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## FEATURES

- 12 1992 RUMORS & NEWS  
New model madness
- 20 BIKES OF THE 4-STROKE NATIONALS  
Exotic and really, really fast
- 43 UNOBTAINIUM SUZUKI 200  
Better than the KDX and WR?
- 80 SITUATION: IMPOSSIBLE!  
The best riders' worst rides

## HOW-TO SPECIAL

- 28 50 MISTAKES EVERYONE MAKES  
How you can avoid them
- 32 DB'S PRO TRAINER GUIDE  
The top-ten go-fast classes
- 53 HUNKY'S 60/60 TECH  
\$60, 60-minute improvements
- 87 JETTING DECODED  
What the numbers mean

## TESTS

- 39 200cc ENDURO SHOOTOUT  
Can the WR dethrone the KDX?
- 46 MODIFIED 200 FACE-OFF  
For closed-course competitors
- 60 HUSABERG MC501 RACE TEST  
Lawson and Sweden take on Tulsa

## COMPETITION

- 14 RACIN' 'ROUND THE WORLD  
MX/SX//GP heroes in the news
- 68 TULSA ISDE QUALIFIER  
Rocks, mud, rocks and tornadoes
- 72 24-HOUR WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS  
Dirt Bike shatters the off-road record

## DEPARTMENTS

- 6 FROM THE SADDLE
- 9 RIDERS WRITE
- 11 CHECKPOINT
- 12 BITS & PIECES
- 16 VIDEOCROSS
- 18 NEW PRODUCTS
- 19 TEN RIDES AFTER
- 95 MR. KNOW-IT-ALL
- 98 CRASH & BURN

ON THE COVER: Jimmy Lewis flirts with disaster for Joe Kosch and Situation Impossible. The modified 200s take to the air for JoPapa, and John Ker snapped the XR/CR hybrid photo. Tasteful cover design by DeWest, separations by Valley Film and anti-gravity machine by Super Hunky.





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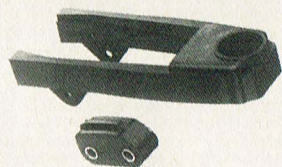
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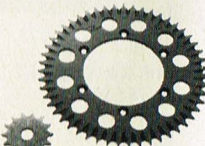
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# KDX VS. WR

Which is the ultimate trail/race bike?

By the DIRT BIKE Staff

Last month, while working on the "Dirt Bikes of Desert Storm" article (July '91), we got an indication of just how good 200cc enduro bikes—machines we moto-heads take for granted—really are. We were invited down to Camp Pendleton to interview and photograph the Marine M/C Rider Instructors, so we took our KDX200 along for transport across the vast base. After we shot photos of the Marines on their KLR250 military bikes, we let them ride our KDX. They were visibly pumped with the bike.



Which 200 is the ultimate all-around off-road racer and trail machine? To find out, we pitted the KDX and WR against every kind of terrain and rider we could muster.





## KDX vs. WR

Maybe "visibly pumped" isn't the right phrase. They acted like they'd parachuted onto the lawn of the Playboy mansion. "With 12 of these, we could've ridden into Baghdad and captured Hussein!" one marine joked.

Clearly, we'd been spoiled by the RMX250 and KTM 300. We had to regroup and take a fresh look at the 200s before pitting the KDX against the new WR, so we took a few laps on their clapped-out '86 KLR250s.

### SHAKING THE FAMILY TREE

Three years ago, the Yamaha R&D guys decided to take a DT200 non-U.S.-legal dual-sport motor and wedge it into a YZ125-style frame. The bike got YZ-style suspension, but also received several cost-cutting DT200 parts. The new WR would be an off-road bike for America—Yamaha's answer to the KDX200—but it would also be sold as the new DT200 in Europe and Japan. In other words, the WR200 is also a dual-sport bike.

On the other hand, the Kawasaki KDX200 is a machine bred from race bikes. Kawasaki took the '88 KX125 suspension and motor,

*The Yamaha will hold a much tighter line than the KDX does corners, but the "inverted inverted" Kawasaki fork holds its line better.*

an '87 125 frame, along with the '88 KX250 cooling system, and incorporated these into the '89-'91 KDX200. Sure, the motor and suspension were detuned a bit for enduro work, but the KDX definitely has a racing heritage.

Can the mixed-blood WR dethrone the pure-bred KDX as king of the 200 class? Let's shoot them out, stone stock, just as you'd get them from the dealer.

