

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR:

I received a letter from Stephen Day, from St Catharines, who was enquiring about what is the difference is between a stock 1972 Norton and a "Combat" version. Since I personally own a Combat version of the 1972 Norton I thought it would be a good time to let everyone know why so many Norton enthusiasts who like speed and top end power use these specifications and various parts when rebuilding their 750 models for the road or racetrack. Prior to the Combat engine being introduced for regular production on 1972 Norton motorcycles, many of the parts and specifications were used on the 750 cc Production racer (The Yellow Peril), which had excellent success on the racetrack. In particular the SS version camshaft which allowed the engine to provide more power at higher RPM than the standard camshaft. It was thought at the time that the extra power generated by the Combat version would attract even more riders looking for more power to keep up to the Japanese motorcycles of the time. The Combat equipped Nortons were the Interstate, Fastback and Roadster models only as the Hi-Rider used the standard engine only. Everything was the same between the standard and combat version engine except the below mentioned parts and specifications:

1972 NORTON MODEL	STANDARD	COMBAT
COMPRESSION RATIO	8.9 TO 1	10 TO 1
CYLINDER HEAD	STANDARD (NO MARKING)	COMBAT "C"
CARBURATORS (2) NEEDLE JET NEEDLE POSITION	30 MM AMALS 0-107 MIDDLE	32 MM AMALS 0-106 TOP
HORSEPOWER	60	65
CAMSHAFT	PLAINED	"SS" VERSION
ROCKER CLEARANCE (COLD)	INLET .006 IN OUTLET .008 IN	INLET .008 IN OUTLET .010 IN
PAINT COLOUR OF CYLINDERS BARRELS	SILVER	BLACK
RECOMMENDED OCTANE	97 (ORIGINAL) 92.2 (R + M)/2	100 (ORIGINAL) 95.1 (R + M)/2

Although these specifications and different parts worked well for a racer that normally wouldn't have seen considerable mileage between rebuilds, the non-superblend main engine bearings would fail prematurely when the bike was pushed at high RPM for long lengths at a time over a few thousand miles. The 750 engine design was at its limit as far as HP was concerned and the Norton factory quickly introduced a thinned Valve Spring Cap (by .040 in) to make up the difference in the Higher Compression ratio (Serial # 232740) and the Superblend Main engine bearing (Serial # 207198) . They attempted to replace all the faulty engine bearings that they could by rebuilding any engines that were still in the factory or at dealers in the UK but no recall was done once they were sold to any North American customers as far as I am aware. (I know for certain that I and many other Combat owners weren't told to bring their bikes in for a rebuild which would have cost them more dearly than it already did. I had the original Bearings in my bike until 1997 so if you didn't push them they could last but are you going to take the chance that they won't fail. Not on your life! If you personally aren't sure that you have Superblend Bearings in your 1972 Norton then replace them. The Combat motor when all of the improved modifications are done makes for a very powerful engine which is reliable if put together properly.

Will Norton
Norton Nomad Editor