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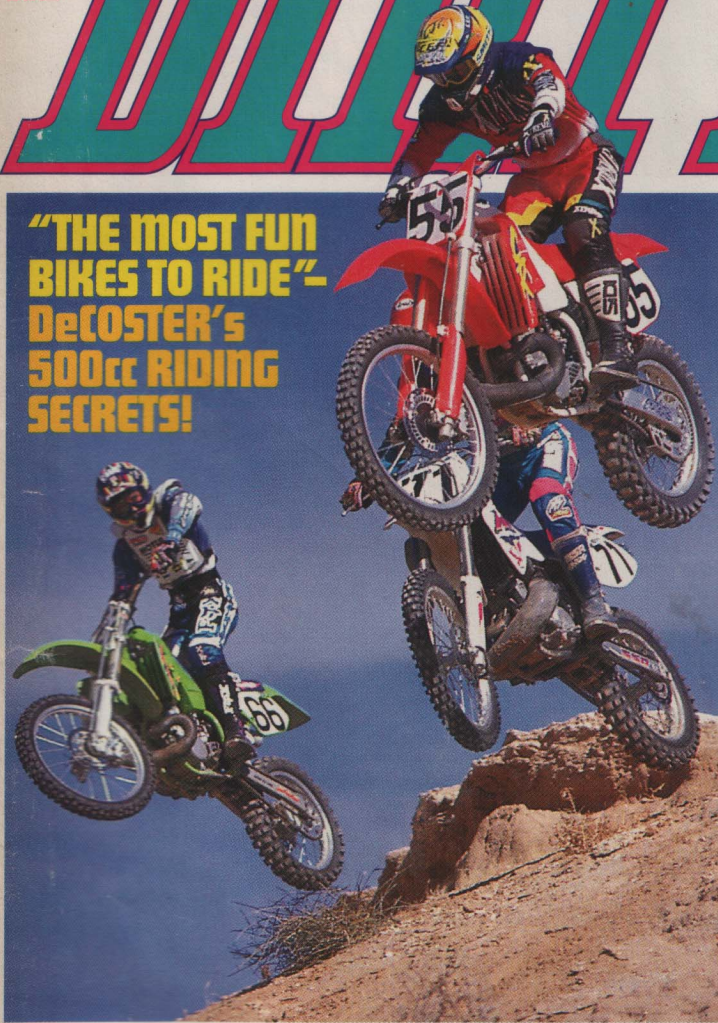
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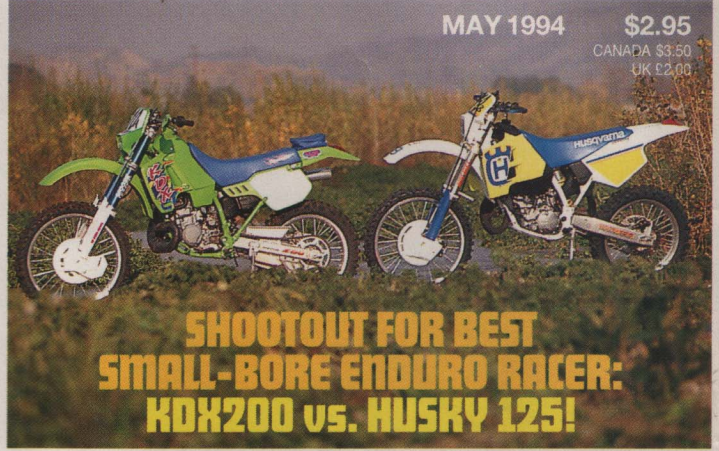
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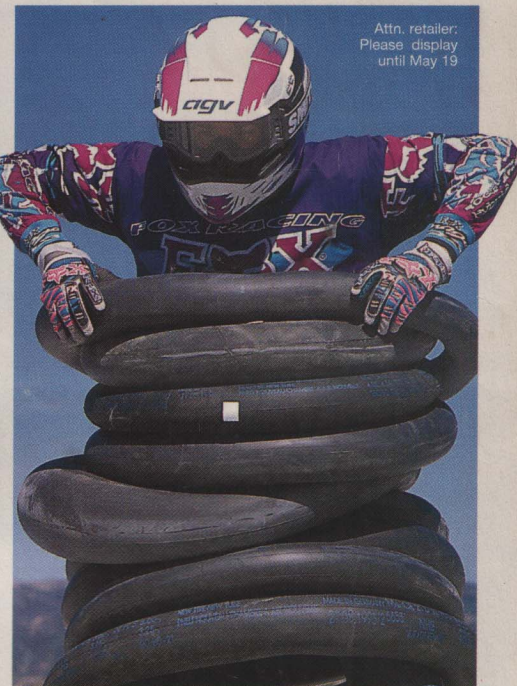
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ON THE COVER: Yes, that's Joe Papa trying to climb out from under an inner tube comparison this month. And yes, those are 500 motocross/off-road bikes leaping into a two-level comparison test, in the same issue as a lightweight enduro bike shootout. And yes, we're looking inside more works bikes. That's us: hopeless yes men. Photos by Joe, Ron and Tim. Color seps by D.I.S.C.

