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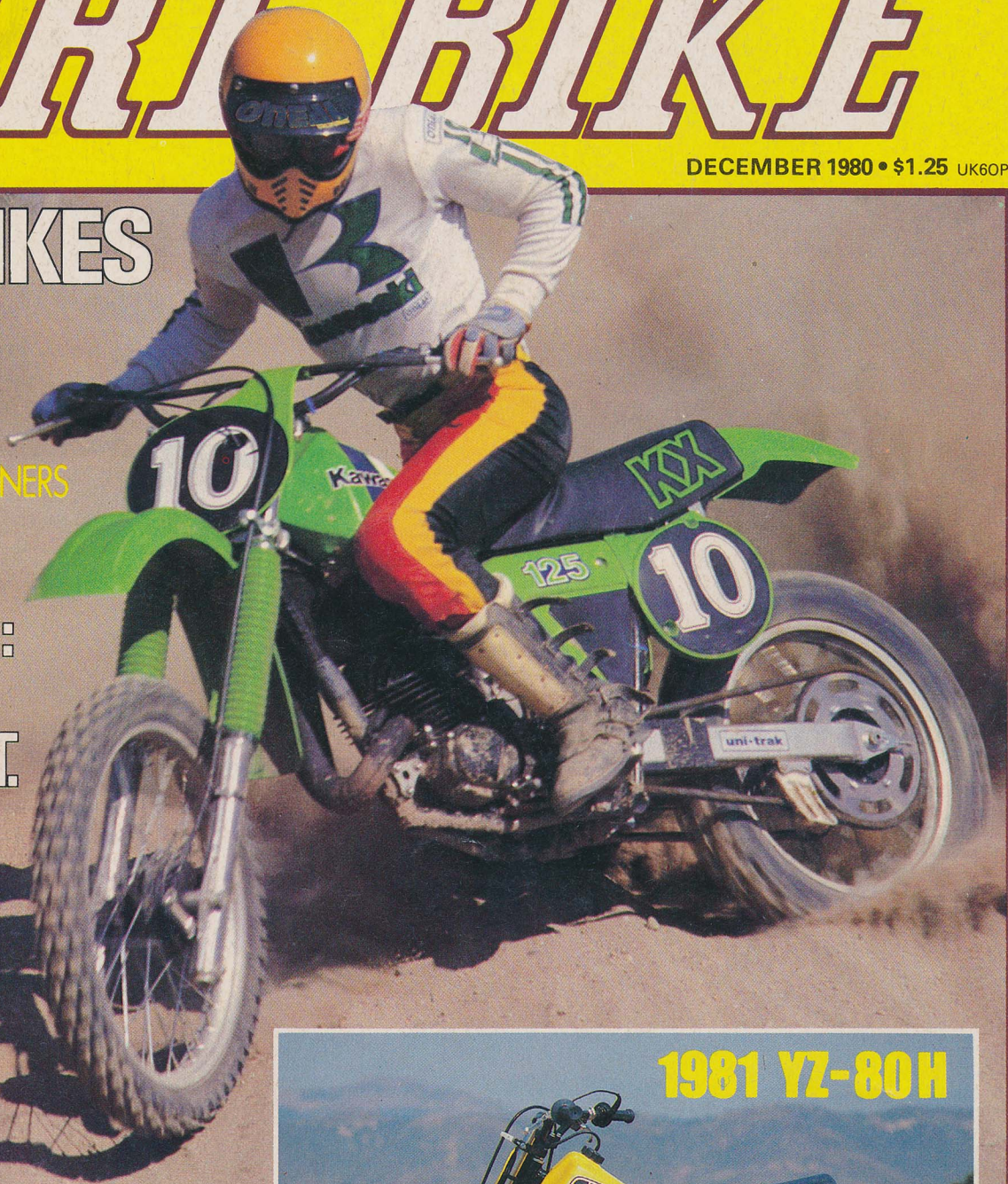
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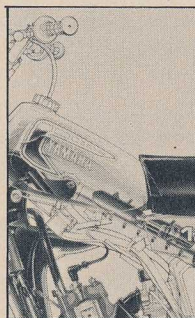
JT RACING USA TELEX 697-869
 303 West 35th Street Suite C National City, CA 92050
 United States of America

TESTS

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The turtle grows wings
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Mini missile



Can-Am 250 MX6-B



New wave Yamahas



I.S.D.T.

