

TM EN250



SCORECARD

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|---------------------------|------------|
| Motor | 2nd |
| Handling | 1st |
| Ergos | 3rd |
| TOTAL (out of 100) | 87 |
| PLACING | 1st |

COMMENT

After years of taking gongs for the best pro package in enduro shootouts, TM has finally come up with the goods. The powerplant is big and juicy, once you find out where it bites in the mid-range, and the suspension has to be felt to be believed. Pros, in particular, will absolutely froth over this machine. It's insane.

FIRST MODS

- Larger rear sprocket (\$120)
- Racing numbers (\$60)

MAINTENANCE

The TM carries the same CR-style air filter as it has since 1991 and access is via two bolts under the seat. The oil can be changed by just undoing one bolt, and the sparkplug removed with the tank still bolted in place. The Reikon bars are carried on 24mm rubber-mounted offset clamps. All the factory race parts are available for the Italian bike, including pipe and silencer.

MECH
REPORT

Italian brand TM has a reputation for making great race packages, but they've never really gained favour with trailriders. The bikes always seem to have massive amounts of power and a stiffer suspension set-up that favours competition use rather than casual trailriding. After making a raft of changes in 2006, TM is starting to break down these stereotypes.

MOTOR

With a modified cylinder and head, revised timing, compression and combustion, the TM motor is a lot more user-friendly. It still has a very strong, potent plant, but is now an option for trailriders. Pros will love the abundance of power, and if a clubman doesn't kill himself on it, he'll love it, too.

The EN's bottom-end isn't strong, but comes on smoothly and gives little indication of the amount of power that's hiding just around the corner. When exiting tight, tricky corners, you have to feather the clutch more than on the other bikes to make it sing, but once you do, you'll find yourself tapping into a monstrous mid-range that's the best of the bunch.

The mid is strong and lively, but nowhere near as hard-hitting as previous years. Now it's just chunky and broad and can be used anywhere from second-gear rutted and power-sapping sandy corners to the straights in between. The mill keeps pulling hard well into the top-end. It keeps winding out until you hit the chicken button and back off.

The TM boasts an abundance of power up top. Out on the trail, you

can afford to ride it up a gear to keep out of the lively mid-range, and by gently rolling the throttle on and off, you'll make short work of twisting bush tracks.

For an engine with such broad power, it was surprisingly tractable. Less experienced riders, without Merriman-type throttle control will have to grow accustomed to more clutch use to make the most of the tractability.

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Gear ratios are okay, but it sometimes feels like one is needed between first and second when riding through deep sand or picking your way up steep hills. We found the shifting action was tight, probably because the bike hadn't been run in properly.

The new AJP hydraulic clutch is smooth and had a light pull, although the lever comes in a long way before it'd disengage properly.

HANDLING

The last time we saw a rash of perfect 10s on a scorecard was when Anna Kournikova first came out to play tennis. But now it's happened again, while viewing the rider feedback forms on the TM's suspension.

You know a bike's suspension works well when it feels like everything moves in slow motion and you float smoothly down the trail and the bike's not dancing around underneath you.

The fork is excellent, and feels

more motocrossy than the rest of the class. It's firm in the initial part of the stroke, but smooth and progressive throughout the action, and doesn't dive under brakes as soon as you button off.

Because all the other bikes sit lower in the stroke, it takes a while to get used to the TM. It sits higher, making you feel farther away from *terra firma*.

The shock, too, is excellent. Even though it's not overly plush, it's very progressive and soaks up everything you throw at it. A testament to its adaptability is that even though our riders weights varied by over 25kg, they all felt at home in the saddle and raved about the suspension. The entire package is very well balanced from front to rear and, as a result, rear-wheel tracking is superb.

The TM's steering is predictable and light, but because of the taller ride height, clubman riders may need to drop the fork 5mm through the clamps to enhance the feel and tip weight. Faster guys who hit obstacles harder than Average Joe won't want to change a thing.

ERGOS & BRAKES

Everything about the TM oozes trickery. The black and silver-speckled frame, blue-anodised hubs, Öhlins suspension and gold finish on the fork give it a factory look, although people will either love or hate the hospital-blue plastics.

One of the biggest grizzles we had with the TM was the big gap between sitting and standing. The seat feels low and saddle-like and the pegs are high, so moving from sitting to standing takes a lot more effort than the KTM, whose ergos are better placed.

The front and rear brakes are both very responsive, but border on touchy. Once used to the feel though, you'll quickly grow fond of it, while pros will love it from the get-go.

The width of the bike is ideal. There's plenty to grip with your knees and it becomes second nature to manipulate the bike's behaviour by slightly moving your feet and knees.

VERDICT

After testing all four bikes, our pro testers stood to their feet and claimed the TM "Numero Uno". The Italian machines have had a reputation as hard to ride unless you're a full-time racer. Now that's changed as they've transformed it into a competitive, yet enjoyable bike to ride. It's still built for racing, but now has more universal appeal.