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KDX200 VS. WXE125

*Dollar for dollar, which
Will bring on the gold?*

By the homologated staff of DIRT BIKE

At last year's Tulsa ISDE Qualifier, Fred Hoess rekindled our interest in the 125cc enduro class. Hoess rode his WXE125 like an absolute madman to win the final moto and pull the class win out of thin air. It was a truly inspiring ride, like Franz Klammer's '76 Men's Winter Olympics Downhill victory. Immediately after Hoess' envelope-pushing antics, the 200s and 250s took to the grass track, with Ty Davis, Larry Roeseler and Rodney Smith duking it out on 250s. Mr. KDX200, Jeff Fredette, was not a factor in this moto. Even if he had thrown caution to the wind and ridden like the Hoessinator, Fredette would not have won. His 200 was way outpowered by the tweaked 250 Kawasakis and Suzukis.

We mention this because ISDE classes have been combined for '94. The 80cc class has been combined with the 125s, forming the 0-125cc class, and everything else is thrown together into the 126-500cc class (the other ISDE categories are four-strokes below 350cc and those above 350cc). Call us Monday morning quarterbacks if you must, but does the FIM really think that a 200 can compete with a 250 or even a 500? Doesn't it make more sense to have a 0-200cc class and a 201-500cc division? In the real world, local enduro clubs usually combine the 200s with 125s, not 250s. We have compared the KDX 200 and 250, but we wouldn't dream of pitting the 200 against a full-blown 250cc enduro bike (WXE, EXC, RMX or WR). It would get smoked!

◀ **Wake up, FIM: For the '94 ISDE, KDX200 riders will be thrown into a pit with the best 250cc and 500cc riders in the world. This is a shootout for those riders who think that the FIM has airbox spooze for brains.**

So, we decided to pit the KDX200 against the '94 version of the Hoessmobile, the WXE125. Even this would have been a lopsided comparison, as the KDX comes with suspension set up for trail plushness, and the WXE is more race-ready, so we decided to pump up the KDX until the prices for the two machines matched. The KDX200 retails for \$3599, and the WXE125 goes for \$4050, leaving us \$451 to put into the KDX.

