

REKLUSE

Z-START PRO

Automatic or not, you choose

► The automatic clutch is the greatest invention of the 21st century (at least so far). But there are people who just don't get it. They fall into two categories: motocrossers, and those with severe learning disabilities. Everyone else knows that the Rekluse z-Start clutch can engage and disengage a motor with much more precision than a human hand.

But motocrossers mostly use the clutch for two things: starting, and a quick jab to break loose the rear end. The old Rekluse isn't particularly good for either. At a National motocross, have you ever noticed how all the motors are nearly pinned just before the gate drops? If they used Rekluse z-Start clutches, they would just be dragged into the gate.

That's why the new Rekluse Pro is such a big deal. For the first time, the automatic clutch has a completely functional override. If you want to pretend you have a conventional clutch, you just forget that it's in there. That little lever on the left side of the bars acts more or less normally. The Pro uses the same idea as the original z-Start: little ball bearings that fling outward and jam the plates

together. But now the whole mechanism can be pushed off the clutch stack by pulling in the lever. It's a perfect override.

We tried the new version on two different bikes. First, we rode Al Youngwerth's KTM 450XC on trails. It was awesome. You can climb rock ledges by just twisting the throttle. You can also leave the bike in any gear and simply never shift—within reason. You'll never stall it, but the taller the gear, the milder the power delivery. As you can imagine, if you stick it in sixth and just open the throttle, the bike barely moves, and you're not doing your clutch plates any favors. The Rekluse will just slip and make lots of heat. But you can ride in third through almost anything. Super steep hillclimbs were an issue with the old Rekluse. If the front wheel came up, you couldn't just work the clutch to get things back under control, you had to roll off, then grab another handful—usually you would loop out. With the new override, you can work the clutch like normal.

Then we tried the bike on a Honda CRF450R motocross bike. The result: excellent starts. You have to learn to feel the clutch in a very different way. At idle, the clutch has no feel at all, as if the cable is just connected to a light spring. Just above idle, though, the clutch lever snaps to attention and acts fairly normally. After the start, you can use two completely different riding techniques. You can use the clutch in every corner like normal, or you can use throttle control. Face it, most riders use the clutch for braking because they don't want to stall. With the Rekluse, our

450 Honda was almost impossible to stall. We say "almost" because if you really try hard and the bike is in first gear, stalling is possible. But that's more because of jetting coughs than rear-brake lockup.

That's the only conceivable disadvantage to the new clutch. If your bike is jetted poorly off the bottom and has a tendency to cough and die, your life can be even more miserable with the Rekluse. You can't just bump the seat and get the motor to come back to life. Our Honda was fine as long as you didn't pump the throttle hard, then chop it suddenly—



The z-Start Pro automatic clutch makes riding through ugly stuff much easier than it should be. Now you can override the automatic clutch and ride your bike like it's normal, if you feel the need.

This is where the work is done. Those little ball bearings know much more about operating a clutch than you do.



Our Honda 450 test bike was ridden like a motocross bike should be ridden. You can ignore the clutch lever or use it.

you know, as long as you don't try to stall it. And we never got it to stall in second gear no matter how hard we tried.

There are lots of other interesting features, such as how you can adjust how aggressively the clutch engages by changing the number of balls and how you can adjust the rpm of engagement at the lever. But the bottom line is that the Rekluse remains the most intriguing product of our time. And now the list of reasons not to have one is getting much shorter. The z-Start Pro sells for \$699 and is available through Rekluse; 866-REKLUSE. □

