

(In response to a question about the classic "bag of spilled marbles" sound when the starter button is pressed)

You have a slipping starter clutch.

When the starter turns over, it rotates a gear on the clutch. The clutch is a roller type, mounted around the alternator shaft. When it rotates, three rollers grip the shaft spinning it and the engine. When the engine starts, the shaft rotates faster than the starter motor and the rollers slide up ramps against spring pressure. They can slip if there is a build-up of gunk on the shaft, the springs are weak or if the rollers are worn down.

A build-up is often the result of poor maintenance. Using a crankcase cleaning solvent (like seafoam) may dissolve the gunk and magically fix the starter clutch. Try that first because replacing the rollers and springs means removing the engine and splitting the transmission case halves -- a fair bit of work.

Add the recommended amount of solvent into the oil, run the bike at a fast idle on the centrestand for at least 20 minutes (use a fan to blow air over the engine if it's a warm day!). Run it through all the gears several times to thoroughly splash the oil/solvent around. Let the bike cool for 30 minutes or an hour, so it all drains down and you don't get burned when you change the oil and filter. Use a good quality oil, avoiding any brand that contains "friction modifiers".

If this doesn't work then I'm afraid that you need to conduct some surgery on your bike.

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