

# ...AND IN THE WHITE CORNER, THE CHALLENGER...

*We have a new champion, with a knockout in two rounds*

By the DB Staff

Chris Crandall never won a major desert race overall in his life before he made history and won the prestigious Barstow to Vegas classic. Then he followed it up with a big win at the Whiskey Pete's World Championship hare and hound race and walked home with most of the money.

The only difference between the Chris Crandall of before this winning streak and the Chris Crandall making the headlines now is the bike he's riding, and that bike is the subject of this test.

We met with Horst Leitner, designer and builder of the ATK 560 motorcycle and owner of the ATK Company, makers of the ATK Torque Eliminator system. Horst delivered a brand-new ATK to us, one that was a dead-on replica of the bike Chris Crandall rode to victory. Only the gearing was changed to protect the innocent.

Rather than do the usual "one afternoon of riding" test that most special bikes get, we arranged to have the ATK for a full month of racing and riding. The idea was to see how the ATK fared in the real world of Sportsman-level MX racing, rather than in the hands of a top-level expert rider. The DB staffers race a variety of bikes each weekend of the year and know the riders they compete against. How we fared in an actual race or two would give us a good indication of how the ATK would work in the hands of that mythical average rider.

## INITIAL IMPRESSIONS

We spent a day riding the ATK before we raced it. This gave us a chance to dial in the jetting and suspension components to suit our riding styles. We had heard that the ATK did not have any low-end power to speak of. With the correct pilot jet in place and an air screw adjustment, the low-end hitch disappeared. The low-end power was strong and smooth, with an awesome mid-range and nice bonus: the thing revved out like a flattacker.

Starting was a mixed bag. Often the ATK would start with only part of a kick, at other times it would protest and demand a handful of hearty boots and a milk crate to get a good kick. Horst took the bike back, installed a fresh carb, and it became an easy starter.



*Chris Crandall tells us that he's comfortable at high speeds.*

Once started and properly warmed up, the ATK showed no hitches or flat spots anywhere in the power delivery. The bike is fast... just about as fast through the gears as a strong 500cc two-stroke bike.

When we rode the bike, two things became apparent: The ATK did not feel heavy, and it most certainly did not vibrate at all. Horst leaves the counterbalancers in the 560 Rotax engine and insists that taking them out is only a good idea for shorttrack and flattrack racing. Otherwise, the vibration level is so high that it would shake a rider half to death.

As you ride the bike, the front end feels ultra light, and it's no problem lofting it with only a blip on the right handle. Also, after putting in a solid half hour on the track, it was surprising and pleasant to note that we were not all that tired. The ATK is an easy bike to ride.

## ABOUT THAT SUSPENSION

Wild-looking is the word for the single side-mounted White Power shock. However, it works at least as well as any single-shock rear end on the market, with the possible exception of the Suzuki Floater.

Complementing the rear end is a set of White Power upside-down forks that somehow don't quite match the action of the rear end. They're good, but not great.

Together, this suspension is well balanced and lets the rider blast through some genuinely nasty terrain. We took more than a few high-speed passes through the Indian Dunes sand wash at very high speeds and noted that the bike displayed exceptional straight-line stability. The rear handled square-edged ruts and bumps extremely well.

Back on the motocross track, we found that the turning habits of the bike took some



## ATK 560

◀ Warning! Do not try this in your living room!

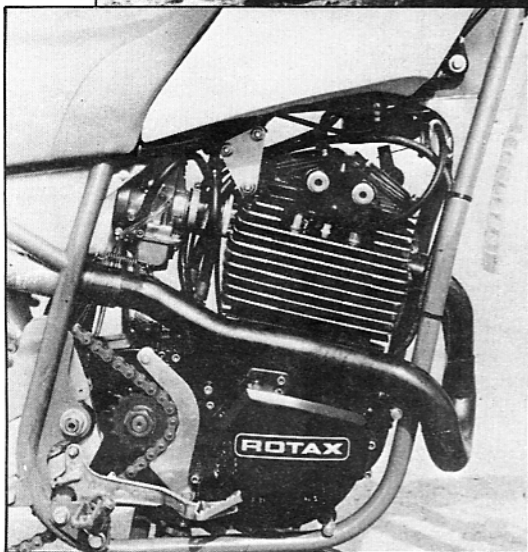


**Crandall noted that he's been working hard on improving his cornering ability.**

can personally testify to. Crandall was timed at the Whiskey Pete's race at slightly over 110 miles per hour by a TV helicopter.

