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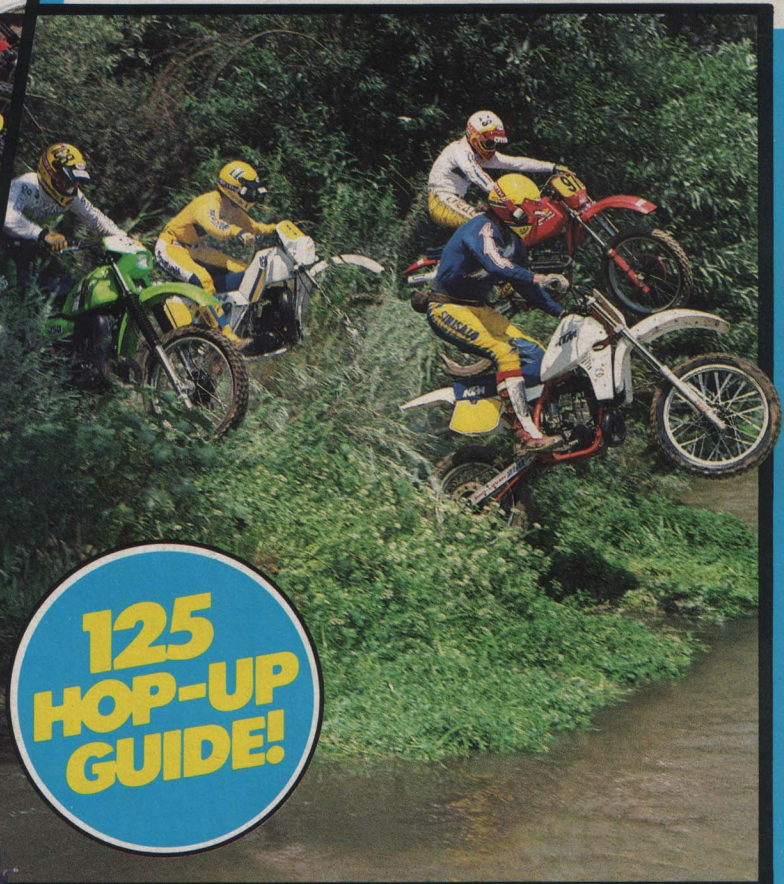
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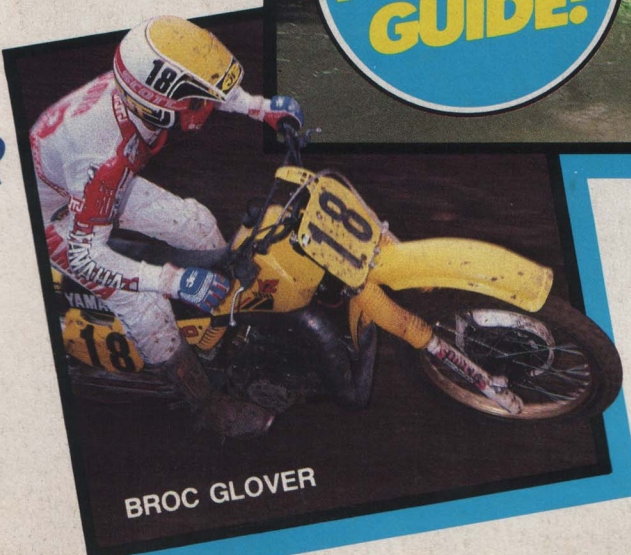
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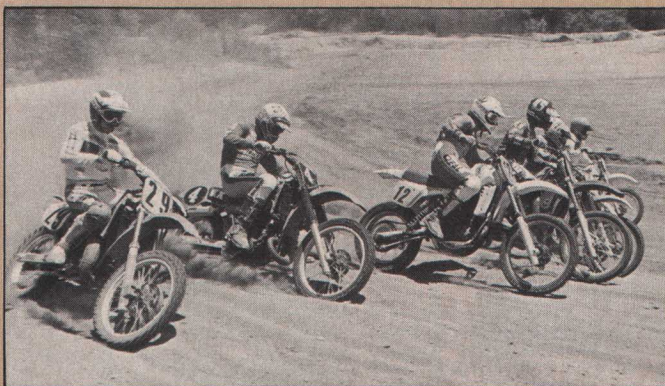
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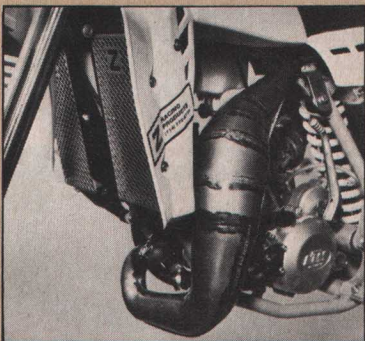
250 MX SHOOTOUT