MOOSE ON THE LOOSE

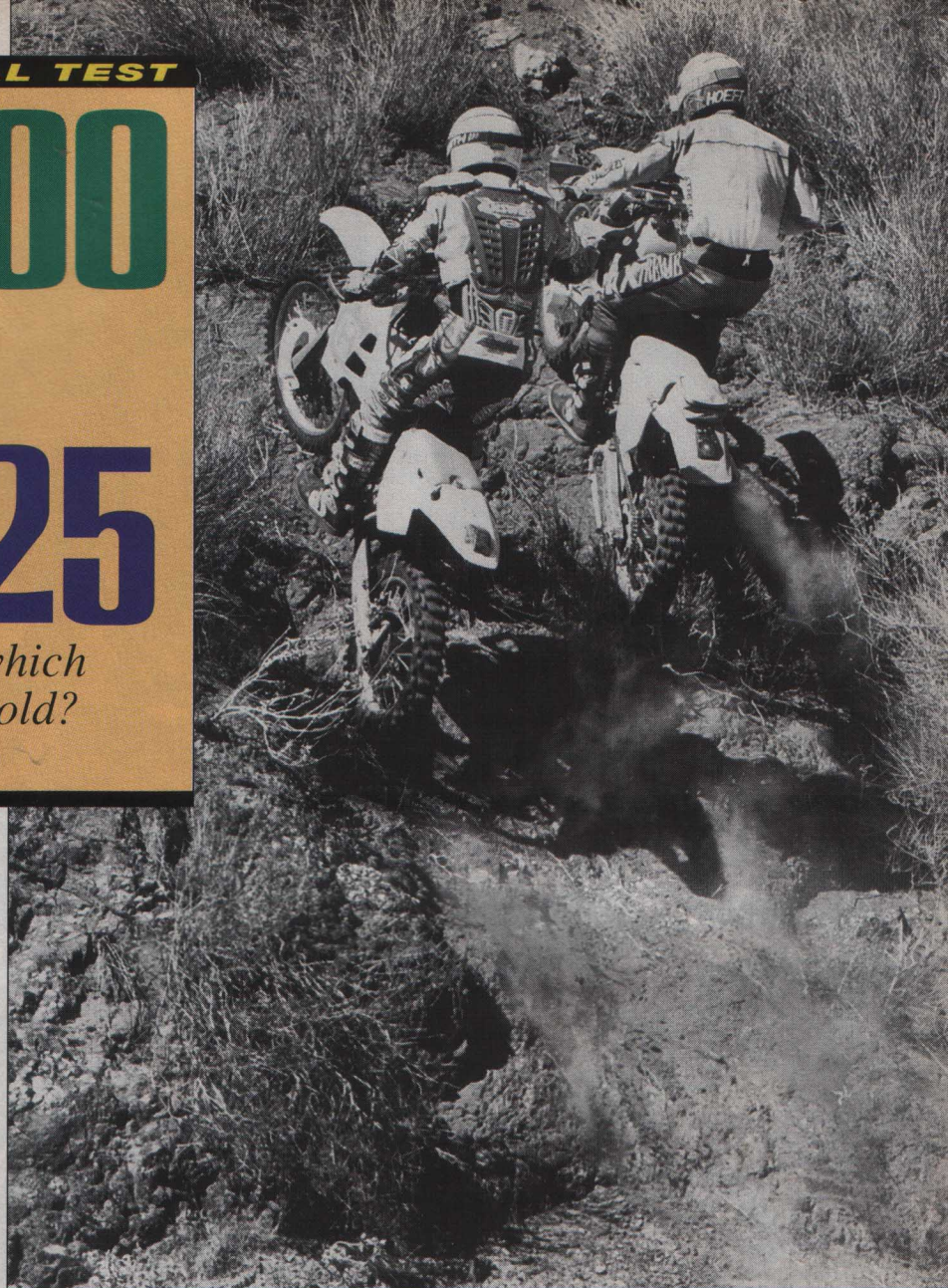
Moose Racing was chosen to bring the KDX up to race speed in the motor and suspension departments. The stocker comes with horribly soft 0.30-kg springs and plushmobile damping. Moose revalves the inverted 41mm Kayabas (\$88 labor and \$18 in fork oil). The stock fork springs are replaced with 19/23 (lb./in.) Progressive springs (\$59.95). Moose also revalves the shock to resist bottoming at speed (\$128 labor plus \$8 in shock oil). Because most of the staff weighs more than 180 pounds and/or rides really hard,

Only really good riders or complete lunatics attempt cliff climbs on the WXE125. The modified KDX is much more forgiving at this stuff (check out the WXE's rear fender if you don't believe us).

Moose put a 5.0-kg Kayaba spring (\$89.95) on our revalved shock.

