

THE FLYING Z

THE NEW SUZUKI Z400 IS GOOD, BUT WE MAKE IT BETTER

By Jesse Wozniak

Editor's note: This is the first segment of a two-part story on our Z400 project.

No doubt about it, the Suzuki Z400 — and Kawasaki KFX400 for that matter — is a great bike. Stock for stock it's better than most, but few serious ATV enthusiasts ever settle for a stock bike. With help from the aftermarket, we took a bone-stock Z400 and turned it into a more legitimate performer; we call it "The Flying Z." For this issue, we added mainly bolt-on performance-enhancing mods.

First Step

Mike Findley, of Temecula Motorsports in Southern California, is a big supporter of ATV racing. He was excited to be part of the project, and quickly sent us the new Suzuki. We had no real complaints about the stock bike, but we did want to improve a few things.



We left the cylinders alone, this time, on our project Suzuki Z400, but did add a few stellar parts from Duncan Racing, Roll Design, One Industries, TAG and more.

Power

No matter how fast a stock ATV is, someone always wants it to go faster. This used to be easier than it is today, according to Duncan Racing's Loren Duncan. He explains that in the old days, factory-built motor components and exhaust systems were easy to improve upon. Now, more development goes into the performance of the stock components, and your average hop-up shop's products may even slow your machine down.

Duncan's Z400 power exhaust system underwent a ton of testing and development. The stainless-steel header pipe and exhaust pipe, mated to the aluminum Fat Boy 4 muffler, isn't just for looks.

We added a Pro Design Pro Flo air filter kit at the DR shop. This kit better fits the Z400, and is extremely easy to install. Duncan Racing then mounted a K&N filter on the billet-aluminum filter flange. To create more airflow, we removed the stock air box lid. Along with the updated intake and exhaust, Duncan made changes to carburetor jetting. The exhaust is

louder than the stock system and improved our Suzuki's power numbers. Duncan Racing says this package should give us a 10- to 15-percent gain in torque and power.

Suspension

Any time you make an aggressive change to an ATV's engine and power, you'll want to consider upgrading the suspension, too. We

We improved the Z400's suspension, power numbers and handling with these bolt-on components. So far, the Suzuki has proven more durable and easier to ride, especially in the rough stuff. The wider Roll Design front end, combined with the new shocks and tires, improved the Z's cornering abilities.



decided a Roll Design Lobo II front end would be better for our new Z. The Roll Design front end is 2.5 inches wider than stock for more stability. Roll designed the unit so it accepts the stock Suzuki front spindles.

Often, on two-stroke machines, the A-arms are moved forward to increase traction by placing more weight on the rear end. During development, Roll discovered the stock wheelbase worked best because the four-stroke powerplant supplied plenty of traction.

We added a Roll Design steering stem, which is 1.5 inches taller. This device makes the Z more comfortable for riders 6 foot and taller. The chrome stem looks trick and is stronger than the stock unit.

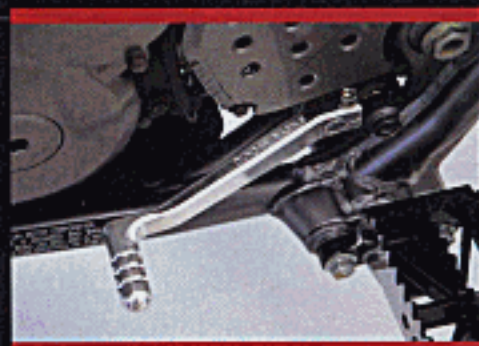
The Roll front A-arms utilize a different geometry than the stock units and must be used with long-travel aftermarket shocks. We added MOTOWOZ shocks in the front and rear. These rebuildable shocks use triple-rate springs and high-flow hoses. The threaded, adjustable cross-over rings allow the rider to change the effective spring rate with the shocks mounted on the quad.

The MOTOWOZ rear shock for the Z400 increases the travel without replacing the swingarm. It offers the adjustable, threaded cross-over rings and the high-flow hose, too. The machine has an aggressive stance and better ride with the new suspension.