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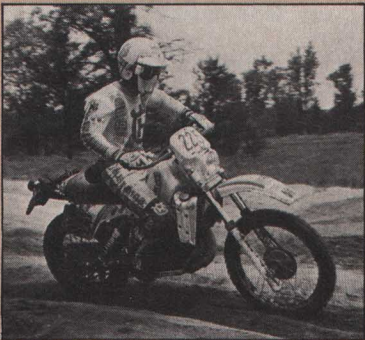
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WARNING: Much of the action depicted in this magazine is potentially dangerous. Virtually all of the riders seen in our photos are experienced experts or professionals. Do not attempt to duplicate any stunts that are beyond your own capabilities. Always wear the appropriate safety gear.

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ON THE COVER: The test staff lines up for the 250 MX shootout; the top four enduro bikes take time out for a bath; and Broc Glover burns down Carlsbad. Photos by Webb, Clipper, and Webb, in that order; color separation by Valley Film.



250 ENDURO SHOOTOUT

Middleweight face-off!

By the Staff of DB

This year's 250 enduro shootout will feature four machines: the KTM 250-MXC, Husqvarna 250WR, Kawasaki KDX250 and Honda XR250R. Although Can-Am has a competitive 250 woods scoot, they've been sold out for some time, and we couldn't secure one for the shootout. During the year, we've lived with, worked on and suffered with the bikes involved in the shootout. We know how reliable they are, how competitive each one is and how much fun they can be once you're tooling off-road.

Every aspect of the bikes' performance, attributes and glitches will get a rating. The ratings go from excellent to very good, to good, then average and finally hopeless. Keep in mind that when we talk about power, we mean usable, tractorlike enduro ponies. Handling involves ease of riding and how much fun the bike is to ride. As with any shootout, there will be a winner. *Dirt Bike* will hold no punches here. This wishy-washy garbage of claiming all the bikes are

good is pure nonsense. We'll tell you the truth, bottom line, okay?

Two of the bikes, the KTM and the Honda, received major updates this year. Visually, the Husky looks unchanged, although it has a number of new items. The KDX is the only bike to run the same motor and chassis as the '83. Here's a short rundown on each machine:

HONDA XR250R

Obviously, the Honda is the only four-stroke of the bunch. Nineteen eighty-four marks its return to the lineup after it was dropped in '83. It features an all-new four-valved, twin-carbed engine and a highly refined chassis over the extinct 1982 model. Some 20 pounds of meat has been cut off, the suspension refined, and it comes standard with all the neat enduro apparel. Hand guards, disc brakes and a cool-minded enduro look grace the XR.

KTM 250MXC

This is the only water-cooled bike of the bunch and except for the larger gas tank,

it looks exactly like an MXer. Its forte is super-light weight, nimble manners, beefy suspension and an overall serious attitude. In stock trim there are neither lights nor a speedo. It's basically bare, with the accessory enduro kit available for those who want it. This bike is *all race*, with the most travel, the lightest weight and the most power of the bunch.

KAWASAKI KDX250

A grunt-'em-up motor, low saddle and working-class suspension highlight the KDX. There's nothing new to speak of, but the '83 proved to be a strong machine all the way around. The Uni-Trak rear end takes punishment well, and the short machine is nice for the woods-minded. As far as performance, the engine is all John Deere and great for less advanced riders and the cow-trailer crowd.

HUSQVARNA WR250

The twin-shock ITC is unique in this field of bikes. A new low-slung plastic tank and a pulled-in rake make for improved turn-



250 ENDURO SHOOTOUT



Overall, the Husky has the plushiest suspension. It's also the heaviest of the four bikes.

ing over past models. A six-speed engine got the once-over by the factory, and the powerband is completely changed from the '83. Revs instead of chugs are the norm.