Joe, Moose's motor man, digs working on KDX200 motors, because "there's a ton of them out there, and they are practically unbreakable. You can really tweak the motor, and it doesn't faze them a bit."

Porting is done with the power-valves in place, so the valves can be easily matched with ports. Compression is bumped by milling the head. Porting and head mods cost \$225. Usually, Moose then disassembles the valve train and sends it off to Supertech for a special coating process. This process resists carbon or gum accumulation on the valves and hardens the aluminum parts to prevent wear. We were in a big hurry to get the KDX back, though, and had Joe polish the parts instead. As it was, we went





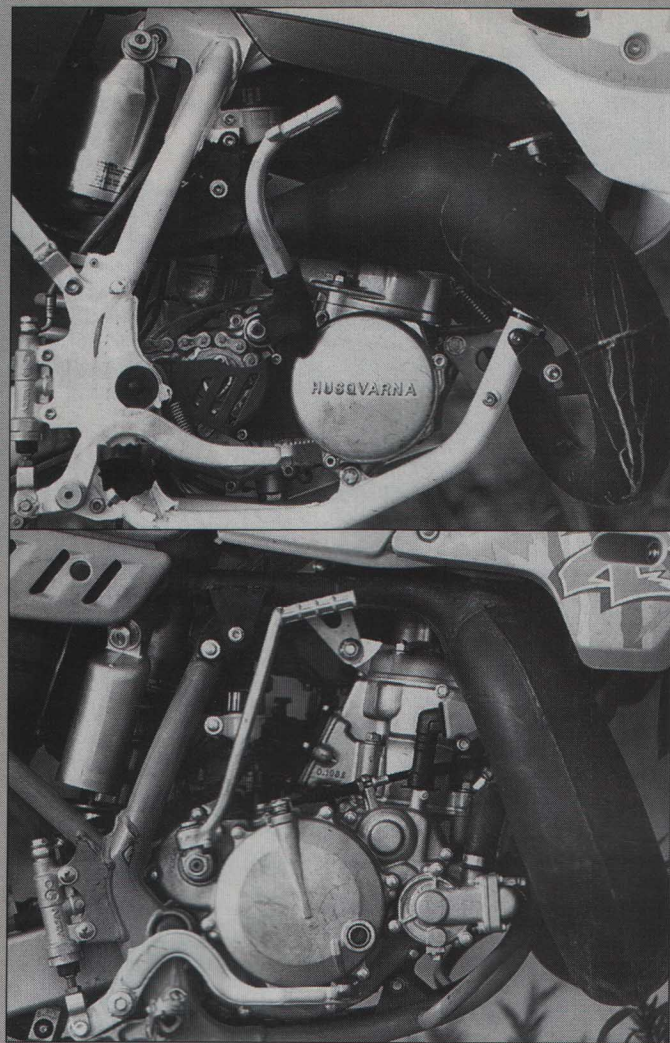
KDX200 vs. WXE125

◀ The '94 WXE125 has more flywheel than we have ever felt on a modern production 125. It wants massive clutch in technical sections, has a lethargic midrange punch but revs out well for its restrictive exhaust. It will even pull the Lump in deep, wet sand!



The WXE has the advantage in weight, ground clearance and width at the pegs and seat/tank junction. The disadvantage of higher clearance is a taller seat height. Your toes are a lot safer on the WXE pegs, too.

◀ Moose knows KDXs. Our project bike is almost trials-like off of the bottom, snaps when the power-valves open and revs fairly well with the stock exhaust. We haven't been able to break it, but we did smash the dual-wall pipe.



over budget a bit, due to the heavy-duty shock spring. The Moose total was \$616.90, some \$165.90 over our target. Forced to justify this, we would probably mutter something about dealer discounts or starting with a '93 instead of a '94.

Other than that, we left the bike stock, right down to the dual-wall pipe. Oh, yeah, we removed the airbox snorkel and threw it far, far away. The standard jetting was almost spot-on for these mods. With pump gas, the bike pings a tad in the mid-range unless you richen the needle a position. Jetting is spot-on if you use race gas.