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ON THE COVER:
 Rod Brand winds out the KX125 at Indian Dunes, and the '81 YZ80 makes its debut. Zoot Kwacker photo by Paul Clipper; Yamaha shot by Rick Sieman.

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1981 KAWASAKI KX125 A7 MOTOCROSSER

REVENGE OF THE TURTLE!

A New King of the Hill

By the Staff of Dirt Bike



We rolled the KX125 A7 out of the vomit colored Dirt Bike Toyota pickup truck and slipped a milk crate underneath the frame tubes. Almost immediately, a crowd gathered. Questions were fired: "Is it still a dog?" "Did they finally get some ponies into that green thing?" "Will it run with a YZ?"

We answered all of those queries with a fantastic start in the first moto and a good finish overall for the day.

Yes, the new Quacker is fast.

In actual fact, if the KX125 for 1980 had the motor it sported now, it would more than likely have won the Great 125 Shootout.

As you might recall, Kawasaki roared onto the racing scene with their Uni-Traks and a great deal of fanfare. One problem: someone forgot to put muscle into the 125. While the handling drew rave reviews, the motor left a lot to be desired.

Every other 125 would pull the KX in a drag race quite easily, uphill or downhill. Not only was the power down, but the rpm buildup was so slow that large gaps were evident between gears. Just about any tight turn required the use of low gear, and then much frantic shifting thereafter.

Bad news.

Kawasaki was concerned enough to send their R & D department out with us on several testing sessions, to try emergency fix-ems. We installed Boyesen reeds, bumped the compression up and fiddled with the ports. All to little or no avail.

The KX125 A6 was still a woofer.

Which was sad, because the suspension and handling were top cabin. First rate. World class. Primo a la moto. Which, in the hyper world of 125 motocross, zip-slant-doodley-squat to the racer.

In the 125 class, the first and foremost requirement is power. Lots of it. You can put up with all sorts of idiosyncrasies if the bike has enough steam.

Surprise! Kawasaki engineers appear to have done their homework and have turned the turtle into a hare. The new motor is a killer of the first order.

Power to Spare

While most any new 125 is fast, you can expect the bulk of the response to happen in the rarified range of upper rpms. Not so with the KX125 A7. It pulls hard at amazingly low revs and has a snappy mid-range jolt that demands attention.