POWER

KTM sets the horsepower standard. Its eliminator engine is easy to start, rips off the bottom, and keeps gaining until an awesome top-end hit is achieved. There is an annoying gap between fourth and fifth gears, but a one-tooth-smaller countershaft sprocket cures that. Right out of the crate, the KTM carburetes perfectly, shifts well,



High speed, slow speed, jumping and crushing were all a cruise aboard the KTM. It has the most travel of the bikes and is the lightest, by a ton.

and is water-cooled, to boot. We got over 1500 miles out of the top end before it was re-ringed.

Second place is a tie between the Husky and the KDX. Oddly enough, the engines are worlds apart. The Husky has lost much of its low-end punch but has gained in the middle portion of the powerband, and revs further than last year's WR. In stock trim it's geared too tall, and a one-tooth-smaller countershaft sprocket is a must. On the other hand, the KDX is geared dead-on and has a killer engine. From zero revs into the



Short and plush, the Honda XR proved to be a fun bike. The weight is in the ball-park; it handles well and flicks through the woods with a flair.

mid portion of the powerband, the Kawasaki pulls like a mule.

Filling out the bottom position comes the Honda. It does have a tractorlike powerband and revs out, but there simply isn't enough power when compared to the other bikes. Yes, it's fun and easy to ride, but try climbing a gnarly hill that the KTM just flew up, and you'll be wishing that you either weren't there or were riding a two-stroke.

TURNING

Once again, the KTM tops the field here. The KTM typifies the new-generation en-

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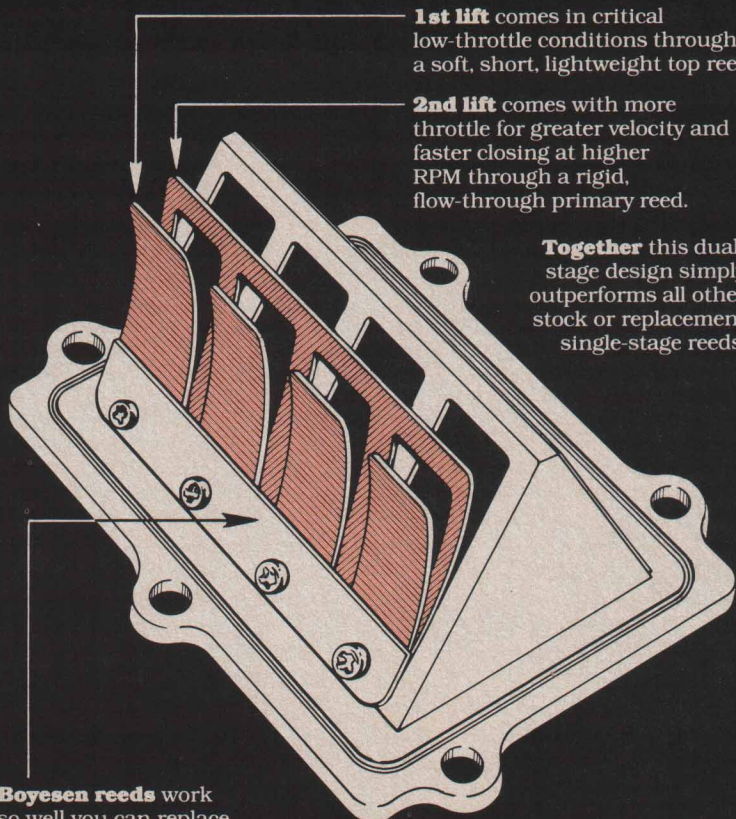
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A too soft front end and a dismal front stopper hampered the KDX. Everyone loved the power, its seating and the excellent rear end.

duro bike. With a pinpointed rake coupled with a feather-light chassis, you've got a bike that flicks, sticks and holds a line with below-normal rider input. It shines in the woods and is just as comfortable turning in a flat-out sand wash.