A FEW WORDS ABOUT THE WXE

We haven't tested a WXE125 in a while, so let's go over the bike. The '94 gets the same updated Showa suspension as the 250 and 360. It's meant to be raced, pure and simple. Fork spring rate is 0.40 kg, and the shock spring is a 5.4 (the 250 and 360 gets 0.42/5.6-kg coils). The swingarm is new and more rigid, with a stiffer cast linkage crossbrace. The Cagiva motor has cases made of a new, strong-

◀ On curvy trails or in rolling hills, the Husqvarna WXE125 puts even a modified KDX200 to shame, due to the 125's weight, brake and handling advantage. Just don't expect brute acceleration to help you complete a pass like this.

er alloy, and the 125's clutch has new fiber material for smoother action. It also has a new piston to fight detonation.

The six-speed motor has a massive flywheel for a 125. This is good and bad. When there's a lot of traction, the motor seems too lethargic for the full moto mode. If it's really wet, tight or dry-slick, though, the curse becomes a blessing that will keep you on the trail. Even though the dual-wall pipe and spark arrester rob top-end power, the WXE will rev out fairly well and pull a heavy rider through deep sand. There's just not a whole lot of bottom. Luckily, the clutch holds up well to abuse; the WXE pilot will be using it a lot in really tight stuff.

Come to think of it, everything on the WXE125 is top-notch. The suspension, carburetor, brakes and tires are Japanese. Italy provides the frame, swingarm, plastic and wheels. Nice touches argue for attention, things like Domino levers, dished-out bolts, aluminum frame guards, the quick-release seat and wheels, linkage seals and case guards. The radiators and handlebars are well-made, too.

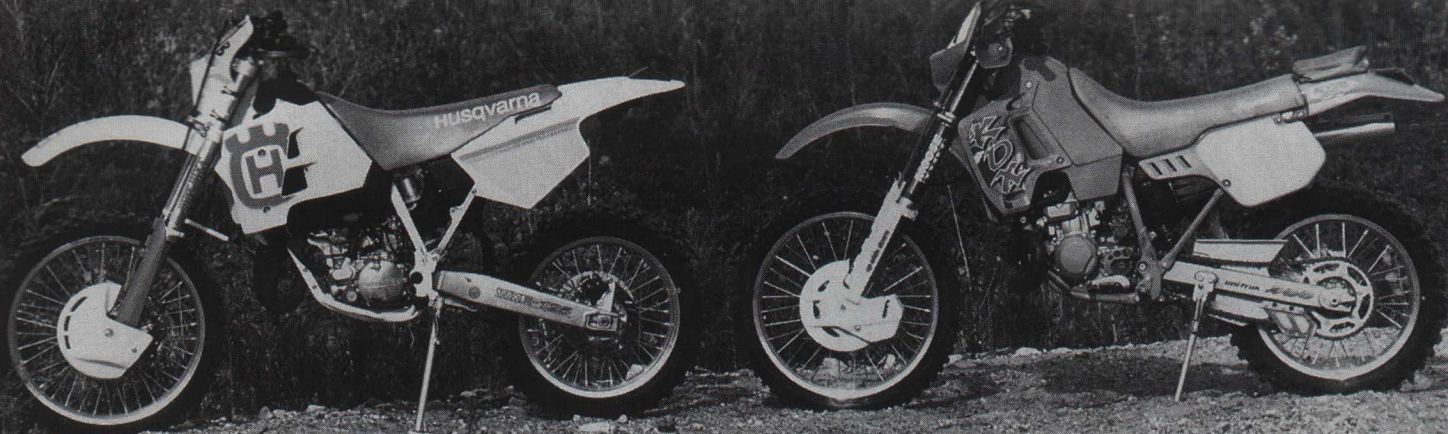
POWER & EASE OF RIDING

Can a stock 125 enduro run with a modified 200 enduro? Not in most conditions. The Moose KDX200 barks more

like a 250, if you fan the clutch, but it still likes to be ridden like a 125 in sandwashes. The torquey 200 will pick its way through trials-like sections without clutch abuse, and it pulls evenly off the bottom. It's really, really hard to mess up with this motor. It chugs through deep water and mud, works well from turn to turn and revs its guts out in high-speed sandwashes. The 200 will also climb further up gnarly hills than the screaming WXE125.