### FUTURE RMX200? THE UNOBTAINIUM TS200

- While at Suzuki to pick up a DRS, we saw a stripped-down version of the Japanese-only/European-only TS200R. The folks at Suzuki threw themselves on the TS like human blankets when we asked to take photographs of the bike. Could that mean that we'll see a 200 from Suzuki in '92 or '93? We wouldn't bet against it.

The TS is very much like the Yamaha WR/DT200. An electronic servo motor controls the power valve, and displacement is 195cc (66mm×57mm), whereas the WR is 66.8mm×57mm). A 30mm Mikuni feeds the case-reed motor. Fuel capacity is 2.4 gallons on the dual-sport version. Suspension travel is 10.6 inches at both ends, and the fork is inverted. Seat height is 34.6 inches. Wheelbase is 55.5 inches, and rake/trail is 26.33 degrees/4.2 inches. Of course, these

measurements may change as the TS gets the RMX treatment.

Suzuki, we hope to see this bike in the United States, and we hope that you don't feel that a great motor can carry the whole package, as Yamaha did. Market a TS mo-

tor in a chassis as good as the KDX or your RMX250 and you'll have the ultimate 200cc enduro weapon! •

**Unobtainium:**  
The interest generated by the WR200 is leading other factories to take a long, hard look at the class. Suzuki Japan's domestic dual-sport TS200R may see its way to our shores as a pure dirt bike. ►





# KDX vs. WR

## MAGICAL MOTORS

Both machines have kick-butt motors but different deliveries. The case-reed, electronic power-valved WR200 has the smoothest motor we've ever experienced. Where the KDX valves open all at once as the revs climb, a servo motor opens the WR valves gradually throughout the rev range. There's no surge of power anywhere—revs climb like you're riding a huge variable-speed electric drill. This is great for finding traction on muddy, root-infested trails, but it's not so good for anything that requires a sudden burst of power, like jumping a washout that suddenly looms up on the trail, or cliff-jumping with Larry Roeseler. Fanning the clutch helps the rev-building process some, but not much.

Power is more abrupt with the KDX. It will light up the tire in slick conditions when the valves slam open, but you can avoid that by lugging the motor in technical sections. The KDX produces more low-end torque than the WR, so it will chug along happily where the WR requires a downshift, like on technical uphill. It also pulls harder in the midrange and builds revs faster than the WR, making it more desirable on more wide-open trails.

Starting and shifting are equal between the two bikes, but the WR clutch holds up better to abuse. However, the KDX has a quick-pull clutch cover and the WR doesn't. In fact, the WR clutch cover is so rounded that it makes finding the rear brake a pain at times. Plug access is equal, and we did manage to foul plugs on both bikes. The WR is quieter than the KDX.

This is a close call. The WR is an ultra-smooth mount for Eastern mud runs, but the KDX has the more versatile mill for play riding, motocross special tests or riding anything west of the Mississippi. On the basis of smoothness and stealth (it's really fun to



◀ Sit-down riders will love the WR, but the KDX will go faster under a rider who knows how to use both brakes.

sneak up on people with the WR), we'll give the WR motor the win.

## SUSPENSION SUBTLETIES

In the suspension department, we have a battle of state-of-the-art (WR) vs. tried-and-true (KDX). The WR's KYB inverted cartridge fork has adjustable compression damping and offers a half-inch more travel than the old-style, non-inverted, non-cartridge, compression-adjustable KDX KYB fork. Spring and damping rates are extremely light on the WR—too light. The front dives excessively, which makes for excellent cornering, but it also causes a variety of ugly traits. The fork deflects off of trail debris, it wants to flop into corners and climb out of ruts, and slide-outs on off-cambers are the norm. Whoops are scary with the stock fork springs, and the WR is harsh on little stuff. The KDX exhibits none of these traits and simply blows away the WR fork in all situations, except one: In deep ruts, the KDX will drag its lower legs, where the WR has less hanging below the axle.

Technology is more equal in the rear, as both bikes offer a piggyback single shock with adjustable compression and rebound damping. The KDX uses a KYB anodized unit, while the WR uses a Showa. We like the KYB better. The KDX soaks up square-edged impacts much better than the WR unit, which is too soft, just like the WR fork. Whoop fields put the KDX rider way out front, as the WR rider will be fighting big swappers. The WR200 is simply under-sprung, like most of the dual-sport bikes in the world today. Worse yet, Yamaha doesn't have any optional heavy-duty springs on the books yet, so you may have to go aftermarket and spend money on a bike that already costs \$600 more than the KDX. A big win for Kawasaki here.