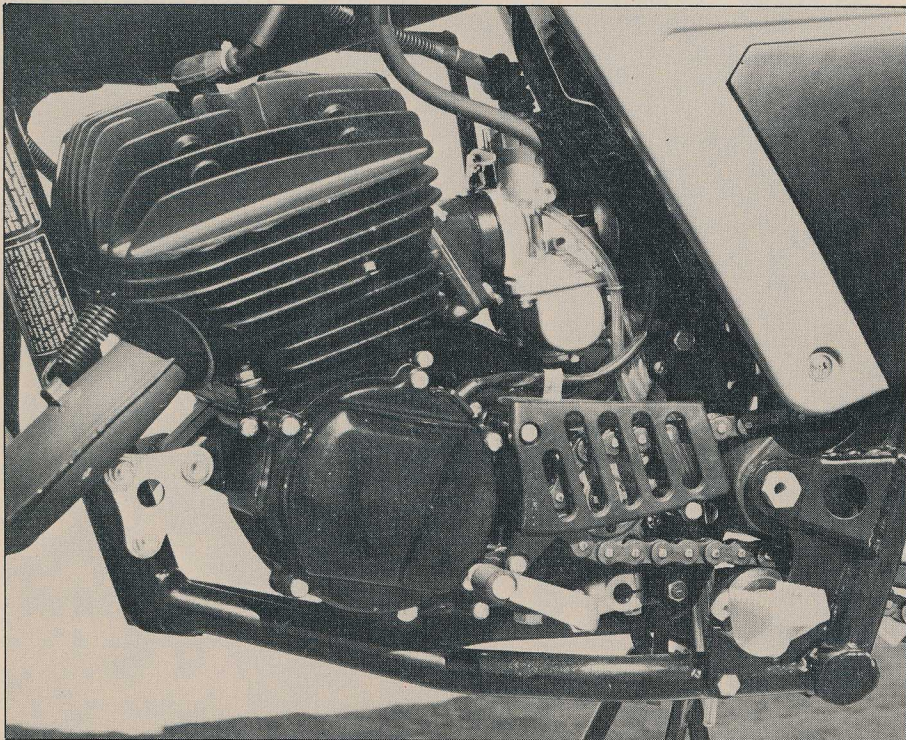
Peak revs? Don't ask. The new Greenie revs to a heady 12,000 rpm before it shuts off the wind. What this all translates into is a bike that won't fall on its face between gears, will lift the front end at the mid-range and will strongly scream out till the crank is ready to melt.

Truly a remarkable engine!

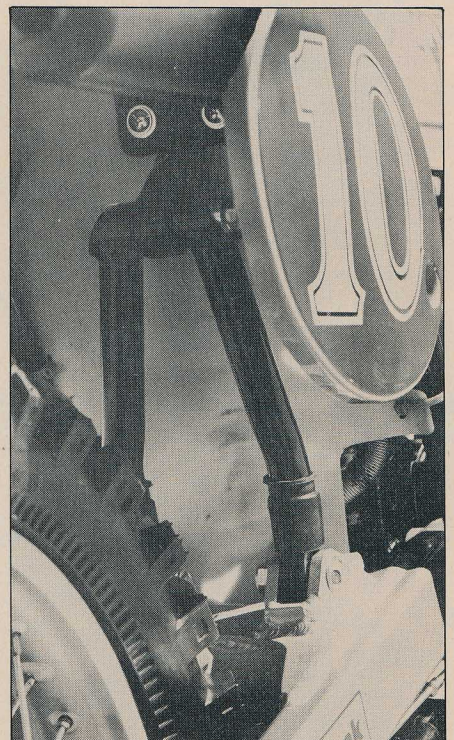
The only logical question that must be asked is how the KX will compare to the new generation of water-pumpers coming down the pike. We noticed a slight drop in power near the end of a twenty minute moto with our KX, even though the day was not particu-



Rod Brand demonstrates that the newest KX125 does, indeed, have some power.



Totally new engine revs to an almost unbelievable 12,000 rpm!



Reinforced links transfer axle movement to an all-new UNI shock.

KAWASAKI KX125 A7

larly hot. Still, the KX had enough grunt to do the job.

We'll have to wait and see how all of the water-cooled bikes stack up to the air-cooled Kawasaki. Will the complexity of the plumbing prove to be a hassle? Will the weight of the radiator bother the rider? It looks like our annual 125 shootout will be a very interesting session.

Right now we know one thing: the KX125 A7 is at least as fast as the 1980 Honda CR125 . . . and has a better powerband. And, as you know, the Honda was our pick for the horsepower king in 1980.

Uni Things

Last year, we raved about the smooth action of the Uni-Trak rear end. This year, it's improved. An aluminum-bodied shock replaces the old steel unit, while the reservoir remains steel.

To make adjustments simpler, damping (compression only) can be adjusted without taking half of the bike apart. Just reach in through a gap in the right side number plate/panel with a screwdriver and nudge the circular ratchet clip. Very sano.

