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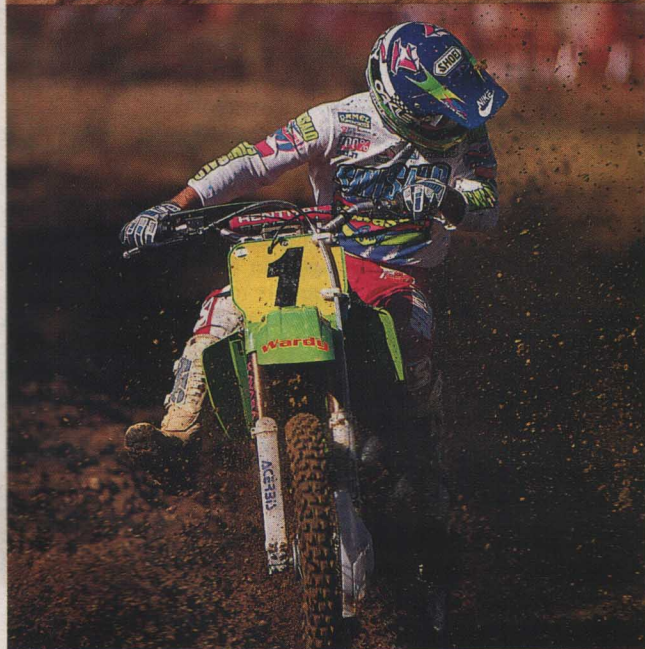
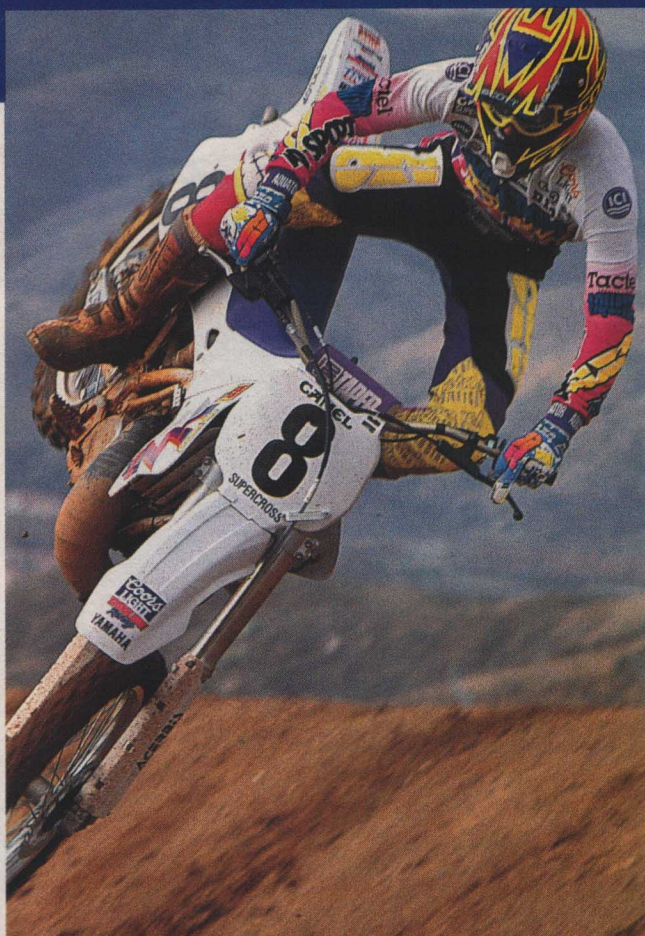
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ON THE COVER:—Who will be the stars of '93? Aside from Hunky and Rondo, Phil Lawrence has a shot. Tim got this shot, while Ron caught Jim Holley and Kohji Ohkawhara on the Noleen Yamahas.

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. Dirt Bike does all of its testing and photography legally on public land, or private land with permission from the owner(s), and we abide by the local laws concerning vehicle registration and muffler/spark arrester requirements. We are not responsible for quality of aftermarket accessories we use.

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STUCK IN THE MIDDLE

ATK 406 vs. KTM 300 M/XC

By the staff of DIRT BIKE

Stopwatches are infernal, evil things. They destroy all that is sacred, strip us of our beliefs and, more often than not, leave us looking stupid.