## HANDLING THE TWISTIES

Despite its heft of 246 pounds, the WR carves rings around the KDX in tight trails. The too-soft suspension and low center of gravity combine to make the WR literally fall into corners, but the fork dives into the harsh part of the travel, so any bumps encountered will force a mid-turn correction. The WR is actually longer and much taller than the KDX, but feels much smaller in corners and is a real joy to flick through endless S-turns. Like its KX brethren, the KDX has to be forced into the turn. It fights back

initially but is actually easier to control once laid over, as the suspension works better and there are 12 fewer pounds to fight. The KDX front end sticks much better than the WR, too.

In more high-speed corners, the KDX is much more stable and controllable than the WR plushmobile, which gets a very twitchy front end at speed. You can never be sure what the WR's fork is going to do. The same with whoops, G-outs, off-cambers, rock fields, sand washes and downhill—the abundance of weight and lack of springs work the WR rider mercilessly if he attempts anything resembling speed. Chalk up another win for Kawasaki.

## TRAIL COMFORT

On paper, the KDX should win this category hands down, as it's a good 1.6 inches lower and 12 pounds lighter than the WR. In the real world, the KDX is wide in the middle and has a very square, hard seat, making it feel taller. The suspension settles less in corners, and you have to really force it into tight turns. Also, the KDX vibrates much more than the WR, and it's louder,



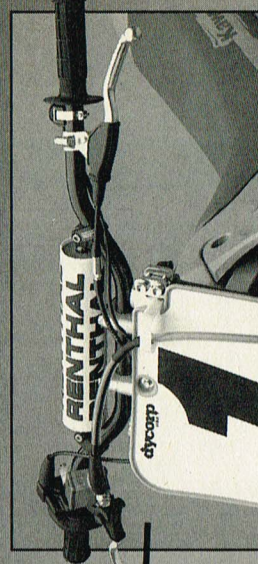
The very snap that makes the KDX a double-jumper can bite the rider on truly nasty trails.

