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*Elsinore raceway has lots of sweeping turns and power-gobbling soft straights. In other words, it's KX250 country.*

# 2000 KAWAS





*If you liked the '99...*

By the Staff of DIRT BIKE



**“M**ore power,” the test rider said, “the 2000 model has more low-end, slightly less crankshaft inertia and possibly more overrev than the old KX250.” It was an excellent test report; specific, to the point, concise. We almost didn’t have the heart to tell him he had just ridden the 1999 model by mistake.

For the record, the 1999 KX250 has the Kawasaki logo in white. The 2000’s is in black. This isn’t a big change year for the KX250. Yes, there are mechanical changes, but the bike looks essentially unchanged. Kawasaki figured that the bike didn’t need to be changed. Almost everyone liked it last year. And the year before. Between 1998 and ’99 there were a lot of changes, but the bike’s position near the top of the class was the same. Last year, the Power Jet carb appeared along with narrower bodywork, and both the suspension and the powerband got a little softer. Enough for now, they figured.

# KAWASAKI KX250



# 2000 KAWASAKI KX250

## SIGNIFICANT BUT UNCHANGED

- Steel perimeter frame
- Separate hi and low-speed rear compression damping
- Rubber mounted handlebar
- Reversible bar mounts for more seat-to-bar room



*Most KXs sold never see the race track. The ones that do will need stiffer rear springs and that's all.*

*You want motor? You got it. The KX250 runs like crazy on the bottom, on the top and everywhere in between.*



get kicked in the pants. No other 250 jumps to life like this. And no other 250 makes power all the way up like this. The Kaw is a torque monster that screams.

On top of that, the jetting is spot-on. We never even opened up the carb, which is rare. Overall, the Kawasaki has the all-time, snarling-pit-bull powerband to beat all powerbands. It's fast.

## HIDDEN CHANGES

The 2000 model isn't quite as unchanged as it looks. For one thing, the porting is all different. The exhaust main port and sub ports are smaller, the KIPS power valve has changed (the main valve opens later and more decisively while the sub ports open more slowly). And now the Power Jet carb is being used for two different roles. You probably remember (maybe you don't; it's okay, no quiz) that the Power Jet spewed in a little extra fuel until the bike topped out, then cut the flow for more over rev. That hasn't changed. But Kawasaki also struggled with a lean spot down low, so the engineers decided to simply use the Power Jet to address that problem. So now the jet is off, then on, then off and then on again at

extremely high rpm (in case you crash with the throttle pinned open). The Keihin carb still uses a throttle position sensor to fiddle the ignition timing, which is remapped again this year.

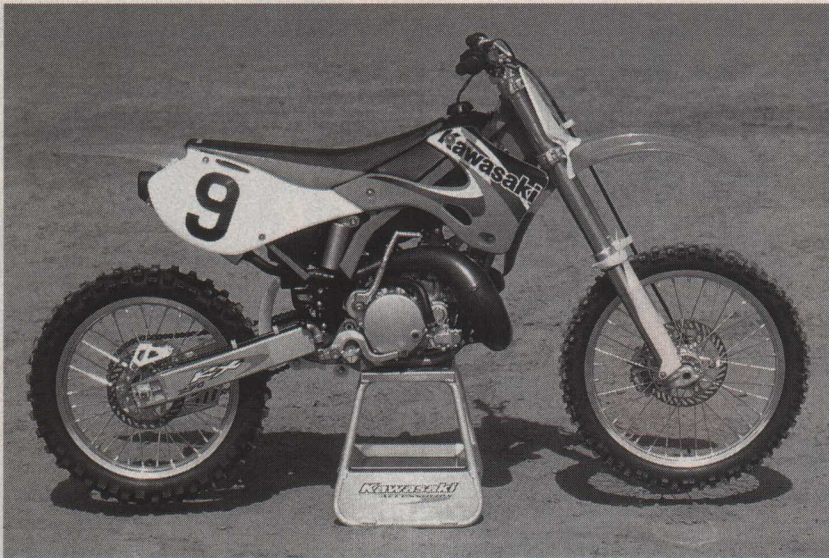
Messing with the engine was risky; it was already good. Maybe the best. But it seemed like the 1998 motor was even better. It had a harder hit down low, and Kawasaki decided that wasn't such a bad thing. The 2000 model has the hit back. The motor is super responsive right off the bottom. It feels like there's very little fly-wheel effect; you just twist it and you

## SIGNIFICANTLY CHANGED

- Bladder KYB fork
- Straight-rate fork springs
- New porting
- Bigger rod big end
- Smaller exhaust port
- Reworked KIPS mechanism
- Remapped ignition
- Polished shift drum pins
- Power Jet carb on at low rpm



# 2000 KAWASAKI KX250



*Last year, the KX got a big makeover. Some riders liked the old '98 KX better. For 2000, the KX has the best of the '99 and the best of the '98.*

## THINGS WE DON'T LIKE

- Soft rear suspension
- Mushy front brake
- Body work catches on rider's boot
- Easy-bend handlebar
- Easy-stretch chain

## RIDE IT SOME MORE

You can't help but play with the monster motor, just for giggles. You find yourself trying to get away with ridiculous things; third-gear, uphill starts, "let's see if I can do a lap without downshifting," and "let's see if I can do a lap without upshifting." Usually you get carried away and do things that make you slower. But it's fun just exploring the limits and discovering what the bike can do.