Next, strangely enough, comes the Honda. A super-sharp rake lets the four-stroke turn on a button, and while it doesn't respond like a two-stroke, the strong pull of the motor works well with the chassis dimensions. In sand or at higher speeds, things aren't so boss, but get in tight woods or rocks or switchbacks, and the XR is a cakewalk to ride. A stiffer rear end would help considerably, since it wallows in stock trim.

Both the Husky and the KDX turn well; not great, but not poor. Husky greatly enhanced the WR's performance by pulling the rake in to 28.5 degrees. While it won't turn under the KTM or the XR, it does respond easily to rider input and no longer demands the cut-and-thrust technique. A soft front end and a low saddle height make the KDX a comfortable turner. Nothing alarming ever threatens the rider, but cutting a swath through the woods simply takes more work than it does on the KTM.

HANDLING

Although the KTM is the tallest of all the bikes, it will manhandle terrain the others wince at. It's long, making it stable, the head doesn't shake a bit, and it'll carve a fine line through the woods. Add to that a weight at least 20 pounds less than any of the competition and you've got a strong-running flea flicker of a bike that likes to go plonk, carve and crank.

In second slot comes the Husky. Excellent forks and a plush tail section combine with a well-thought-out, good-turning chassis and a fairly low saddle height. It'll bounce through the woods yet is just as happy in the whoop-infested desert. Like the KTM, it's stable and won't shake its head coming down from speed.

Give the KDX third; a very good rear end takes the hits in stride, and a long wheelbase makes for a stable ride. Too soft forks and

slow turning hamper the KDX's ratings. In last comes the XR. A mush rear end which wallows and is matched to a super-sharp rake make the Honda more than a handful to ride at speed. A glaring headshake scares the rider when the throttle is chopped in sand, and a super-wide tank gives the rider a knee ache after an hour or so.

SUSPENSION

Rating the suspension is a combined effort. This is both the front and rear-end ac-

tion, not one or the other. An enduro bike's suspension must be somewhat plush, not wallowy, yet have the ability to firm up and take control over the crushers. Basically, it can't be too soft or too stiff.

The Husky tops the field here. While it's not perfect, it does get the job done better than any of the other bikes. Up front the 40mm units damp in a smooth, progressive manner. They feel soft at first, then firm up once a killer g-out is thrown at them. Sec-



Once again, the inbred enduro manners of the Husky make it an all-around excellent machine. It turns, is stable and has a decent spread of power.



Carving through the woods on the KTM is an exercise in hand control. The power is monstrous, the handling excellent, and the bike plain works.



The photos of the XR are of a modified version of our test bike. It has less power than all the other bikes, but turns on a quarter and has a low saddle height.



A longish rake on the KDX made it a slow turner, but good all-around power proved to be a blessing.

250 ENDURO SHOOTOUT

ond goes to the KTM. Neither end shines, but both get with the program just enough. The Zokes are a little harsh, as is the rear end, but will take a big hit fine and are supple enough to work in the woods.

A great rear end on the KDX is offset by marginal forks, while the XR is quite the opposite. The XR forks are in the ballpark and the rear end is of the mushman design.

BRAKES

We'll break (no pun intended) this into front and rear brake categories.

The best front stopper goes hands down to the Honda. Its disc unit is super strong, progressive and perfectly waterproof. One step down is the dual-leading-shoe stopper

of the KTM. It too is strong and waterproof, but the shoes glaze up easily and require constant cleaning. We found that YZ shoes fit right in and work much better.

Husky's dual-leading-shoe front brake is decent, but it loses in the waterproofing and pure stoppability departments. All testers felt that the KDX front binder proved to be anemic at best.