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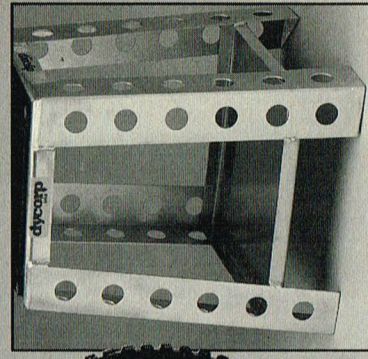
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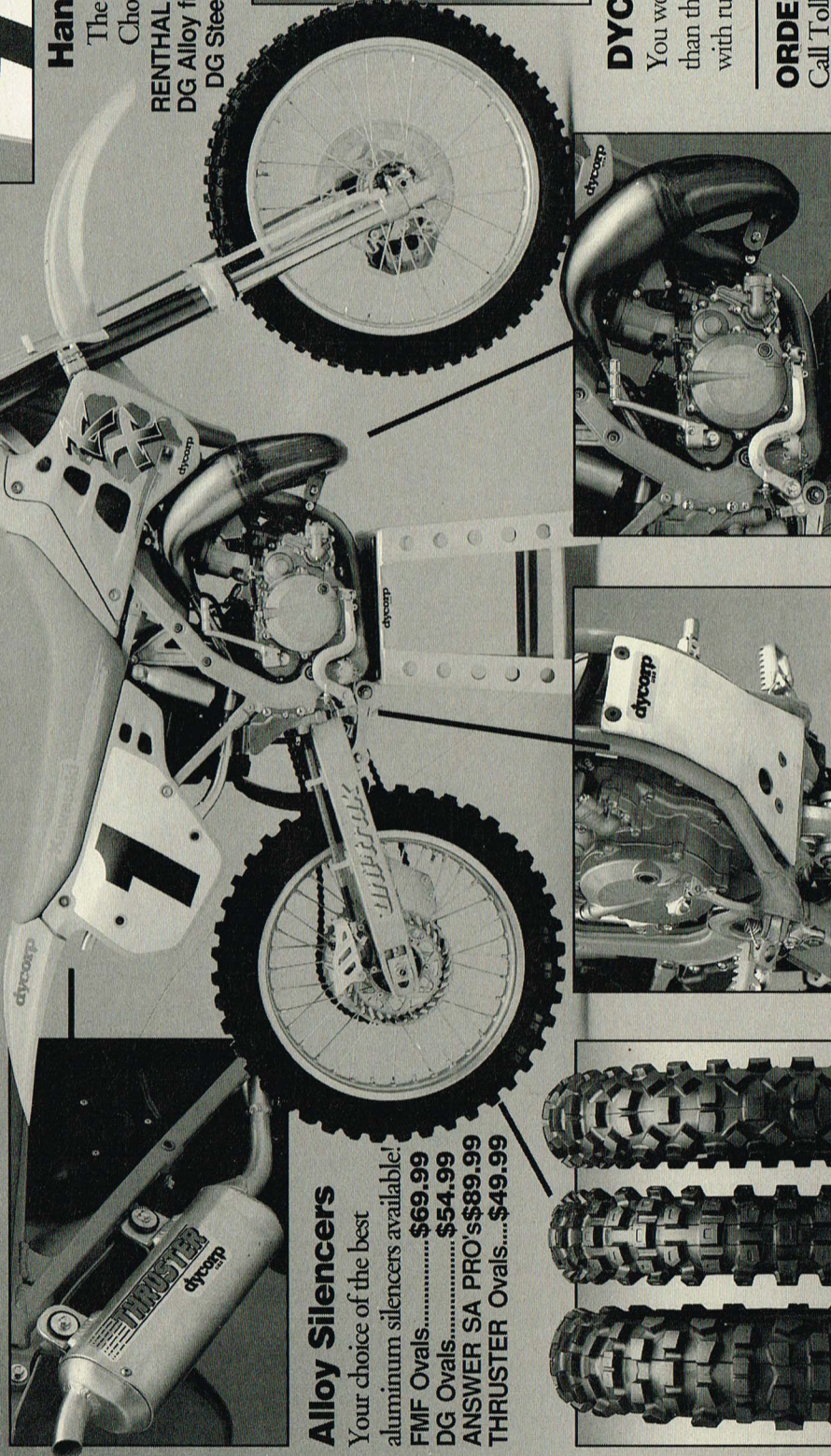
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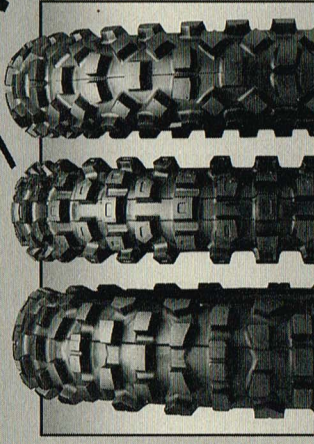
