

**BEST BIKE SHOWDOWN:**  
YZ360 vs. YZWR500 • DR350 vs. HUSKY 350  
KX500 vs. CR500 • KTM300 vs. ATK 406!



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**DIRT  
BIKE**

# DIRT BIKE

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RIDERS  
SAY WHAT  
THEY REALLY  
THINK OF  
EACH OTHER:**  
**BRADSHAW vs.**  
**STANTON,**  
**KIEDROWSKI**  
**vs. COOPER,**  
**SUMMERS vs.**  
**HAWKINS,**  
**ROESLER vs.**  
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GO WRONG ON YOUR  
BIKE & HOW TO FIX THEM!**



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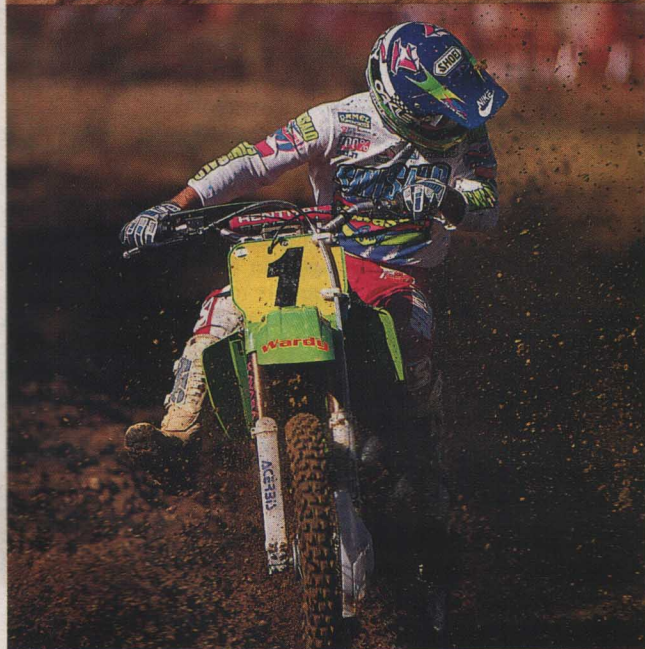
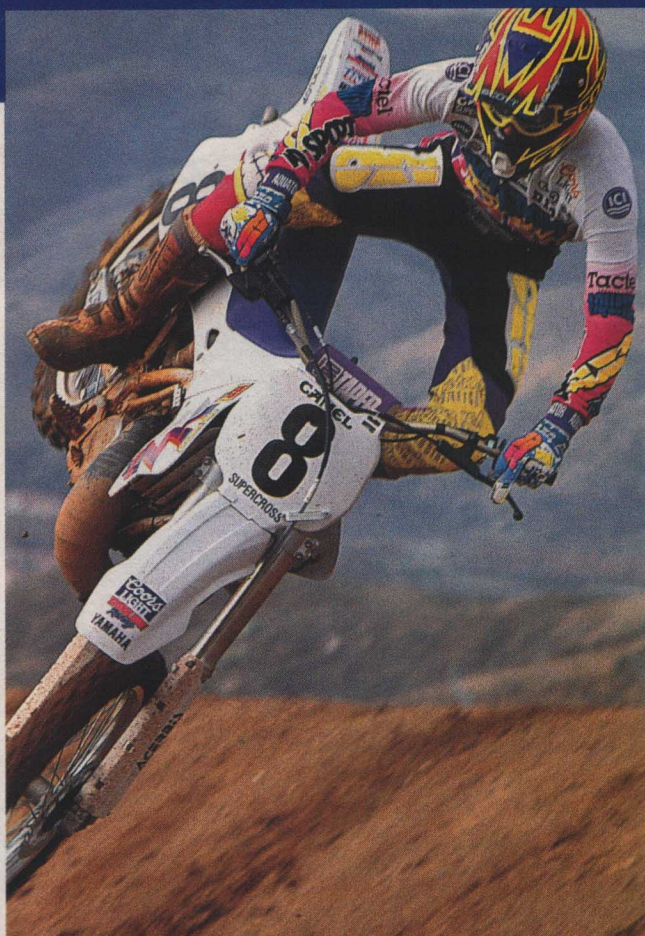
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ON THE COVER:—Who will be the stars of '93? Aside from Hunky and Rondo, Phil Lawrence has a shot. Tim got this shot, while Ron caught Jim Holley and Kohji Ohkawhara on the Noleen Yamahas.