We could only find one condition where the WXE works better than the KDX, and that's more a weight thing than a power one. On trails with a lot of corners, the WXE is easier to ride fast. It's not giving up a whole lot in midrange power, and the WXE's light weight, excellent brakes and awesome carving capabilities offset the comparative lack of power. Anywhere else, the KDX has the low-end torque and power advantage to make most obstacles with minimal effort. The WXE pilot will work the clutch and shifter a lot more than a KDX rider to go just as fast.

Both bikes start easily and have two-piece clutch covers, but comparisons stop there. The WXE has a much stronger clutch and smoother actuation. It also fades less when hot. Shifting is better on



KDX200 vs. WXE125

the WXE. It ought to be, because the 125 rider will be shifting twice as much. The kickstarter is on the right side on the KDX, but the WXE is backwards. It has a left-side starter and right-side chain. You will have to change the piston more often on the 125, too.

SPYING THE SUSPENSION

Stock for stock, the WXE suspension smokes the KDX, badly. The Moose KDX surprisingly holds its own against the WXE Showas, which have a travel advantage (almost a full inch in back) over the KDX. The beefed-up Kayabas soak up rocks, whoops and gullies without wallowing or bottoming. So do the WXE Showas. Both ends work very well on both bikes, but the Moose-modified KDX provides a slightly plusher ride on small rocks and roots. The Husqvarna has a slight advantage in really big whoops, due more to lighter weight and more travel than suspension superiority. Overall, the WXE wins the shock shootout, but we like the Moose KDX fork better than the Husky Showas in rocky stream beds and cross-grain terrain.

TURNING vs. STABILITY

If Fred Hoess tried to ride even the Moose-modified KDX200 like he does a WXE125, he would crash his brains out. The WXE outhandles the KDX in all categories or conditions. It corners much quicker and with less effort than the Kawasaki, and the Husqvarna is also more stable at speed. The heavier KDX reaches its full capabilities quicker, then starts flexing and swapping. In boulder fields or deep ruts, the WXE is narrower, has more ground clearance and doesn't catch its kickstand as easily as the KDX. The KDX still tries to tuck its front wheel in deep sand corners, and doesn't track as straight in really deep whoops. Again, this is a factor of weight and travel, but handling flaws are flaws, regardless.

GET ON THE BRAKES

This category is also a Husqvarna run-away. If you strapped 20 pounds to the WXE, it would still outbrake the KDX. The Husky front brake is much stronger

	1994 KAWASAKI KDX200-E6	1994 HUSQVARNA WXE125
Engine type	Reed- and power-valved, liquid-cooled 2-stroke	Reed- and power-valved, liquid-cooled 2-stroke
Displacement.....	198cc	124.6cc
Bore & stroke.....	66.0mm x 58.0mm	56mm x 50.6mm
Carburetion.....	35mm PWK Keihin	35mm TM Mikuni
Fuel tank capacity.....	3.2 gal. (12.7L)	3.4 gal. (14L)
Gearing.....	13/47, 6-speed	13/32, 6-speed
Lighting coil.....	Yes	Yes
Spark arrester.....	Yes	Yes
EPA-legal in stock form.....	Yes	Yes
Running weight w/no fuel.....	235 lb.	223 lb.
Wheelbase.....	57.1" (1450mm)	57.1" (1450mm)
Rake/trail.....	27°/4.4"	NA/4.0"
Ground clearance.....	13.4" (340mm)	14.6" (378mm)
Seat height.....	35.8" (909mm)	36.2" (919mm)
Tire size and type:		
Front.....	80/100-21 Dunlop K490	80/100-21 Dunlop K752F
Rear.....	110/100-18 Dunlop K695	110/100-18 Dunlop D752
Suspension:		
Front.....	Kayaba 41mm inverted cartridge fork, adj. comp., 11.8" (300mm) travel	Showa 45mm inverted cartridge fork, adj. comp./reb./prel., 12.5" (320mm) travel
Rear.....	UNI-TRAK, KYB alum. piggyback shock, adj. comp./reb./prel., 11.8" (300mm) travel	Showa alum. piggyback shock, adj. comp./reb./prel., 12.5" (320mm) travel
Country of origin.....	Japan	Italy
Suggested retail price.....	\$3599	\$4050
Distributor/manufacturer.....	Kawasaki Motor Corp. USA 9950 Jeronimo Rd. Irvine, CA 92718 (714) 770-0400	Cagiva North America 5 Washington Ave. Fairfield, NJ 07006 (201) 839-2600
REPLACEMENT PARTS COST		
Piston.....	\$63.47	\$124.00*
Rings(s).....	28.50	29.45
Air filter.....	40.80	15.30
Clutch plate (front).....	12.12 (7), 10.33 (1)	6.75 (7)
Clutch plate (driven).....	7.69 (7)	2.55 (6)
Front sprocket.....	18.18	15.05
Rear sprocket.....	38.49	51.00
Front brake pads.....	N/A	33.45
Rear brake pads.....	N/A	33.45