The downfall of the Open class can be blamed directly on the stopwatch, for instance. Some time ago, some joker had to put a stopwatch on the big bikes and announce to the world that the 500s were no faster than the 250s. Dreams crashed, legends were destroyed. Next thing you know, the Open class is empty—who wants to work harder just so they can go slower? Now Kawasaki and Honda are the only manufacturers still interested in mak-

ing 500s. Even they aren't *that* interested—the CR500R and KX500 haven't seen much in the way of development in years.

At least one good thing came out of all this: The lightweight Open bike came into being and kept interest alive for big bikes. The KTM 300 M/XC and ATK 406 are little bikes by big-bore standards, or perhaps they are big bikes by 250 standards. Increasingly, we are seeing classes combined where everyone rides against everyone else, regardless of displacement. Depending on the track, they are quite capable of winning against 500s or winning against 250s.

FROM WHENCE THEY CAME

KTM's 300 is a KTM 250 with a bigger bore and longer stroke. KTM used an enduro bike ignition to slow down the revs, but almost everything else is interchangeable with the 250.

In reality, though, the 300 works very differently from the 250. It's a super-smooth bike with a soft but very controllable low-end. Then, the KTM revs out to a good peak. As you might expect, the bike revs higher than a 500, but not as high as a 250. Surprise, surprise!

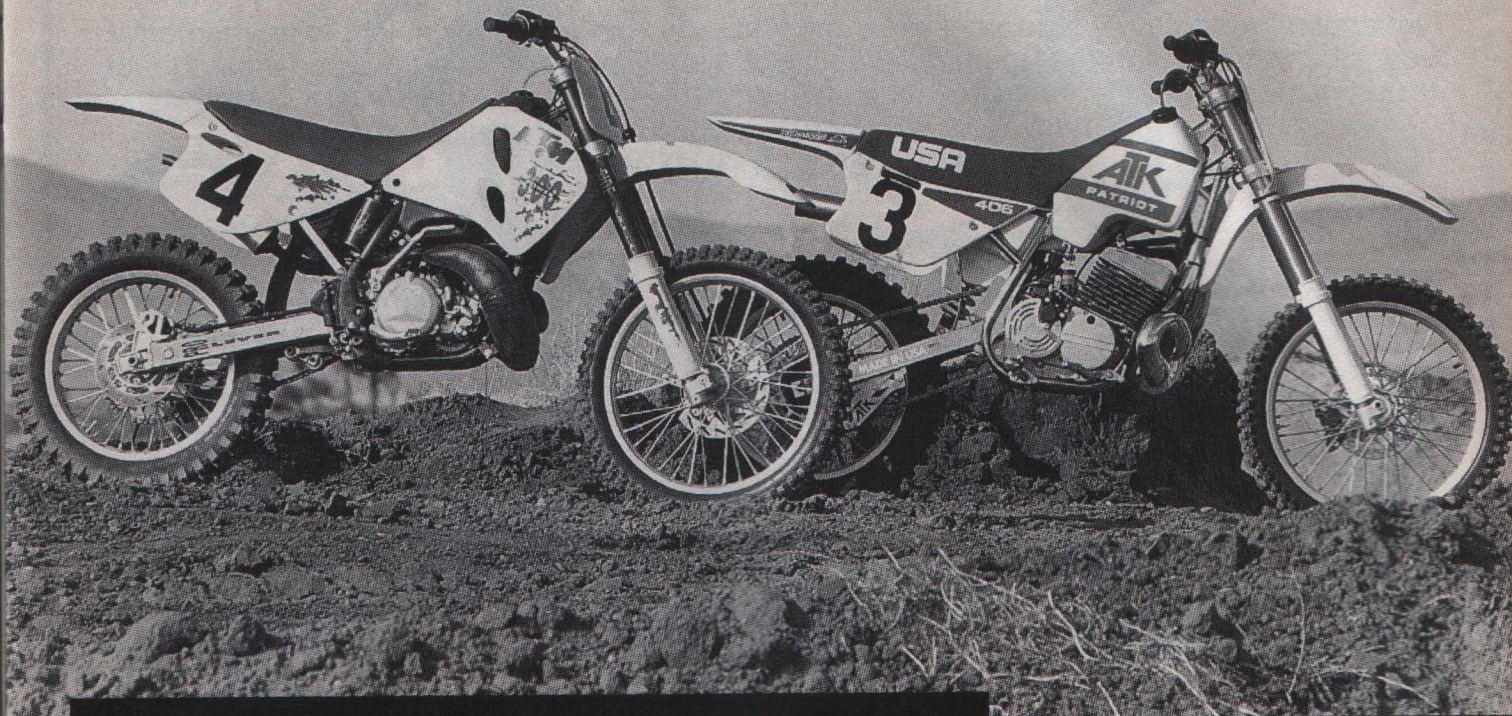
The 300's chassis is identical to the 250SX's. We rode a prototype 250 earlier in the year and we were horrified by the suspension. The rear end was bad and the front end was worse. Then big wheels began to turn at KTM in Austria. None of the early KTMs like the one we rode were even sold. The fork and shock were changed—not just damping rates, but structural changes like bushings and overall shock length—and even the cylinder porting was modified. So, basically, all of our testing and all of our conclusions about the early KTM 250 are meaningless. This 300 is a real production bike, like the bike your KTM dealer is selling.