**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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# HOLDOUTS

*With bikes this good, the 500 class will never die*

*By the knob-chunking DIRT BIKE staff*

**Question:** Does horsepower win races?

**Answer:** Who knows? At the '92 Australian Motocross des Nations, which was held on a rough sand track, Jean-Michel Bayle and Kurt Nicoll rode 500s and smoked off every 250 and 125. They proved that 500s are fastest, whether you are a finesse rider (JMB) or a bulldog (Nicoll)—at least on that track. Also, every rider in the world seems to want more power, to the point of spending thousands on 250s and 125s. In the meantime, the Open-class start line looks like a ghost town. People seem to want power, but are afraid of it. Now there are only two 500cc bikes left in the world of Open-class MX. Let's take a look at the Honda CR500R and the Kawasaki KX500 and see if there is really anything to be scared of.

## MAULING MOTORS

Either one of these bikes will pull your arms out of their sockets if you are not careful with the loud handle, but which is the hands-down horsepower king? Either bike can get the holeshot, depending on the reaction time of the rider. Both have the ponies to top hills that will give you nosebleeds. From turn to turn, though, the CR is more responsive and will outpull the KX when traction permits. On hard-pack or in mud, the tractor-like KX gains the advantage with superior hookup. We like the Honda's power better, but both get the job done. If you want more acceleration than either 500 can deliver, your name must be Georges Jobe.

## KICK, TWO, THREE

Full-blown 500s have earned a reputation of being vile, nasty beasts. Many a bench-race session has included a story about a guy getting thrown over the bars or destroying brand-new boots trying to kickstart a 500. This is exaggeration, pure and simple. Both the CR and KX start easily, even when cold. The drill is: gas on, choke on, second gear, rock it back and forth, neutral, then kick hard. If it doesn't start in two kicks, quit kicking like a 12-year-old girl.

The Kawasaki is a bit rich off of the bottom. Going one step down on the pilot, to a 60, helps, and so does dropping the needle one position. The Honda is in the ballpark and can be cleaned up with the airscrew on warmer days. Overall, life with either motor is the life of Riley. Neither does anything hideous like overheating, and you can go years without a top-end job. Both vibrate a bit, with the

KX500 being the closest to annoying. Bar-Snakes help, as do lead weights in your bar ends.

## SUSPENSION SAVVY

If you predicted that Kawasaki would win the section, you win a cookie. The KX500 has the better suspension, but not by much. Honda closed the gap this year and is effective right out of the crate. Sure, the CR fork spring is on the border of being too soft for a fast 160-pounder, but so is the KX's. The CR gets the job done without the plushness of the KX.

Some testers didn't complain about harshness on the CR (a first!) but did about the KX feeling mushy. Both will bottom.

Out back, Kawasaki wins again. The KX shock soaks up square hits better than the CR and feels much more plush. Hardpacked acceleration bumps wreak havoc on the CR, but it soaks up everything else well enough not to draw any snivels. Again, though, the KX feels much more smooth, to the point of feeling like the bike is riding on a giant marshmallow.