Preload changes can be done without disassembling the shock, too. We found it easiest to merely lay the KX over on its side and tap the shock jam nut loose with a blunt tool, then tap the preload ring to the desired position a small bit at a time.

There's also an air fitting on the reservoir to allow for checking or changing pressure. The shock worked so well that we never tampered with this feature.

Response to bumps was, if anything, even better than last year's bike. Whenever a series of whoops came up, all the rider had to do was dial it on and keep the front end light. Even the most vicious ruts and ledges could be taken in an almost casual manner. In fact, the Uni-Trak inspired such confidence, that some of our test riders tended to get in over their heads on a long bumpy straight and overshoot the next corner. It's *that* good!

Once we got a few hours on the bike, the shock action became supple and ultra-responsive to small stutter bumps as well. Some break-in time will be required to get the Uni-Trak working spot on, but nothing out of the ordinary. During our first few hours of riding, we ran the preload on the soft side, then increased it as needed. Riders should experiment with the

preload to suit their body weight and riding style. In our opinion, the compression damping should be left on the softest setting for most riding conditions.

Long Green Legs

While the forks appear to be basically unchanged from last year, we found them to be a bit harsh on small chatter bumps and when landing from a jump. We did not have enough time to experiment with oil changes. Perhaps a lighter fork oil, combined with an increase in air pressure, will smooth them out. We'll report on this in our shootout.

On big bumps, the forks performed well . . . but not perfectly. Again, an oil change might help here, too. Too much shock was transmitted to the rider's hands for maximum comfort. We ran four to five pounds of air in the forks. Any less, and the forks tended to dive when slamming into a berm, and the front end would tuck under.

Directional Changes

The KX feels light, even though it is not the lightest 125 around. When flinging the bike into a turn, there's no feeling of weight up high. The placement of the single shock contributes to this, no doubt.

Steering accuracy was good and the front wheel could be placed in exactly the right slot with no problem. A 3.00x21 Bridgestone tire rides on the aluminum rim and this was a decent tire for an hour or so. Then, the knobs started to lose their sharp edges and the steering deteriorated somewhat. We slipped a two-ply Metzeler on and the front end bite improved dramatically, especially on hard-packed, flat turns. As with all of the new two-ply nylon carcass Metzeler's, we ran 15 pounds for best results.

Not a hint of washout was experienced with the fresh tire in place, even when the rider failed to get his weight forward quickly enough for sharp turns. On fast sweepers, the test riders found that they could just ignore any possibility of the front end pushing out and concentrate on gassing the bike hard. Only small stutter bumps caused the front end to lose bite, and, as we explained, this was a function of fork action, rather than any flaw in steering geometry.

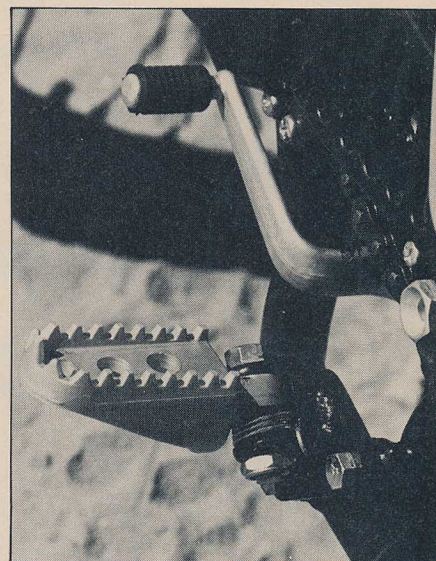
All things considered, the handling of this latest Uni-Trak borders on magic. It's an intelligent compromise between good turning habits and high speed stability. Rake and trail remain the same as the A6 machine. For number freaks, the rake is a steep 28

degrees. While several other bikes have 28 degrees of rake, most of them will shake the steering head on deceleration a bit. The KX will not shake, even under extremely heavy braking over bad bumps.