We tested an early prototype of the ATK, too. This year, ATK changed the steering head angle of the bike in order to make it turn a little faster. Unfortunately, that meant the engineers had to redesign the pipe, because the wheel would hit it when the fork bottomed. The bike we rode had an experimental pipe that just plain didn't work and made the bike phenomenally slow. We were impressed with the rest of the machine, though, and could not wait to ride the finished bike, new pipe and all.

To give you a brief rundown on the ATK: It uses a 399cc Rotax engine made in Austria. The air-cooled engine was originally designed for the Can-Am 400 back in the late '70s and has progressed little since then, at least at the factory level. ATK buys the engines; then, if the buyer pops for the extra porting (a deal at \$125), the engine gets extensive modification here in the U.S. The bike also has several unique features, like an airbox that is located behind the front numberplate, a chain torque elimination device (pulleys mounted so that the chain runs parallel to the swingarm) and a White Power shock that is mounted off-center with no link-



Shane Trittler shows Scot Harden what it's like to be young, skinny and have lots of hair. The KTM and the ATK are almost equals in horsepower.



	ATK 406 PATRIOT	KTM 300 M/XC
Engine type.....	Case reed, air-cooled 2-stroke	Liquid-cooled, case-reed-valve 2-stroke
Displacement.....	399cc	297cc
Bore and stroke.....	84.0mm x 72.0mm	72.0mmx73.0mm
Carburetion.....	38mm Mikuni TMX	38mm Keihin PJ
Fuel tank capacity.....	2.4 gal. (9.0L)	3.3 gal. (2.6 gal. as tested)
Gearing.....	14/48	15/50
Lighting coil.....	Yes	Yes
Spark arrester.....	No	No
EPA-legal.....	No	No
Claimed dry weight.....	213 lb.	221 lb.
Wheelbase.....	57.0" (1382mm)	58.4" (1483mm)
Rake/trail.....	NA	27.7°/NA
Ground clearance.....	14.0" (356mm)	15.2" (386mm)
Seat height.....	37.0" (940mm)	37.8" (960mm)
Tire size and type:		
Front.....	80/100-21 Bridgestone	90/90x21 Metzeler Unicross
Rear.....	110/100-18 Bridgestone IRC	120/90x18 Metzeler Unicross
Suspension:		
Front.....	White Power inverted cartridge, adj. comp./reb., 11.8" (290mm) travel	White Power inverted cart., adj. comp./reb., 11.8" (300mm) travel
Rear.....	White Power aluminum piggyback, adj. comp./reb., 13.0" (330mm) travel	White Power alum. piggyback, adj. prel./comp./reb., 13.6" (350mm) travel
Country of origin.....	U.S.A.	Austria
Suggested retail price.....	\$4665	\$4769
Distributor/manufacturer.....		
ATK Motorcycles.....		
5430 Union Pacific Dr.		
Commerce, CA 90022; (213) 722-8880		
KTM America, Inc. West: 930 Fesler St.,		
El Cajon, CA 92020-1808; (619) 258-6300		
East: 1906 Broadway, Lorain, OH 44052;		
(216) 246-1060		

age. ATK has always been quite proud of its countershaft-mounted rear brake, although we have never cared for it. This year ATK decided to put a brake on the rear wheel, too. Only American know-how could produce a bike that has two wheels and three brakes.