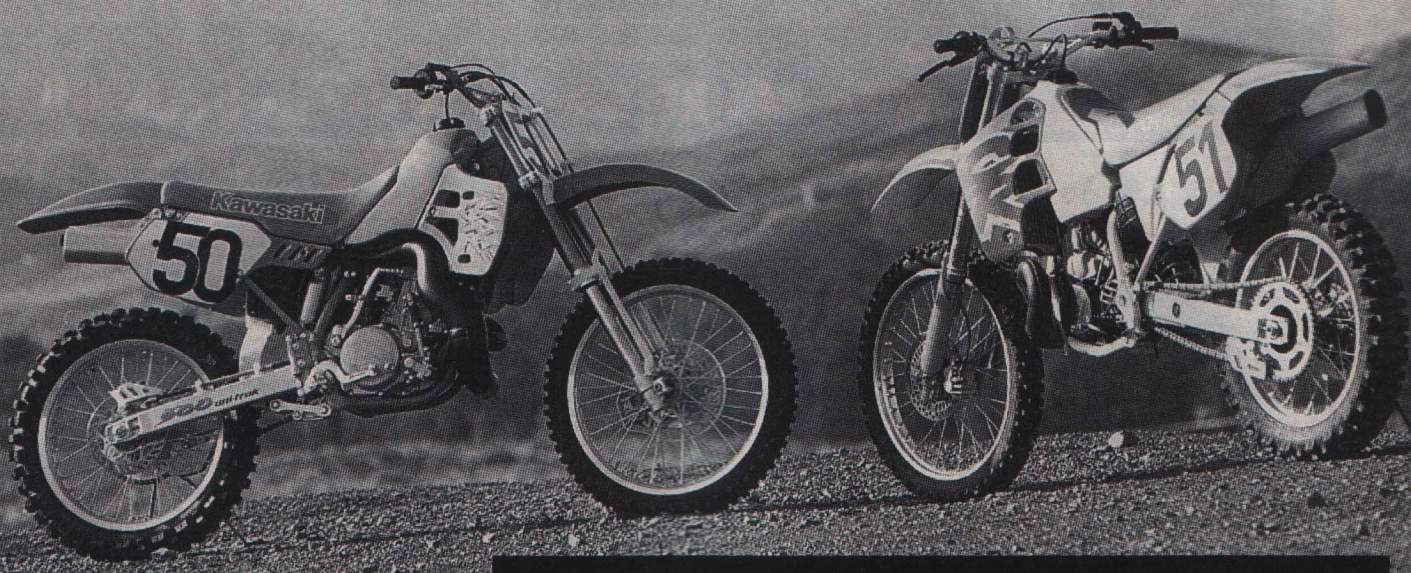


**You take the high road:** The CR500 rider will be able to easily pass the KX pilot in corners, because the Honda has better brakes, a slimmer midsection, quicker steering and better throttle response.







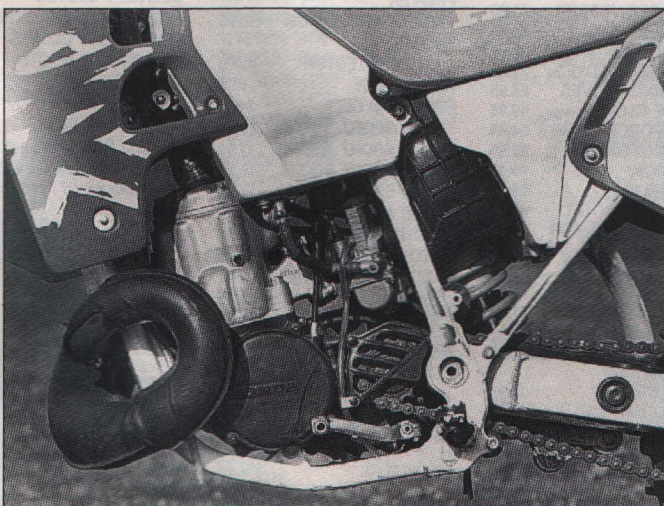


### HANDLING THE BEASTS

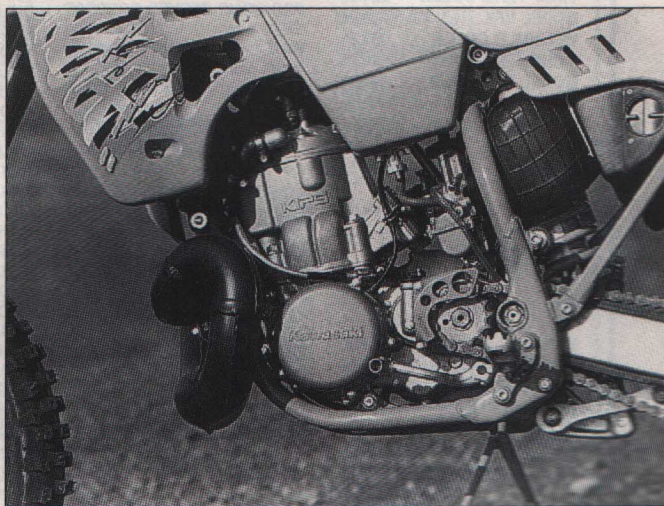
Here is where things get tough, although the bikes are completely different handlers. The Honda is a responsive handler with a feathery feel. It wants to turn, even when you may want to go straight. Yes, it still headshakes, but not as bad as in the past. The CR turns sharper than a unicycle and feels as light. Throttle response and the light feel let it float over stuff like James Bond's helicopter-in-a-suitcase. If there still was a 500cc Supercross class, Honda would, no doubt, hold the #1 plate.

