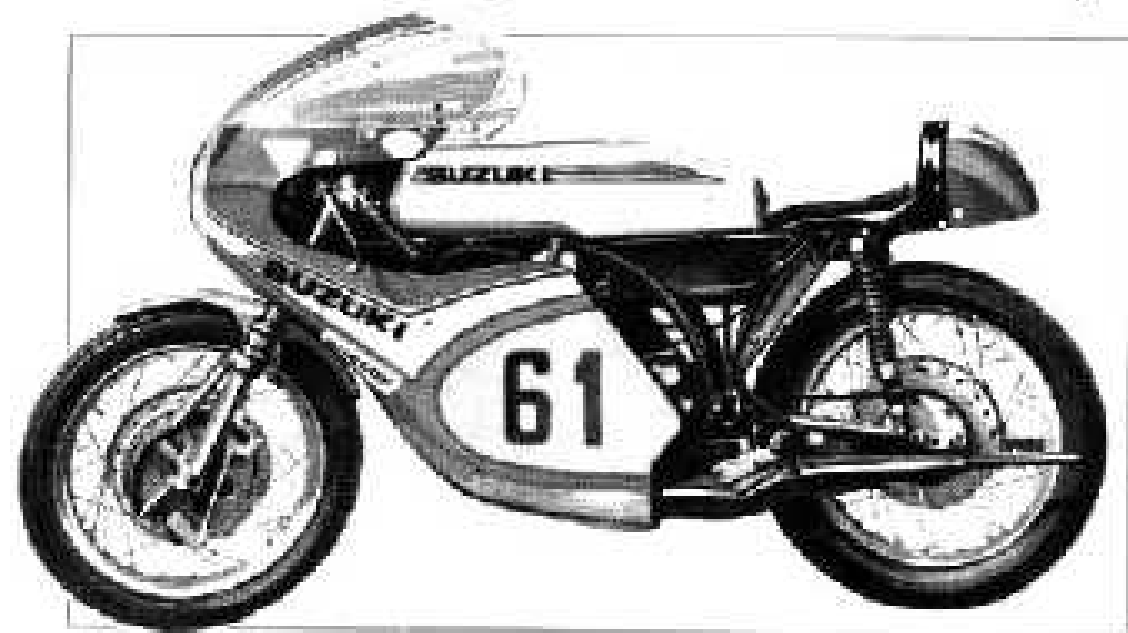


SUZUKI 500 FANATICS

The factory racers - the TR500 - Air-cooled and water-cooled



1971 Daytona TR500

The TR500 found its origins in... Boulogne, France. Pierre Bonnet was the French Suzuki distributor and the works team indeed was based there for their first serious onslaught on the Grand Prix world in 1962. By 1967 Jacques Roca, a talented Spanish-French racer and technician had joined forces with Pierre Bonnet after being the distributor for Derbi. Shortly after the new T500 roadster was issued by the Japanese manufacturer, Roca built and raced a racing version that was so impressive that Suzuki, which had officially retired from world championship racing, built a full-race version of the new machine, as well as a 250cc version from the smaller parallel twin.



The author's '72 Daytona TR500



Suzuki realised in the late sixties that racing victories made for great advertising. Suzuki had a good 500cc bike so why not make good use of it. the company developed a racing model from the production version, utilising a new Norton Featherbed inspired frame, called the XR05.

The author's Daytona TR500 showing the featherbed inspired frame

America was where the big sales potential was, so where else to start racing a big 500 but at Daytona. In 1968 the first machine appeared and caused a sensation. it looked mean and went like stink. Shame about the handling though.



Brian Ferguson with the author's Daytona TR500 at a remote road-testing site



The XR05 in 1968 could pull 135mph and produced 63.5hp at 8000rpm. The bike weighed 135kg. The 1969 model managed 64.5hp at 8000rpm and with new gearing was good for 147mph. Ron Grant ran to 5th at the 68 Daytona 500 on the TR500 and Itoh managed 9th.

The author's Daytona TR500 at Wanneroo raceway

In 1970 the TR500 produced 70.5hp at 8000rpm with a speed of 152 mph. The bike still ran a Ceriani 9" twin leading shoe front drum brake and Ceriani forks.

For 1971-2 the TR500 ran 71.5 hp and 154 mph from a dry weight of 130.6 kgs.