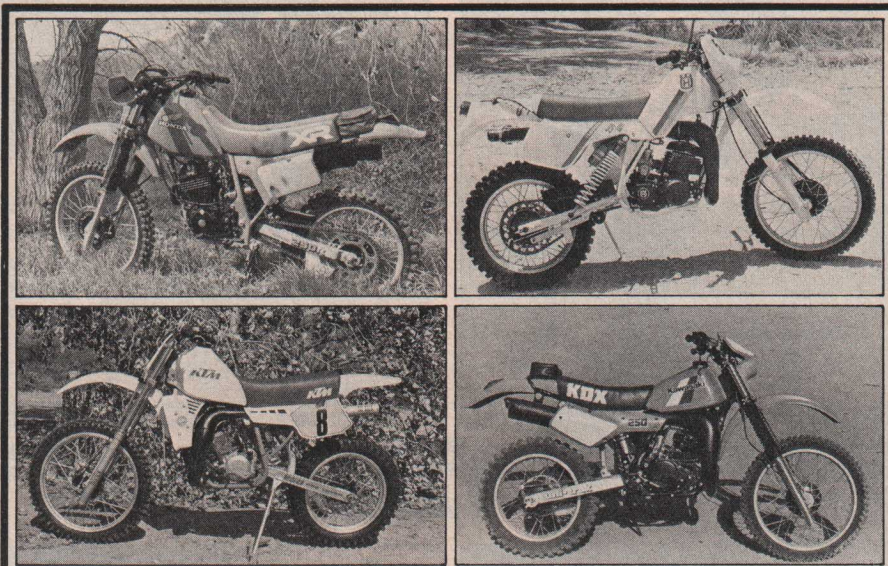
For the rear only the KTM tops the group. It's the only dual-leading-shoe rear unit, and while it's intense and takes some getting used to, it does stop with a vengeance. Next is a tie between the Husky and the KDX; both are better than average, but not great. Last goes to the XR. It's grabby, it squeals and the hub is painfully average.

COMFORT AND LAYOUT

Here the KDX and the KTM grab the number one slot. The KDX is low, has a slim



Husky lost some ground this year in the motor department. Not enough down low made it a little tough to ride for the novices.



Even our modified XR couldn't come close to the other machines in the power department. The handling is there, but not the ponies.

	HONDA XR250R	HUSQVARNA WR250	KAWASAKI KDX250	KTM 250MXC
Engine type	4-stroke	2-stroke	2-stroke	2-stroke
Bore and stroke	75mm x 56.5mm	69.75mm x 64.5mm	70mm x 64.9mm	71mm x 62mm
Displacement	249cc	245cc	249cc	245.5cc
Carburetion	(2) 24mm Keihin	38mm Mikuni	36mm Mikuni	38mm Bing
Factory recommended jetting:				
Main jet	108/102	400	320	190
Needle jet	N/A	Q-8	R-6	280
Jet needle	N/A	6DH3	6FJ42-2	8L2
Pilot jet	45	45	45	50
Slide number	N/A	2.5	3.0	215
Fuel tank capacity	9.0 L (2.4 gals.)	12.5 L (3.3 gals.)	12.5 L (3.3 gals.)	12.7 L (3.4 gals.)
Lubrication	Wet sump	Pre-mix	Pre-mix	Pre-mix
Transmission	6-speed	6-speed	6-speed	5-speed
Gearbox ratios:				
1	2.769:1	24.7:1	2.583:1	2.917:1
2	1.941:1	17.8:1	1.800:1	1.929:1
3	1.450:1	13.5:1	1.350:1	1.412:1
4	1.130:1	10.9:1	1.100:1	1.100:1
5	0.923:1	9.2:1	0.909:1	0.084:1
6	0.785:1	7.7:1	0.777:1	
Gearing, front/rear	13/50	13/52	14/52	14/54
Ignition	CDI	SEM	CDI	Motoplat
Recommended spark plug	NGK DPR 9Z	Bosch W4-C	NGK B8ES	NGK B10EG
Silencer/spark arrester	Yes/yes	Yes/yes	Yes/yes	Yes/no
Wheelbase	1360mm (53.5 in.)	1480mm (58.3 in.)	1475mm (51.1 in.)	1475mm (58.1 in.)
Ground clearance	314.9mm (12.4 in.)	320mm (12.6 in.)	340mm (13.39 in.)	350mm (13.8 in.)
Seat height	904.2mm (35.6 in.)	960mm (37.8 in.)	939mm (37.0 in.)	950mm (37.4 in.)
Steering head angle (rake)	26.5°	28.5°	29°	28°
Trail	104mm (4.1 in.)	131mm (5.2 in.)	127mm (5.0 in.)	105mm (4.1 in.)
Wet weight, no fuel	238 lbs.	241 lbs.	237 lbs.	217 lbs.
Tire size and type:				
Front	3.00 x 21 IRC VE-32	3.00 x 21 Trelleborg	3.00 x 21 Dunlop	3.00 x 21 Metzeler
Rear	4.60 x 17 IRC VE-32	5.00 x 18 Trelleborg	5.10 x 18 Dunlop	4.50 x 18 Metzeler
Suspension, type and travel:				
Front	38mm, 254mm (10.0 in.)	40mm, 270mm (10.6 in.)	38mm, 260mm (10.24 in.)	Marzocchi 40mm, 300mm (11.8 in.)
Rear	Pro-Link, 243.8mm (9.6 in.)	ITC twin shock, 300mm (11.8 in.)	Uni Trak, 270mm (10.6 in.)	Pro-Lever, 337mm (13.25 in.)
Intended use				
Country of origin	Japan	Sweden	Japan	Austria
Retail price, approx.	\$1825	\$2745	\$2059	\$2820
Distributor:	American Honda 100 W. Alondra Blvd. Gardena, CA 90247	Husqvarna 4925 Mercury St. San Diego, CA 92111	Kawasaki 2009 E. Edinger Ave. Santa Ana, CA 92705	KTM America 1906 Broadway Lorain, OH 44052