On the opposite end of the handling spectrum, we find the Kawasaki. Sure, the KX has better suspension and doesn't shake its head when you chop the throttle. It is also a very tall, heavy-feeling motorcycle. The slow-revving motor and chunky midsection make handling feel sluggish, and you slam into more stuff than a CR

	HONDA CR500	KAWASAKI KX500
Engine type	Reed-valved, liquid-cooled 2-stroke	Reed- and power-valved, liquid-cooled 2-stroke
Displacement	491cc	499cc
Bore and stroke	89.0mmx79.0mm	86.0mmx86.0mm
Carburetion	38mm PJ Keihin	39mm PWK Keihin
Fuel tank capacity	2.4 gal. (9.1L)	2.6 gal. (9.8L)
Running weight w/no fuel	235 lb.	233 lb.
Lighting coil	No	No
EPA-legal	No	No
Final gearing	14/49	14/47
Rake/trail	27.9°/4.7"	27°/4.6"
Wheelbase	58.5" (1486mm)	58.7" (1490mm)
Seat height	38.0" (965mm)	37.4" (950mm)
Ground clearance	13.5" (343mm)	14.6" (350mm)
Tire size and type:		
Front	80/100-21 Dunlop K490	80/100-21 Dunlop K490
Rear	110/100-18 Dunlop K695	100/100-19 Dunlop K695
Suspension:		
Front	Showa 43mm inverted cartridge, adj. comp./reb., 12.2" (310mm) travel	Kayaba inverted cartridge, adj. comp./reb., 12.2" (310mm) travel
Rear	Pro-Link, KYB piggyback shock, adj. comp./reb./prel., 12.6" (320mm) travel	Uni-Trak, KYB piggyback shock, adj. comp./reb./prel., 13" (330mm) travel
Country of origin	Japan	Japan
Suggested retail price	\$4349	\$4399
Distributor/manufacture	American Honda Motor Corp. 1919 Torrance Blvd. Torrance, CA 90501-2746; (310) 783-2000	Kawasaki Motor Corp. 9950 Jeronimo Rd. Irvine, CA 92718; (714) 770-0400



**Dulling the lion's teeth:** After years of toning down the CR motor, Honda left the motor alone for '93, except for wider fourth- and fifth-gear ratios.



**You've got a lot of brass:** The KX500 motor is unchanged. You will want to lean the pilot circuit and pay close attention to mainjet size and octane. Otherwise, it will blubber and ping.





**Don't tread on me:** Landings from monster road jumps will bottom the fork on the CR and KX500. The surprise for '93 is that the CR fork is no longer painful.

pilot. It also takes more effort to make it settle into a rutted turn.

On high-speed tracks like Unadilla or Washougal we would want the KX, but on more technical tracks like Glen Helen we would choose the CR. It's weird—the CR is an aggressive machine that rewards finesse, while the KX is a finesse machine that demands aggression.

#### **HAULING THEM DOWN**

In case you've been on ice longer than *Encino Man*, we'll say it again. The Honda has the best brakes ever to grace a production dirt bike. Nothing else stops so well with so little effort and so much feel at the lever. By comparison, the KX feels spongy and weaker than a two-day-old kitten, at least up front. The problem lies in Kawasaki's front master cylinder. For the past five years, we have had to replace several front cylinders. The KX500's has not failed yet, but, if it does, we will replace it with a Yamaha unit.

#### **LOOKS & LONGEVITY**

The Kawasaki looks so '87 that moto-heads will drool more over a new Honda, but it takes more to keep the Honda looking sano. The white airbox and gas tank scuff easily and are a pain to clean, and the plastic fades if you leave it in the sun a lot. It's much easier to keep the KX looking sharp.

Mechanically, each machine has its quirks. The CR requires fork disassembly more frequently, as particulate contamination scours the bushings and fouls the valves. The KX requires more diligence with jetting and octane from weekend to weekend and rewards the lazy with detonation or clouds of blue smoke. The CR tends to cold-foul more, despite crisper jetting. Both bikes come stock with chains that are seemingly made out of Play-Doh. Kawasaki's handlebars aren't much stronger than the chain. Going to an Answer Pro-Taper may be expensive, but you get a stronger bar and less vibration.

#### **WE'LL BE STANTON; YOU BE KIEDROWSKI**

Which bike is for you? If you would rather have a root canal without Novocain than experience headshake on Carlsbad's downhill, avoid the CR like the plague. If you have Jeff Ward's stature but don't have his awesome finesse and throttle control, steer clear of the KX. The CR suits smaller riders better, rewards aggression and penalizes those who don't search out smooth lines. If traction and turns are plentiful, it has an advantage over the KX.

On the other hand, the KX is super-stable at speed but feels lethargic in slow corners. It does soak up things better than the CR, but doesn't accelerate or decelerate as effortlessly. The KX feels ten pounds heavier than the CR but is actually two pounds lighter. The reason is the tractor-like motor.

Both bikes can win, but we have more fun riding the Honda. □