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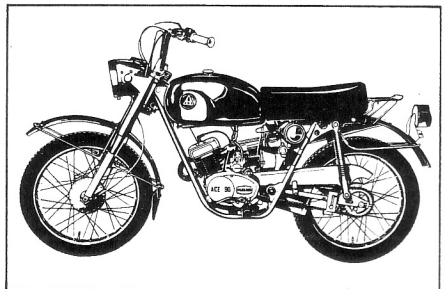
speedway bikes. On the most successful applications, PABATCO passed on the details to dealers and riders with a series of beautifully illustrated modification leaflets to supplement the illustrated parts list and owners manual for every bike. Some of these changes found their way into models still under development, or inspired the introduction of a new motorcycle. Hodaka mania was taking over the small-bore world.

Brad Lackey, likely to be America's first world motocross champion, started out on a Hodaka. Desert aces Tom and Cordis Brooks once blinded the opposition with the glare from the chrome-plated gas tanks of their Hodakas. Scores of future stars spent some time and learned a lot aboard the agile little red terrors.

Then came Hodaka's first out-of-the-crate racer, the Ace 100/MX, quickly dubbed "Super Rat" by a test rider, and the beginning of the crazy names, a menagerie of wombats, toads, clams and rodents (even one dog), monikers which belied the seriousness of the designs and the integrity of the machines they identified. One model, and soon one color, was a thing of the past, and eventually even the familiar chrome "toaster" disappeared. With the names came new fun as the line of Hodakas expanded and new models with funny sounding names were tested by the motorcycle press and found to be good, in spite of what they were called.

The distance runs and race wins continued to sell Hodakas as a whole new wave of riders took to the dirt. With the new 125cc Wombat that came out in 1972, Frank Wheeler eclipsed his previous long-haul runs by riding 10,000 miles around the perimeter of Australia in just 21 days, *without a support crew*. That's about 475 miles a day. Frank weighed 225 pounds at the time, and he rode a stock bike equipped with a fairing and loaded down with 200 additional pounds of gas, water, tools and gear. Temperatures on the run ranged from below freezing up to a scorching 131°. That sold a lot of Hodaka motorcycles and hooked a lot of new riders, our family included. By the end of the next year we had owned four of the critters, and Wombats and Combat Wombats (designed for enduro and MX) filled the woods and competed in enduros and other events across the U.S.

Those were the happy, carefree days before land-use hassles, noise regulations



Where it all began, the street-legal trail-useful Ace 90.