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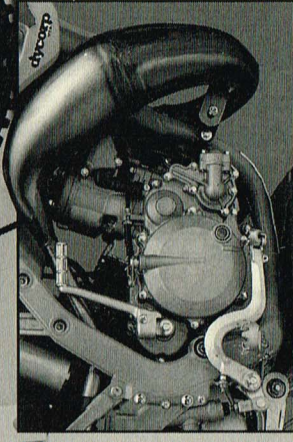
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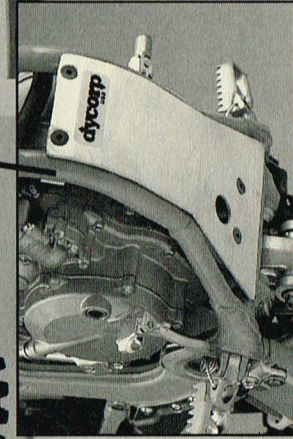
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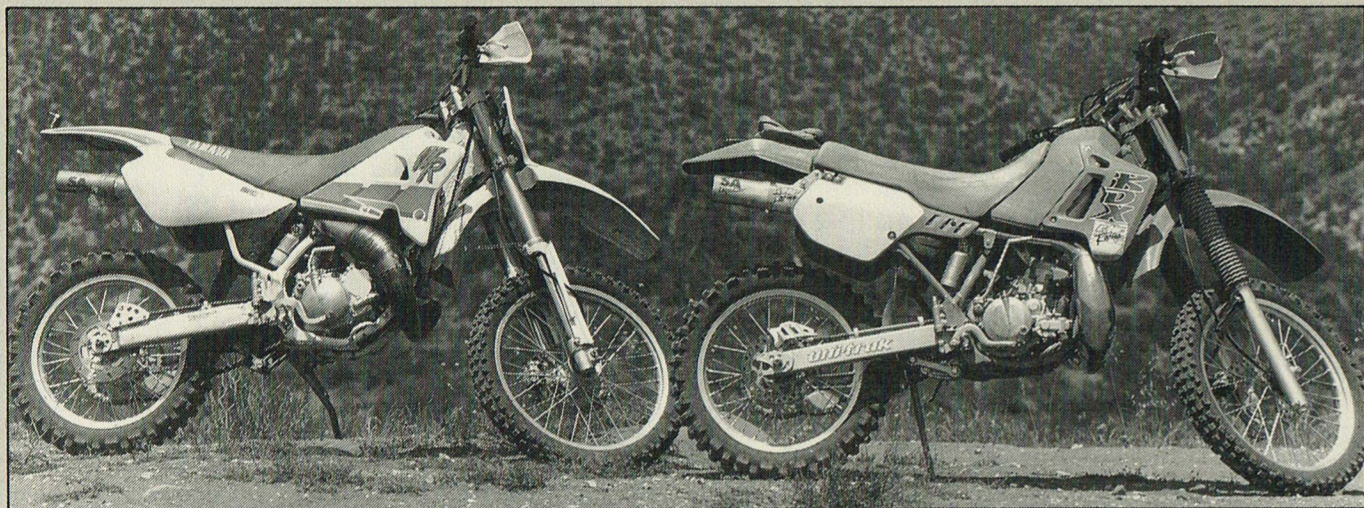
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### MODIFIED SHOOTOUT