seat/tank junction and all-around feels right. Super-easy controls and light action grace this department. KTM's biggest drawback is the saddle height. It's up there! Still, the levers, bars, and pegs all fit the rider; the seat/tank area is slim; and rider movements are easy and unobstructed.

Both the Husky and the Honda had one major glitch in the comfort and layout department. The Husky is the widest in the middle by a longshot, and the Honda has a big, fat tongue extension on the seat which obstructs rider movement.

WEIGHT, DRY

This department was easy. A trip to the brilliantly dull DB scales shows the following:

KTM 250MXC.....217 pounds
Kawasaki KDX250.....237 pounds
Honda XR250R.....238 pounds
Husky WR250.....241 pounds

GLITCHES/RELIABILITY/HASSLES

You can call this the likes, dislikes, bugs and uglies portion of the shootout. Both the Husky and KTM get better ratings than the



The KTM is the only water-cooled bike, the lightest, the fastest and the best handling. It'll bolt out of the corners like a motocrosser.



As far as power, the KDX has one of the easiest-to-ride motors of the four. A tractorlike bottom end and a healthy mid-range grace the green machine!

XR and KDX, simply because they held up to year-long beatings much better. Stronger frames, forged pistons and tougher engines will live long after the others need a doctor. One KTM glitch is the fact that it comes with no enduro gear. We understand that the majority of riders like it this way, so a kit that sells for 70 bucks will be needed for the timekeepers. Also, woods riders will need a spark arrester. It doesn't have one stock.

Plan on replacing the stock KTM fork springs often. They sack out quickly. Keep an eye on the rear sprocket bolts when the bike is new. They loosen quite a bit. Also watch the rear brake play; if it gets down too far, the pedal will bottom on the frame.

As for the engine, the KTM is awesome in performance and wear. As we said, we went 1500 miles before the stock top end was unplugged for a new ring.

In the tires department, the KTM comes with Metzlers, which smoke all the other bikes' standard rubber.

Our Husky held up, with the exception of a leaky shifter seal and fork seals that