A YZ490 tank and saddle is used over a custom-built chromoly frame, but the angle of the saddle is better than on the stock YZ.

KTM wheels are used at both ends, and



**Muscle is supplied by a thoroughly modified Rotax 560 engine running a cam that would make a flattracker happy.**

getting used to. The ATK worked best when careening off a berm or sliding around a corner with the rear wheel under moderate to heavy power. It did not like to turn on hard-packed flat turns with the throttle lightly on or chopped off.

The more we got used to the bike, though, the easier it was for us to use the power and to turn with more confidence. We'd say that the average rider could hop on the ATK for GP or desert use right away with no trouble, but he would have to learn how to handle the bike in the turns for MX work.

### ODDS AND ENDS

Shifting is first-rate on the nicely spaced five-speed gearbox, and the bike will comfortably pull over 110 miles per hour, which we



## ATK 560

Engine type	Air-cooled, SOHC, 4-stroke single
Bore and stroke	94mm x 61mm
Displacement	562cc
Carburetion	38mm flat-slide Mikuni
Factory recommend jetting:	
Main jet	250
Needle jet	Q-4
Jet needle	41
Pilot jet	35
Slide number	4.0
Fuel tank capacity	2.9 L
Lubrication	Dry sump, oil in frame
Gearbox ratios:	
1	2.901:1 (32/11)
2	2.000:1 (24/12)
3	1.400:1 (21/15)
4	1.118:1 (19/17)
5	0.913:1 (21/23)
Gearing, front/rear	15/48
Ignition	N.D. CDI
Recommended spark plug	NGK D8EA
Silencer/spark arrester	White Bros. Megalloy or SuperTrapp spark arrester
Wheelbase	1490mm (58.0 in.)
Ground clearance	370mm (14.0 in.)
Seat height	960mm (37.5 in.)
Rake/trail	27.5°/125mm (4.45 in.)

Wet weight, no fuel 254.2 lbs.

### Tire size and type:

Front 3.00 x 21 Metzeler MXR

Rear 5.10 x 18 Metzeler MXR

### Suspension type and travel:

Front White Power upside down, internally adj. comp./reb., 300mm (11.8 in.)

Rear White Power shock, side-mounted, adj. comp./reb., 318mm (12.5 in.)

Intended use Motocross and off-road racing

Country of origin USA via Austria

Retail price, approx. \$3995

### Distributor/Manufacturer:

ATK Corp.

2650 C Walnut Ave.

Tustin, CA 92680

### Overall rating of bike, keeping intended use in mind:

Handling Excellent

Front suspension Very good

Rear suspension Excellent

Power Excellent

Cost Excellent

Effectiveness, stone stock Excellent

This rating system is included to aid in comparison of bikes in the same displacement and intended-use categories.

Comparing the ratings of two dissimilar machines is a meaningless exercise in futility.

they're light and strong. The rear brake is way too strong and touchy at first, but you soon adjust to it and learn to let the engine compression do a lot of the slowing down, along with a great front stopper.

One bizarre sensation must be gotten used to: When you chop the throttle, the front end does not dive as with a conventional bike. The ATK chain/roller system no doubt contributes to this feeling. After a while, you tend to forget about it.

Top-line Metzeler tires come on the \$4000 wonder bike, and no corners are cut in the construction. Horst wanted everything to be state of the art on the bike which bears his company name.

A smallish K&N filter rides under the saddle, but it's proven to be big enough to get the job done in a near-200-mile desert race, so it should work just fine for the casual rider/racer.

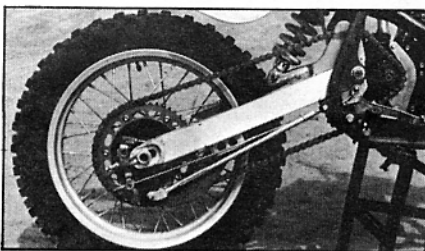
## IS IT JUST A DESERT BIKE?

Not really. The bike was designed to be a pure MXer, but it worked so well in the desert that it could not be ignored. The Larson brothers have turned in some hot performance on various ATKs in the past year, but none of the bikes was as advanced or as light as the one we tested.