#### FMF KDX vs. PRO CIRCUIT WR

**Modifications:** Yamaha sent us a set of prototype .37 kg/in fork springs (no, the price hasn't been set yet) and advised us to set rear sag at 97mm. We also installed a Pro Circuit pipe (\$149.95) and silencer (\$65) and slipped on an Answer Legalizer SA (\$49.95). The KDX wasn't hurting for suspension, so we installed FMF's Power-Up bolt-on kit (\$310.99), which consists of a pipe, silencer and reed cage, and an Answer Legalizer SA (\$59.95) for closed-course competition. That brings the Yamaha's total cost to \$3763 and the KDX's to \$3269.94. Ouch!

◀ The FMF KDX motor is almost as electric as the stock WR. It pulls stronger off the bottom than stock and is a bit smoother through the midrange, but the biggest improvement is on top. FMF's mods make it stronger but easier to ride in all situations. We give the modified KDX a 98 for both racing and playing.

The stiffer springs and taller ride height help the WR's trail manners, but only re-valving will make it as good as the KDX. Pro Circuit's pipe and silencer give the Yamaha better power everywhere without losing that electric-feeling smoothness. These mods bring it up to a 95 for closed-course competition and play riding. ▶



## KDX vs. WR

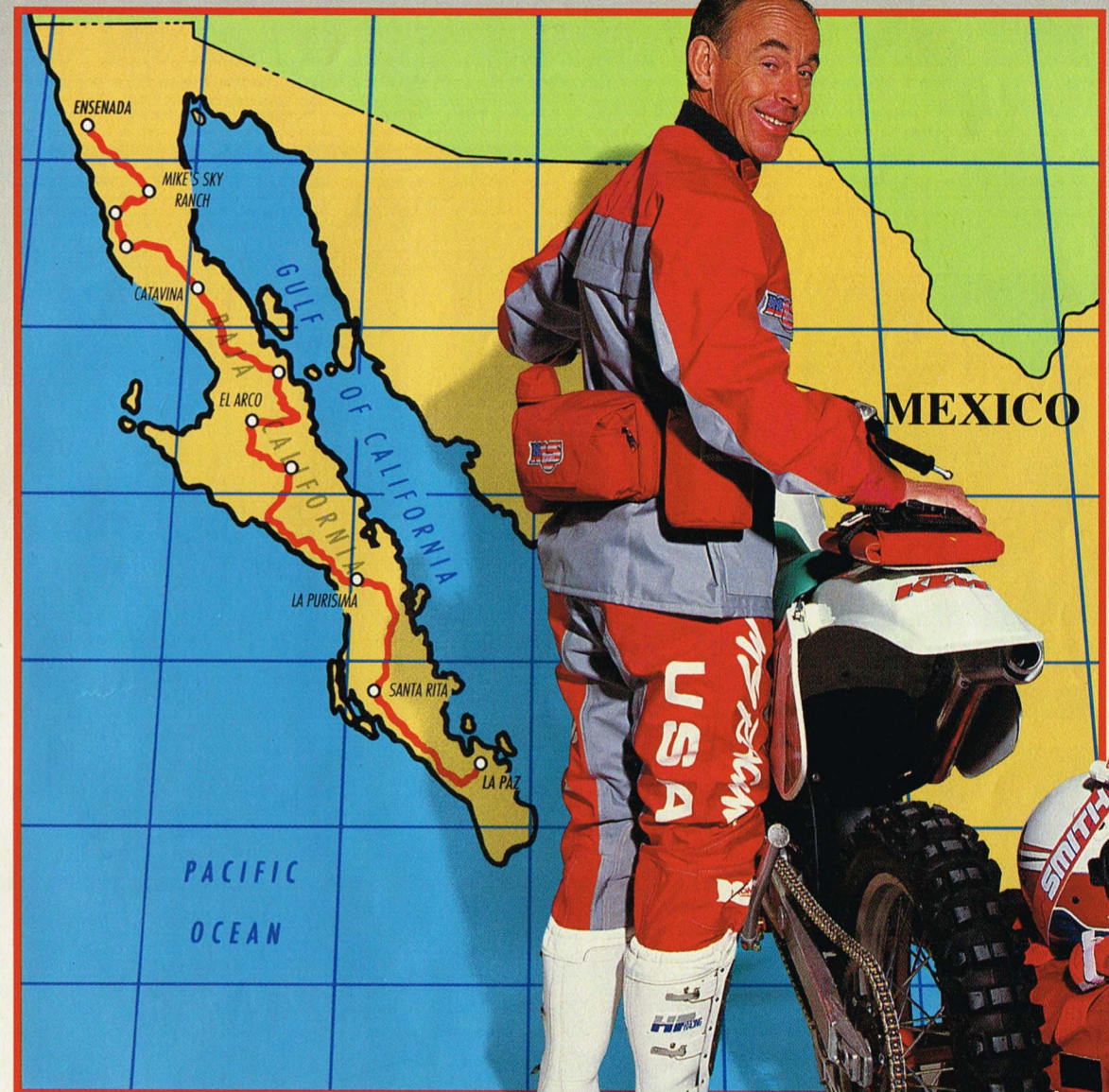
### DEMONS FOR DETAILS

As Hunky is quick to say, the WR is a collection of parts that don't like each other very much. The motor is awesome, but it's stuffed into a frame that doesn't have a removable subframe, and the airbox is a bogus dual-sport unit. The filter is too small and the retention system is marginal, at best. Other cost-cutting measures include a steel silencer, rear brake pedal, shifter and kick-starter. The brakes are nowhere near as good as the KDX's—the front is weak and mushy and the rear chatters way too much. It also

takes a screwdriver to access the tool kit. We blew the chainguide completely off the bike, but Yamaha offers a heavy-duty guide as an accessory. For \$3499, you'd think an acceptable guide would come standard.

On the other hand, the plastic is good-looking and stout. The WR has a look like no other dirt bike, and the radiator shrouds encase the whole gas tank, *a la* Husqvarna. This brings a better resale price. The pipe is tucked in well, and there are strong case guards on the frame. The odometer is easy to read and reset, and cable routing is excellent. Where the WR250 and 500 have eco-no Bridgestone ED-11/12s, the 200 has Dunlop K490/695 meats. The longish shock linkage looks prone to rocks, but we actually find it a benefit when slithering over

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So pack your Bags and hit the trail.

so extended loops can bring undue fatigue. However, taller riders felt more at home on the Kawasaki than the WR, which has handlebars that nobody likes.

While the KDX is wide in the middle, the WR is wide up front. The radiators and coolant overflow reservoir really force the legs out when you slide up for turns. Moving back is easier than on the KDX, as the seat and side panels are more slim and sculpted. The WR has afterthoughts of grab handles on each side of the seat, where the KDX has reinforced ridges on the rear fender for lifting. If you're a leaper, you'll appreciate the wider KDX footpegs.

At race speeds, the KDX is more comfortable overall, but casual trail rides bring out the best of the WR. Call this one a tie.



logs, as the KDX tends to high-center when the log cases between the frame and rear wheel.