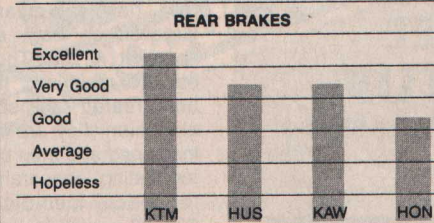
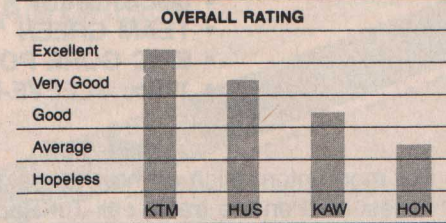
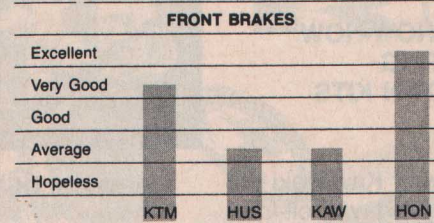
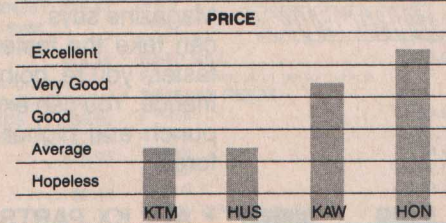
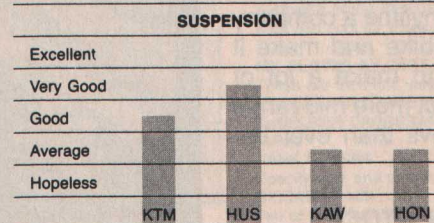
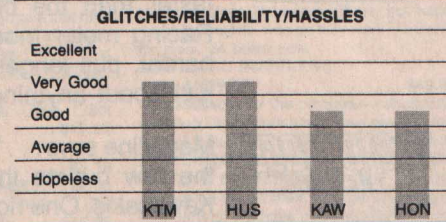
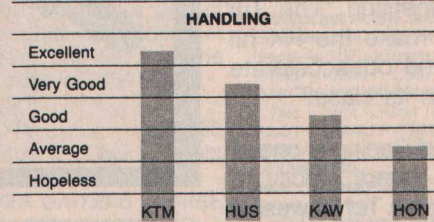
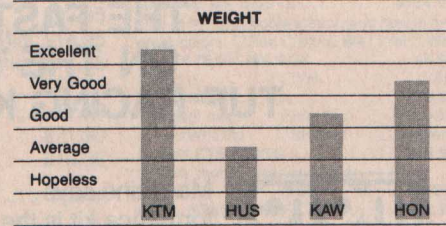
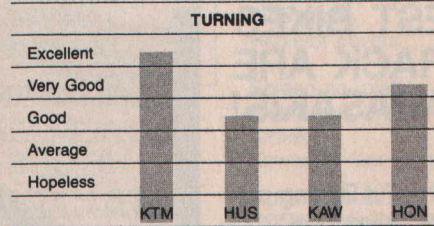
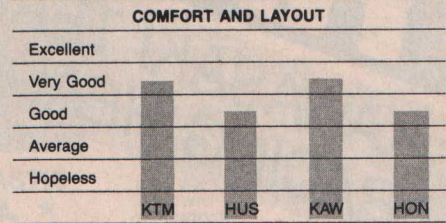
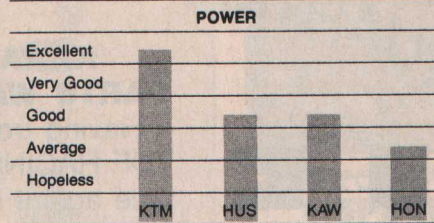
bled. The stock chain is trash, as is the standard spark arrester. Husky Products has a bolt-on spark arrester that takes the place of the screen-and-cone affair. It works much better. Eastern riders will like the stock Trelleborg meat, Western riders will not. Some of the SEM ignitions have been known to travel south for the winter, and plan on the tank stickers lasting exactly one week after you buy the bike. Then, mysteriously, in the

middle of the night, they fall off.

One of the biggest gripes about the XR is the graham-cracker-sized air filter. If you get in a dust run, the tiny element clogs quickly and stifles the engine performance. Also, a bunch of XRs are losing ignitions. Once the bike gets hot, they start coughing and wheezing and won't rev out.

Of the four bikes, the XR is the toughest
(continued on page 72)

RATING THE 250cc ENDURO BIKES



250 ENDURO SHOOTOUT
(continued from page 37)

and notchiest shifter, and it refuses to be upshifted under power. Once the bike gets hot, the starting routine gets vague. It's your basic hope-and-kick method. Eventually it will start, but we bent the kickstarter with the maximum foot aggression.

Everyone liked the classy red handguards and praised the quick handling manners in the woods. It's short and low, making it nice for smaller, less-experienced riders.

As far as speedos go, the KDX gets the award for the most technically advanced. Its electronic unit is accurate to a T and never failed us. One problem is that it's hard to read. The front numberplate shades the unit, limiting visibility.

Toss the rear tool bag; it'll bump your tail until the black-and-blues set in. Once again the seat foam is too soft, and after a little time, you're sitting on the seat base.