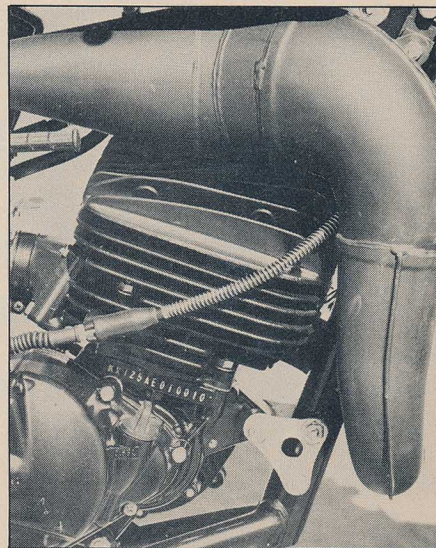
Layout and Feel

Like all new bikes, the KX is tall. A rider under 5 foot nine inches will often resort to using a handy milk crate for starting and getting aboard. Our test bike had a rather highly placed kick-starter for a 125 and the rider was forced to hunch his right knee up high to get at it. The bike would usually fire up in three to five kicks, hot or cold.

Pegs are placed slightly forward and the bars are a bit back. This makes it a slight hassle to go from a sitting to a standing position without pulling at the bars. But it does make sliding



Nifty T-6 aluminum footpegs and a too short, too small shifter. We slipped on an International Motor-sports folder right away.

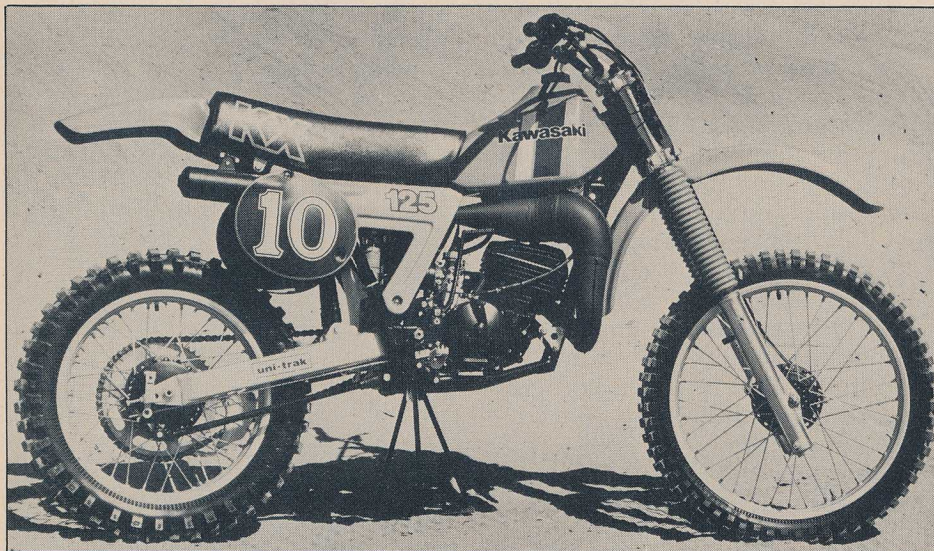


Huge new pipe is part of the horsepower secret. It tucks in well. No leg burns here.

KAWASAKI KX125 A7



Even deep sandy corners wouldn't bog the stout A7 engine.