than the Kawasaki unit, and it provides better feel at the lever. Fading is a problem with the KDX rear brake, and actuation is pretty grabby when it gets hot. The WXE rear brake doesn't do anything weird, fade or try to lock up in every turn. We couldn't get the Husky rear brake to boil, either. Clearly superior.

ATTENTION TO DETAIL

Detailing on the WXE125 makes the KDX200 look like it was designed by Jethro Bodine, in between his brain surgeon and double-naught spy phases. The KDX has a single-sided removable frame member, one without welded-on back-up nuts, while the WXE has a full subframe made of aluminum. It also has toolless air filter access and metal hand guards. We wouldn't trust the molded radiator hoses in a big race, but everything else on the

WXE outshines the KDX componentry. Compared to the WXE, the KDX is very cobby and tractor-like. Where the WXE is thin and stiff, the KDX has a wide mid-section and soggy seat foam. Just by plopping your backside down on the bikes on a showroom floor, you can tell the WXE is a race bike and the KDX is geared more for trail riding. Surprisingly, replacement parts costs are lower for the Husqvarna than the KDX.

WHICH SHOULD YOU BUY?

If you are Fred Hoess, you already get WXE125s, free. Guys who ride like him should buy the 125. Supercrossers trying off-road racing will definitely be better off on the WXE125. It's light, handles great, and an experienced rider will have no trouble keeping the WXE125 on the pipe.



KDX200 vs. WXE125

If you happen to be Jeff Fredette, you are too old to change your riding style now. Stay on the KDX200. It rewards smooth riding and will put a Hoess-style rider on his head. What's so appealing about the KDX is that it's so bulletproof and easy to ride. It will torque through hideous sections or snap out of turns like a tame 250 or scream high-speed stuff like a cheater 125.

Which should you buy? We don't

know you, your abilities or your riding conditions. If you trail-ride mostly and race only occasionally, the Moose KDX is the hot ticket. It's very easy to ride and will go really fast with minimal effort. The WXE is more high-strung and demanding, but a good rider can make a WXE go faster, easier, than the modified KDX. Conditions also play a role. If terrain is more open, like at any western event, the Ocala Hare Scrambles, the Flat River GP or even Blackwater, we would go with the WXE125. Tight trails, mud and steep hills call for more power. At more grueling races like the Alligator en-

Power vs. weight: When the trails get really technical, there's no substitute for displacement, which goes hand-in-hand with power and torque. The Moose KDX200 will walk all over the Husqvarna 125 in this stuff, but curvy trails have the heavier KDX playing catch-up.

duro, Tecate, Mauna Kea or the New Wavery National, the Moose KDX200 would get the nod.

If the FIM joined the real world and put 200s and 125s together, which would we race? More often than not, we would pick the WXE125. □