Interestingly enough, both of these bikes are MX-oriented but do double duty as off-road bikes with minimal changes. The KTM is called an M/XC for Motocross/Cross-Country. The full enduro version has a bigger tank and lighting. The off-road version of the ATK also has a bigger tank and lighting.

WHO'S GOT THE BEANS?

The ATK makes a little more torque than the KTM. The KTM revs a little

higher than the ATK, but, all things considered, the two engines will perform about the same amount of work. This is a classic contest. There are some situations where having torque is an advantage, and some situations where being able to rev higher is better.

Both lightweights have super-easy-to-use powerbands, especially compared to 500s. Where you would be cautiously entering a turn on a 500, waiting to open the throttle for fear of something bad happening, you are on the gas with either one of the lightweight Open bikes. They would not intimidate Rondo's grandmother (not much will) because both the 300 and the 406 have very soft hits at low rpm. They don't loop out if you are in the wrong po-

sition and they don't spin wildly. They just go when they are told to go. The ATK has a ton of flywheel weight. For that matter, the KTM has a half-ton of flywheel weight. They both have the feel of enduro powerplants and are most effective in low-traction situations.

Overall, though, the KTM's engine is a little easier to use. When you are in that mild area of the powerband way down low, a quick fan of the clutch will get the 300 moving out in a hurry. The 406 isn't quite as responsive, and the clutch pull is more difficult. Too much reliance on the clutch and your hand will get sore from the pull, reach and shape of the lever.

Overall, the KTM will outrun the ATK in a race to the first turn two times out of three. The ATK might get an initial jump off the line, but by the time the bikes shift to second, the KTM will be in front. Both bikes are going to be behind the big-bores, though. That's the single biggest disadvantage for the lightweight Open bikes. No one contests that they can get around the track in the same amount of time as a 500, but the start is of vital importance.

WHITE POWER WARS

Both bikes use White Power suspension front and rear. That's unusual—in fact, the only other bike sold in America to be fully White Powered is the Husaberg. You would think that this would make the KTM and ATK very similar in suspension performance. You would be wrong, though.

The ATK, basically, has suspension that feels more motocross-oriented. It's a little stiff and very predictable. The front

end is pretty good—excellent by White Power standards. The rear end, though, takes some getting used to. It doesn't settle in very much with the rider's weight, and it tends to kick any time you aren't on the gas. The KTM would be just as at home in an enduro. It settles down in its travel and makes for a cushy ride. The worst enemy of the KTM fork is the

square-edged bump. Rolling whoops are fine. Big drops are no problem. Hit something that looks like a curb, though, and you will feel it.

The KTM's rear end is much easier to like than the ATK's. It feels more normal and it doesn't do anything surprising. Even though both bikes have components made in the same factory, it's obvious that each manufacturer uses its own specs and standards.

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OPEN-CLASS

In overall handling, too, the bikes are very different. The ATK is a demanding bike. It corners best when you are on the gas, and it's more stable when you are on the gas. As soon as you get tired or slow down, though, the bike wants to stand up in corners and punishes you for not being more aggressive. The KTM is much less demanding. You can go fast or you can go slow; it's up to you. It handles about the same either way. The only disadvantage to that is that sometimes you start going slow without knowing it, and the bike won't warn you.

WHAT DOES THE STOPWATCH SAY?

To repeat: We hate stopwatches. They gave us no help in determining which bike would be the best weapon to carry into 500-class combat. For that matter, the stopwatch couldn't even tell us if you *should* put a lightweight Open bike on the line with a bunch of 500s. Riders would turn virtually the same lap times no matter what they rode. What remains, then, is to see which bike allowed its rider to turn that lap time the easiest, and that would have to be the KTM. The Austrian machine is more willing to run, easier to ride and more fun to race. The ATK feels just a touch outdated, and even though it's an effective race bike according to its lap times, sometimes lap times just don't tell the story. □

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