The KDX has a removable left subframe for shock access, strong brakes and an honest-to-gawd dirt bike airbox and filter. Access is via seat removal, but waterproofing and filter retention are much better than on the WR. Tires are excellent Dunlop K490 and 695, just like the WR. Both the front and rear axles are quick-change type, where the WR only has a quick-release rear. The handguards have been improved, finally, and the odometer is easy to read. We never had a problem with the old cable, but be sure to Loctite the reset knob screw in place. There's a linkage guard welded to the frame, too. The aluminum swingarm and silencer/SA are nice touches. All this for \$600 less than the WR.



Off-cambers are where the KDX fork and WR electric motor really shine. The KDX comes out on top, because its motor is more controllable than the Yamaha fork.

However, the KDX plastic isn't as strong as Yamaha's. Like the WR, the KDX has cost-cutting steel instead of aluminum shift, kickstart and brake levers. Still, the KDX is a clear winner in the detailing department.

#### EFFECTIVENESS, STONE STOCK

No doubt about it, the WR has a sweet motor and a disposition to match, as long as the speeds are sedate and the trail is technical. The stock suspension leaves a lot to be desired, and the short-cuts in componentry are too blatant for a machine costing \$600 more than its intended victim. As a play bike, we give the WR a 95 (out of a 100), but its racer rating is more like 85.

## KDX vs. WR

Stock, the KDX isn't really hurting for anything. It could use a bit more power and suspension travel and a bit less weight, but the KDX is probably the best value in all of dirt biking. It does everything very well, except fall effortlessly into corners, for much less investment than a WR200, Husky WXE125 and KTM 125E/XC. For play riding and off-road racing, we give it a 95 and the overall win. □

	KAWASAKI KDX 200 E-3	YAMAHA WR200
Engine type	Reed- and power-valved, liquid-cooled 2-stroke	Case-reed and power-valved, liquid-cooled 2-stroke
Displacement	198cc	199.8cc
Bore and stroke	66.0mm x 57.0mm	66.8mm x 57.0mm
Carburetion	35mm PWK Keihin	30mm TM Mikuni
Fuel tank capacity	3.3 gal. (12.5L)	2.6 gal. (9.8L)
Gearing	13/47	13/44
Lighting coil	Yes	Yes
Spark arrester	Yes	Yes
EPA legal in stock form	Yes	Yes
Running weight w/no fuel	234 lb.	246 lb.
Wheelbase	57.1 in. (1450mm)	57.7 in. (1465mm)
Rake/trail	27°/4.4"	27.6°/4.8"
Ground clearance	13.4 in. (340mm)	14.2 in. (360mm)
Seat height	35.8 in. (910mm)	38.9 in. (990mm)
Tire size and type:		
Front	80/100-21 Dunlop K490	80/100-21 Dunlop K490
Rear	100/100-18 Dunlop K695	100/100-18 Dunlop K695
Suspension:		
Front	KYB 43mm fork, adj. comp., 11.4 in. (290mm) travel	KYB inverted cartridge, adj. comp., 11.8 in. (300mm) travel
Rear	Uni-Trak, KYB piggyback shock, adj. comp./reb./prel., 11.8 in. (300mm) travel	Monocross, Showa piggyback shock, adj. comp./reb./prel., 12.2 in. (310mm) travel
Country of origin	Japan	Japan
Suggested retail price	\$2899	\$3499
Distributor	Kawasaki Motor Corp. 9950 Jeronimo Rd. Irvine, CA 92718 (714) 770-0400	Yamaha Motor Corp. 6555 Katella Ave. Cypress, CA 90650 (714) 761-7300
<b>REPLACEMENT PARTS COSTS</b>		
Piston	\$45.10	\$27.00
Ring(s)	18.94	14.80
Clutch plate (drive)	7.22 (8)	7.00 (7)
Clutch plate (driven)	5.34 (7)	5.00 (6)
Front sprocket	16.66	13.60
Rear sprocket	34.30	25.95
Front brake pads	42.10	41.30
Rear brake pads	32.00	41.30



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- Side Panels ..... \$45.95
- Front # Plate ..... \$27.95
- Front Disc Covers ..... \$21.95
- TUF Seat Covers (Non-slip) ..... \$44.95

THE 1991 KX FROM KAWASAKI is a mean machine and U.F.O. makes the Bolt on Plastic that demands attention! Available\* in Aqua, Blue, Pink and O.E.M. Green.

(\*Also available for RM, YZ and CR.)

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