The author's Daytona TR500 in the pits at Wanneroo

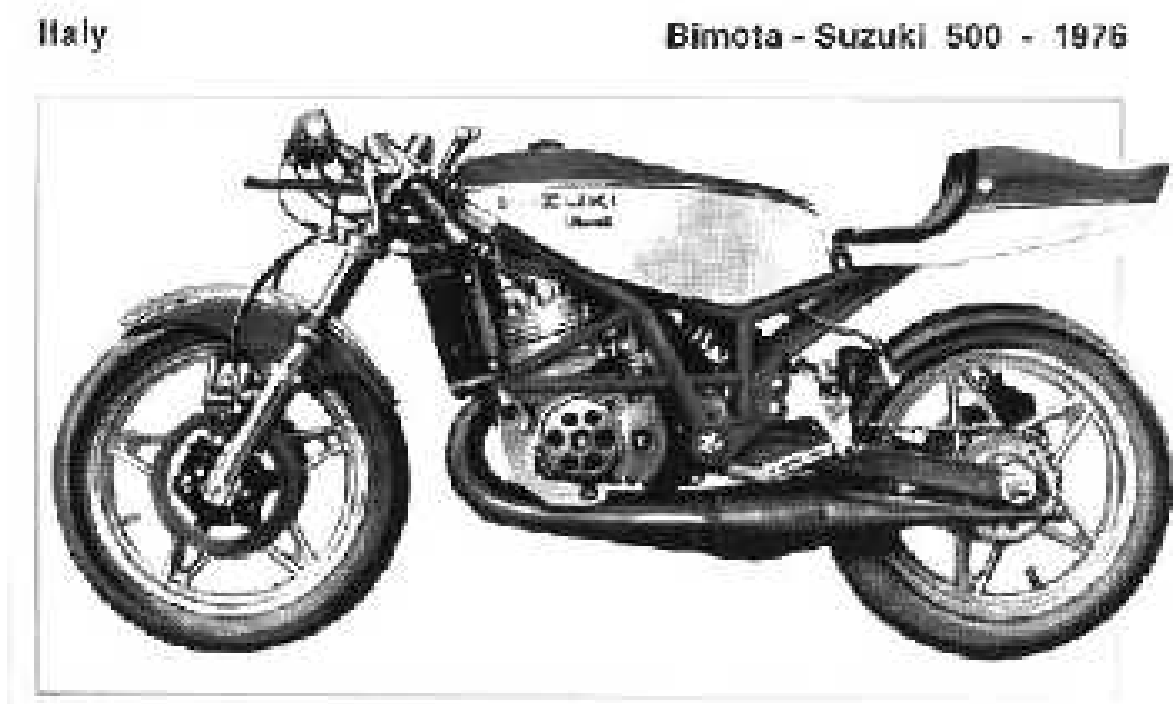


The big change for 1973 was water-cooling for the motor. The TR500III made 73 hp at 8000rpm and pushed 140kg. A new frame was introduced for this model which ran twin disks up front and a single disk at the rear. Jack Findlay came first at the Isle of Man on this model.

The 1974 TR500 produced 78 hp at 8700 rpm and could pull 160 mph!

Ken Rick's water-cooled TR500 - this bike was ridden to success at the 1974 Marlboro Series in New Zealand

The end of the road came in 1975 when new barrels were introduced and the bike was producing 80 bhp reliably at 8900 rpm.



The Bimota water-cooled TR500 of 1976



The ultimate Suzuki 500 was produced in 1976 when Bimota entered the scene. The Bimota-Suzuki 500 used the TR500 MkIII water-cooled motor with a dry clutch and a six speed gearbox. The Bimota used a tubular space frame with a monoshock rear suspension with a Koni F1 shock absorber. The Bimota-Suzuki was an Italian Suzuki initiative and if anyone knows where one is, I want one (for free)!!!

A NZ Steve Roberts built Suzuki TR500 with a non-standard tank, restored by John Woodley

A factory Suzuki TR500 with Ceriani forks and brakes. (pic supplied by Michael Pettifer)



An excellent reference on Suzuki racing machines is "Team Suzuki" by Ray Battersby.

Suzuki Daytona TR500 with a John Woodley built frame