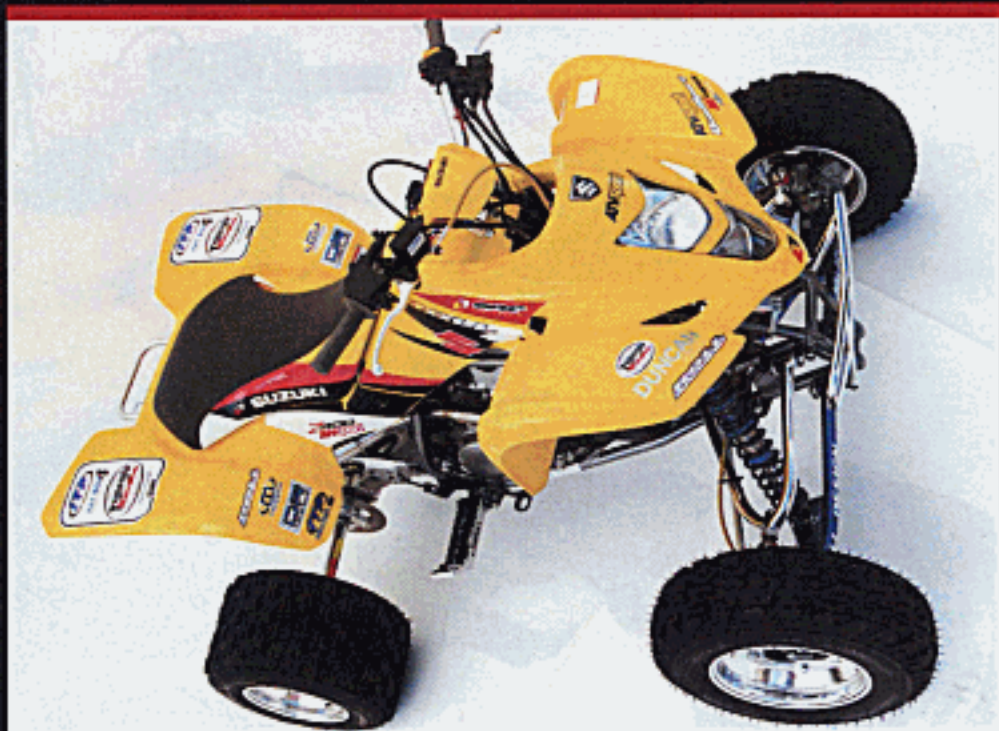
We mounted ITP Holeshots tires with ITP's new T-9 wheel, front and rear. The T-9 is .190 thick for strength. ITP says the rolled-bead design is both stronger and the new semi-clover design in the center of the wheel saves weight.

Finishing Touches

We left most of the assembly details to Gary Borger (Former Mickey Thompson Grand-Prix ATV-Pro mechanic). He installed the performance products, then added several



Small items, like this Duncan foot shifter and the Roll Design/IMS foot pegs, are aesthetic and durable upgrades over stock.



Temecula Motorsports loaned us one of its Suzuki Z400s so we could improve its handling, power and appeal. Mission accomplished. Stay tuned for more!

other items to give the Z a more wholesome look and feel.

Borger mounted TAG T2 "CR-Hi" bars to the Roll stem using a Roll big-bar mounting kit. This kit mounts easily to the Roll stem and will accommodate any 1 1/8-inch handlebar. Extended A-arms force you to switch to longer brake lines, too. Borger installed Duncan Racing's steel-braided brake lines in front. These cables give the quad's front brakes a more positive feel and additional braking power.

Although we ran the stock swingarm in the rear (for now), we had to replace the axle after it bent during our initial ride. Durablue supplied an adjustable rear width axle for a replacement. Borger trimmed the stock plastic to reduce wind resistance and give the Z400 a

We noticed improved power gains — specifically mid-range pop — with the Duncan Racing Fat Boy 4 exhaust system.



A Roll Design steering stem made our test Z more controllable and increased the height of our TAG T2 bars. The new handlebar position and bend is a better fit for us.



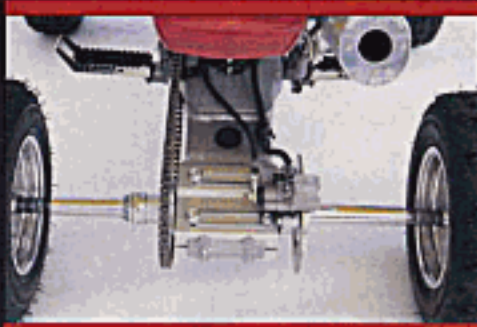
Our modifications included adding a Roll Design front-end, MOTOWOZ shocks, Duncan Racing front bumper and ITP Holeshots.

new look. A Duncan Racing bumper rounded out the aesthetics.

The Ride

After working with Duncan Racing and Berger, we knew we had improved on the stocker, obviously. After riding it, however, we were surprised at just how different the quad was. Even without inner engine mods, this bike rips!

The power gain feels consistent throughout the powerband. Power wise, we noticed a slight improvement on both the bottom-end and the top-end. This mid-range power was the best change. There is a definite power "hit" in the middle now. The improved



Durablue gave us an axle after we bent the stock axle during break-in.

powerband works well with the new tires to provide instantaneous traction.

At these new speeds the suspension was put to the test as well. The wider Z400 really has that "race bike" feel. The improved stability and lower center of gravity really paid off in the turns. The shocks lower the ride height and prevent the bike from tipping in the corners and smoothed the rough ruts and bumpy. The ride was more plush and handled the big obstacles and jumps better than stock. The MOTOWOZ shocks held up to our all-day abuse.

We're glad we added the Roll Design/IMS foot pegs. This addition sounds minor, but the wider platform improved our riding comfort and stability.

In its stock form, the Z400 is rather comfortable, with a narrow fuel tank and wide seat. A One Industries seat cover kept us in the saddle.

Next Step

We are looking forward to improving The Flying Z even more. This first step is a good starting point for riders not looking for a full-blown, high-dollar racer. In the next issue we're going to take this machine to the next

level. We're about to turn this machine into a serious pro-level MX race bike. Check back to see what we've done, and what pro racer Doug Eichner thinks of our new machine. **ATVS**

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• ITP (909/923-7753); www.itptires.com

• K&N (800/858-3333); www.knpowersports.com

• MOTOWOZ (619/659-2889); www.motowoz.com

• One Industries (858/874-5760);
www.oneindustries.com

• Pro Design (714/534-0620)

• Roll Design (760/731-5920);
www.rolldesign.com

• TAG Metals (619/299-6255);
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