



HOT FOUR-PLAY

* What has four wheels and flies? A garbage truck! And the fast and rugged Honda TRX450R ATV. (Psst! Thanks for the help, *Big Book of Jokes and Riddles!*) BY BILL LAMPHIER *



2004 HONDA TRX450R ATV

PRICE \$6,499

THE GOODS Kick start, liquid-cooled, twin-sump, four-stroke engine; five-speed manual transmission; fully adjustable race-ready suspension; hydraulic disc brakes.

TOP SPEED About 75 mph; almost 90 mph with optional power kit.

THE X FACTOR A motocross-proven speed machine made for the off-road.

THE 450R IS THE FIRST serious racing four-wheeler to hit the market in 15 years. * Recent ATVs from Honda (and other manufacturers) have been fine for fast trail riding but not for attacking rough terrain at warp speed. The 450R, however, really hustles, and it's even easy to ride for guys who don't have much off-roading experience.

The 450R's four-valve, liquid-cooled, four-stroke engine has many components similar to those on championship-winning Honda motocross cycles. It has a twin-sump design,

which keeps all the components cool by separating the oil for the engine and the valve train from the oil for the transmission and the clutch. And unlike similar quads, the 450R has neither a reverse gear nor an electric starter. Fire it up with one stab of the kick starter, and the motor quickly revs to 9,000 rpm. Power delivery is strong and translates well into forward momentum. (An optional \$300 power kit will get you a 13 percent increase in horsepower.)

Though the 450R is built for motocross, most buyers will ride mainly for pleasure in woods, deserts and sand dunes. The gearing is a bit too high to snake around trees, and you'll have to slip the clutch a little, but the 450R is rugged and made for that kind of abuse. The hand and foot controls work smoothly and are almost exactly like those on a Harley (but the 450R has a thumb-button throttle). The steering responds perfectly, being neither twitchy nor sluggish. The powerful hydraulic disc brakes allow for stoppies (which are like wheelies but with the rear end up in the air), and the seating layout is roomy enough for tall riders. The seat itself is plenty comfortable for a racing quad.

With lots of aluminum components, the 450R is light enough to maneuver in the air

to correct for a bad takeoff, and the fully adjustable shocks easily absorb the hit of a brutal landing. But you're not supposed to be sitting down when you land from a 100-foot jump. Of course, you're not supposed to be wearing a thong, either. *

BEATING BAJA

National ATV champ Tim Farr of Team Honda won the Baja 1000 in the 450R's first-ever race. Then he told us about it!

"I've raced several highly modified custom ATVs in Baja. The 450R, in stock form, is better than all of them. It's comfortable, the suspension works great, and it has all kinds of torque. Part of the course [at Baja] was wide open on pavement, and for 70 miles I never lifted. That's hard on an engine, but it never hiccupped. [My team] finished almost an hour ahead of second place."



* Bill says, "I didn't write this sentence. Thanks, Mr. Helpful Editor!"