No gearing changes are needed on the KDX, as every cog is well placed and spaced perfectly. Another year of the clutch gremlins greets the Kawa. It howls as you ease out the lever, sending shivers down to your feet.

Maybe next year we'll see some beefier forks and disc brakes on the KDX. The stockers are dated.

PRICE

Honda gets the gold here—the XR is the only bike selling for under \$2000. Here are the retail prices:

Honda XR250R	\$1825
Kawasaki KDX250	\$2059
Husky WR250	\$2745
KTM 250MXC	\$2820

OVERALL RATING

Choosing an overall winner didn't prove to be a complicated task. The KTM took control at the outset and never looked back. A knockout motor, combined with a do-it-all chassis and the lightest total package, left the others fighting over second place. Yes, the bike is expensive, but it holds up, doesn't require a lot of maintenance, and is the fastest and best-handling bike of the bunch.

The battle for second place was close, with the nod going to the Husky, followed by the KDX. Spot-on suspension and enduro-bred handling overshadow an engine that isn't quite as good as last year's. Still, you can take the Husky out, enter an enduro and win. Had Kawasaki done something with the front end and spiced up the handling, things might have been different.

Last place goes to a good bike, but not a competitive one. The Honda may cost \$1000 less than the KTM, but any way you slice it, it's \$1500 slower. You can go fast on an XR250; you can win the four-stroke class on it as well; but it would take a very unique set of circumstances for you to win the overall on this pleasant four-stroke. And winning the overall is exactly what the KTM was built for. Here's the final tally:

1. KTM 250MXC
2. Husqvarna WR250
3. Kawasaki KDX250
4. Honda XR250R

ISDE QUALIFIER SERIES
(continued from page 41)

odd pint of lager, and he spent the evenings raising the standard of living of the local bartender. Dick is only a threat in an ice-cream shop. Come to think of it, Ballard could fit right in on Team Old Guy.

A SERIOUS EFFORT

Burleson was there, of course, in the capacity of team manager for the Husky riders. This is a good time for a comparison of life styles. By the end of day one, it was obvious that the Michigan qualifier was a desert race through trees. When some of the Husky riders came in grumbling about the pace they had had to keep up all day long, Dick said, "Yeah, well, as soon as we close down the pit, I'm going to get dressed and ride day two, and I'll let you know what to expect tomorrow." And that's exactly what he did.

Team Old Guy's Jack Penton, on the other hand, finished respectably on day one, and I walked down to the impound with a can of Pepsi, just in case he was sick of drinking Pripps. When I gave him the can—keep in mind this is after 137 miles of flat-out hauling—he said, "Oh thanks, Paul, that's real nice; but hey, did you bring the cigarettes with you? No? Well, I'm going to walk up and get me one right now." And that's exactly what he did.

STRAIGHT RACE REPORT

I could go on, but you get the idea. As it turned out, Mark Hyde didn't win the 125 class in Michigan. He smacked something with the side case of his Husky and destroyed the water pump housing and had to ride slowly to a point where he could legally change the case cover. He gave away the class win to Randy Hawkins, another Husky rider. Team Old Guy had its share of bad luck, with Mike Rosso and myself going out with mechanical DNFs; however, Jack Penton netted a respectable third behind Honda rider Scott Hodgenson.

Geoff Ballard, hereafter known as the Whiz of Oz, chalked up the overall win in Michigan—his first major win in the States, and probably not his last. His performance in the series has earned him a spot on the Six Days team, and I for one am confident that he is a valuable addition. Geoff beat Mike Melton by five seconds; their scores were so evenly matched that the overall was decided by the final day's acceleration test, where Ballard pulled out a rush through the Michigan sand just slightly faster than Melton. Two excellent riders, no doubt.

And so went the Michigan qualifier, the third and last in our series of three-day qualifiers. After a tornado-racked race in Oklahoma and a mudfest in Oregon, there's no doubt that the top placers in the series are survivors in the truest sense of the word, and in retrospect, the hare scrambles pace in Michigan may be just what we need to get ready for the sandy, flat terrain in Assen, Holland. When the ISDE starts on October 1, we'll find out just how well prepared we are; by October 6 we'll know whether or not we were ready.

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