KAWASAKI KX125 A7 Specifications

NAME AND MODEL	Kawasaki KX125A7
ENGINE TYPE	2-stroke, single, reed valve
BORE AND STROKE	56.0mm x 50.6mm (2.20 in. x 1.99 in.)
DISPLACEMENT	124cc (7.56 cu. in.)
HORSEPOWER (CLAIMED)28 at 11,500 rpm
CARBURETION	Mikuni VM34SS
FACTORY RECOMMENDED JETTING:	
MAIN JET	165 R
NEEDLE JET	R 2/4
JET NEEDLE	6F21-3
PILOT JET	30
SLIDE NUMBER	3.5
RECOMMENDED GASOLINE	
FUEL TANK CAPACITY	8.0 lt. (2.1 U.S. gal.)
FUEL TANK MATERIAL	Plastic
LUBRICATION	Pre-mix, oil in gas
RECOMMENDED OIL	Kawasaki 2-stroke at 20:1
OIL CAPACITY	N/A
AIR FILTRATION	Oiled foam
CLUTCH TYPE	Wet, multi-plate
TRANSMISSION	6-speed, constant mesh
GEARBOX RATIOS:	
1	2.14 (30/14)
2	1.67 (30/18)
3	1.33 (24/18)
4	1.15 (23/18)
5	1.00 (21/21)
6	0.91 (20/22)
GEARING, FRONT/REAR	12/53
IGNITION	Electronic C. D. I.
PRIMARY KICK SYSTEM?	Yes
RECOMMENDED SPARK PLUG	NGK B9EV
SILENCER/SPARK ARRESTOR/QUALITY	
.....	Silencer, noisy
EXHAUST SYSTEM	High pipe, right side
FRAME, TYPE	Single downtube, split cradle
WHEELBASE	1470mm (57.9 in.)
GROUND CLEARANCE	330mm (13.0 in.)
SEAT HEIGHT	970mm (37.1 in.)

STEERING HEAD ANGEL (RAKE)	28 degrees
TRAIL	120mm (4.72 in.)
WEIGHT WITH ONE GALLON GAS	208 (dry - 198 lbs.)
RIM MATERIAL	Aluminum alloy - D.I.P.
TIRE SIZE AND TYPE:	
FRONT	3.00x21 Bridgestone knobby
REAR	4.00x18 Bridgestone knobby
SUSPENSION, TYPE AND TRAVEL:	
FRONT	Telescopic, air, oil - 280mm (11.0 in.) travel
REAR	Uni-Trak, single shock, aluminum arm - 280mm (11.0 in.)
INTENDED USE	Motocross
COUNTRY OF ORIGIN	Japan
RETAIL PRICE, APPROX	N/A

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OVERALL RATING, 0 TO 100, VARIOUS CATEGORIES, KEEPING INTENDED USE OF MACHINE IN MIND:	
HANDLING	99
SUSPENSION	99.9 rear - 89 front
POWER	98
COST	85
ATTENTION TO DETAIL	92
EFFECTIVENESS, STONE STOCK	96

forward easy and lets the rider load the front end comfortably for jumping.

No bulky side panels intrude on the rider's legs or boots and the KX is very, very narrow at the mid-section. Moving around on the machine is easy and comfortable. The saddle tapers nicely into the tank and contours are correct for the necessary gymnastics of motocross.

Controls were a mixed bag of decent to poor. Those old fashioned hand levers were hard to reach. We replaced the front brake lever with a dog-legged Sun Line shorty for improved feel.

The shift lever was too small and hard to reach. Lots of shifts were missed at first, then we replaced the stocker with an International Motor-sports folder and it made a big difference.

Reaching the rear brake pedal was easy and natural, but we did have a lot of rear wheel lock-up and stalling until we put a bend in the brake rod and got some time on the brake shoes.

Changes From A6 to A7

A host of details have been changed on the new A7. Aside from the obvious aluminum body on the Uni-Trak shock, the spring is different. While the actual rate is the same, the spring itself is a smaller diameter, has less coils and is made of improved material for longer life without sacking.

The Uni-Trak links have been improved and strengthened, which should help longevity. Of course, frequent cleaning, greasing and inspection will remain a mandatory task.

Apparently, the 1980 engine was so far off that it wasn't possible to modify it in a reasonable fashion. You'll find that Kawasaki has reverted back to the 1979 crank design, which was a proven design.

Electrics have also seen changes. There's a longer advance curve in the CDI.

Horsepower is up three over last year, according to Kawasaki R & D. One tester was heard to comment: "Gee, that means it must have four horsepower now." Maximum revs are now 12,000. The A6 signed off at 10,500 rpm. You can feel the hook at the end of the rpm range when you ride the A7.