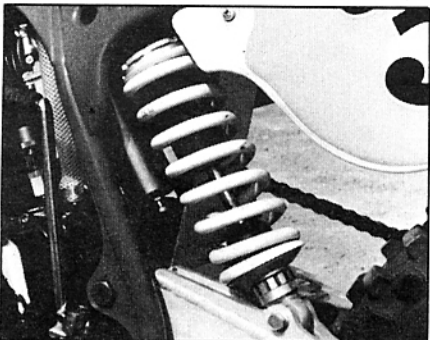
It tips the scales at 254.2 pounds, with no gas in the tank, but with all other vital fluids in their respective caverns.

## RACE TESTING THE ATK 560

After a few local MX races and a trip or two to the desert for fun and evaluation, we can say that the ATK 560 is a thoroughly competitive four-stroke against two-strokes. It'll do better on the higher-speed tracks than it will on the ultra-tight and twisty tracks, but



A beefy aluminum swingarm is framed by the ATK chain/roller system, which is claimed to reduce shock squat and lift.



The short, single, left-side-mounted White Power shock can be removed in minutes. Massive gussets show good thinking.



White Power forks do the job up front, and a KTM disc brake handles the speed-reduction chores.

it gives virtually nothing away to any two-stroke on the starts or the straights.

It's a good, solid, easy-to-ride bike that can not only be raced, but trailridden, as well. A spark arrester tip is available for those who need it, too.

Only one thing puzzles us: How can Horst sell this bike for only \$4000? We've built enough project bikes to know that the ATK 560 is quite likely the best dollar-for-dollar buy on the market today.

If you're a four-stroke junkie, we'd recommend that you snap up one of these babies before Horst Leitner realizes what they're really worth. □

## CHRIS CRANDALL—THE MAN BEHIND THE ATK WINS

### No time to spare

• Chris Crandall burst from what seemed out of nowhere to suddenly win two of the biggest off-road events of the year: Barstow to Vegas and the Whiskey Pete's big-money desert race. And he won both of these events on a new built-in-America bike called an ATK 560. We talked with the 21-year-old desert racer/football player during a recent photo/test session.

**DB:** Chris, are you a full-time racer?

**Crandall:** I'm just a basic college student who goes racing on the weekends. I live in Costa Mesa, California, and have an office cleaning business with my brother. I've been racing desert for about five years now, in between playing football and going to school. I don't have a whole lot of spare time.

**DB:** You've been a good racer for a while, but all of a sudden you've changed into a serious winner. Why?

**Crandall:** Oh, a little bit of luck, and I got more serious about the sport, too.

**DB:** How much is the bike a part of your winning?

**Crandall:** Who knows? It's more the throttle, I think. But there's no question about it...the bike works well. Before I rode the ATK, I rode a Honda CR500 with an ATK system on it. Then ATK started work on their bike, and one weekend my Honda broke, and I raced the ATK and did well with it, so I stayed with it.



Chris "Animal" Crandall, relaxing at speed.

**DB:** You seem to go faster and ride stronger later in the long races, when others get tired. Why is that?

**Crandall:** Football practice. I train for football every day after school at Orange Coast College. It's a different kind of training than just going out and getting in shape. You have to train hard to stay on the team, and that gives you a whole different approach to training.

I run, push a sled, and all the usual stuff. I

play offensive guard this year, and I love to hit. I also lift weights a few days a week, but not like I used to.

**DB:** What are the specs on Chris Crandall?

**Crandall:** I'm five foot ten and weigh about 205 to 210 right now. I bench press around 280 and squat with 350. I used to do a whole lot more in high school.

**DB:** What are your plans for the future?

**Crandall:** I want to do some SCORE races, but I'm not really interested in racing in Mexico. I really like the Casey Folks races. Someday I'd like to race a car. And I'd like to do some flat-track racing and maybe do a little Speedway.

**DB:** What are your strong points in racing?

**Crandall:** High-speed rough stuff. The faster, the better. I've been riding some motocross to improve my turning; I try to ride on a motocross track at least one day a week. Right now I'm best at the flat-out charging, but I'm working on my weak points.

**DB:** What do you think about at 110 miles per hour? Do you wonder what it would be like to get off at that speed?

**Crandall:** No way. You have to have the confidence and not even consider crashing, or you'd never be able to do it. The faster I go, the better the bike handles. I just hang on and pin it. That's when it's fun. •