A 34mm carb replaces the smaller 32mm breather and the left side panel has been redesigned to let the air filter breathe better.

A bridge can now be found in the exhaust port and the ports themselves have all been changed.

A completely new exhaust pipe carries the gasses away.

Other detail changes include aluminum clutch plates (a small weight savings), forged aluminum footpegs and shift lever, hollow swingarm pivot bolt and rear axle bolt and a redesigned mag case.

There's also a beefier swingarm pivot mount on the frame. Number plates are now black, the KX logo on the saddle is mint green instead of white and various brackets and guides are slightly changed.

Wow! Not the same bike, is it?

Bits and Pieces

In this day of 12-inch plus travel, the eleven inches at both ends of the Kawasaki seem a bit short. But only on paper. Eleven good inches of usable travel are preferable to a wallowing 12 inches, every time.

Some weight has been shed in the transition from A6 to A7. Three pounds to be exact. At 198 pounds dry, the KX is in the right ballpark, but could still stand to lose a few more pounds here and there.

The reeds are much thicker in the A7. One of the things we carp about in the 1980 test was the flimsy .014 thick reeds. While they opened easily under a low pressure drop they got confused and fluttered at higher rpm. Still, we played it safe and slipped in a set of Boyesen reeds before we raced the bike. There was a noticeable improvement. Those reeds are the same shape and size as last year's, so those old Boyesens are reusable.

The spec sheets still say that the bike comes with Boyesen reeds. If they are manufactured by Boyesen, they are not the dual stage reeds that DB likes so much.

Gearbox ratios are identical to the old set, but the final drive has been changed. Instead of 12/52 gearing, the new KX runs 12/53.

Grips were smallish, but liked by most of the riders.

The Big Picture

Right now, the KX is the fastest 125 around. But, we can only compare it to 1980 machinery. It's an excellent machine, with the forks being the only questionable component on the bike.

No other bike, as of this writing, has a finer rear suspension.

The only thing that remains to be seen is how the other 1981 125s will stack up against the KX. □

MARTY TRIPES HANGS UP HIS BIKE

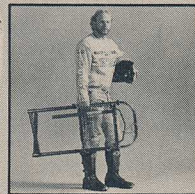
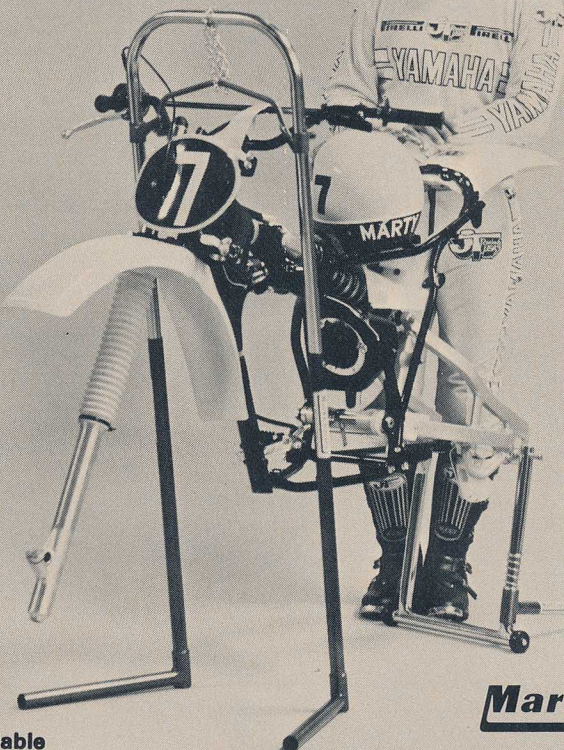
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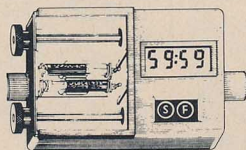
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