Eventually you have to settle down and go for some lap times. Last year the KX got big demerits for having the softest-feeling suspension that had ever come on any motocross bike this side of a PW50. This year, the rear end has bold new damping, but the same progressive spring and linkage ratio. Up

front there's a new KYB fork with a straight-rate (0.43 kg/mm) spring. The new fork uses an air bladder around the inner cartridge and a new low-speed compression valve that is actually *under* the

fork spring. What it all adds up to is suspension that's better, but still gets those same demerits for being too soft for the racetrack.

Certainly, the fork is an improvement. It's plush and can even stand up to big hits without bottoming. But the rear end is still ultra-soft, and now the bike is more unbalanced than before. The soft rear end makes the bike harder to turn because the steering geometry is constantly changing, and it even makes the bike less stable in straight line. You have a ton of adjustability these days with independently clickable high and low-speed compression damping. Our biggest complaint was the constant movement in the rear end, which is usually the domain of the

## THINGS WE LIKE

- Wide powerband
- Great low-end power
- Great throttle response
- Easy clutch pull
- Good shifting

## Kawasaki KX250

Engine type	Reed-valve, liquid-cooled two-stroke
Displacement	249cc
Bore & stroke	66.4mm x 72.0mm
Carburetion	38mm Keihin PWK Power Jet
Fuel tank capacity	2.3 gal. (8.5l)
Gearing	13/48
Lighting coil	No
Spark arrester	No
EPA legal	No
Running weight w/no fuel	230 lb.
Wheelbase	58.3" (1480mm)
Rake/trail	26°/4.3"
Ground clearance	15.0" (380mm)
Seat height	37.4" (950mm)
<b>Tire size and type:</b>	
Front	80/100-21 Bridgestone M77
Rear	110/90-19 Bridgestone M78A
<b>Suspension:</b>	
Front	KYB inverted cartridge, adj. reb./comp., 12.2" (310) travel
Rear	KYB aluminum piggyback, adj. preld./reb./Hi&low comp., 13.0" (330mm) travel
Country of origin	Japan
Suggested retail price	\$5699
<b>Distributor/manufacturer:</b>	
Kawasaki Motors Corp., USA 9950 Jeronimo Rd. Irvine CA 92618; (714) 770-0400	

low-speed clicker. By the time we got down to click number two (second hardest) and an extra quarter turn of hi-speed compression damping, we came to the conclusion that a stiffer rear spring should be on most KX-owners'

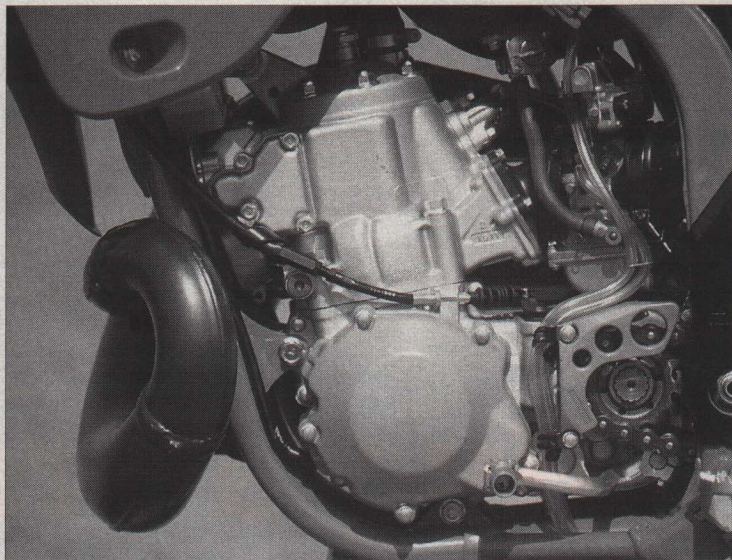


# 2000 KAWASAKI KX250

Christmas lists. In the front, you can probably get away with the stockers, although experts and pros will *have* to go stiffer. Kawasaki certainly knows all this, but also knows that 80 percent of the KXs sold never see a race track. But the way we see it, those bikes need to be revalved for trail riding anyway. The compromise doesn't suit anyone.

### ASIDE FROM THAT

Despite the soft rear end, the bike comes together well. Doing fast laps times just means using that awesome motor to its fullest potential. Come out of the turns in a tall gear, then let it rev all the way to the top. The KX just feels good. It doesn't feel quite as slender as a 2000 CR250, but the KX isn't far behind. You can flip the handlebar mounts



Maybe it's the Power Jet. Maybe it's the throttle position sensor. Maybe it's that funky mojo from Mars, but whatever it is, the KX has a killer motor.

around and get almost an inch more room in the rider compartment. Bigger riders liked the bars in the forward position, although quite a few riders said they wanted a position somewhere in the middle. It also has an easy clutch pull

and smooth shifting. It *doesn't* have very good brakes, though. There must be a test rider at Kawasaki who is afraid of brakes; every other year, when it's his turn to come up with final settings, the front brake gets really mushy. And while

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# 2000 KAWASAKI KX250

we're griping, those number plates still catch on some boots and lock the rider in place. It's an uncomfortable feeling.

In the end, we give the KX the same score as last year. It's an awesome motorcycle with the best motor in the 250 class. But it comes with trail bike suspension settings. It's easy enough to fix—most racers historically go for \$200 suspension rebuilds when all they need are \$80 springs.

Is the KX250 good enough to get away with that? Sure, we'll do almost anything to have that motor. On the right track, it's a guaranteed holeshot. What's the right track? Any one without other KX250s. □

**A matter of bladders: The new KYB bladder fork is the latest weapon in the battle of the bumps.**

## KYB BLADDER FORK

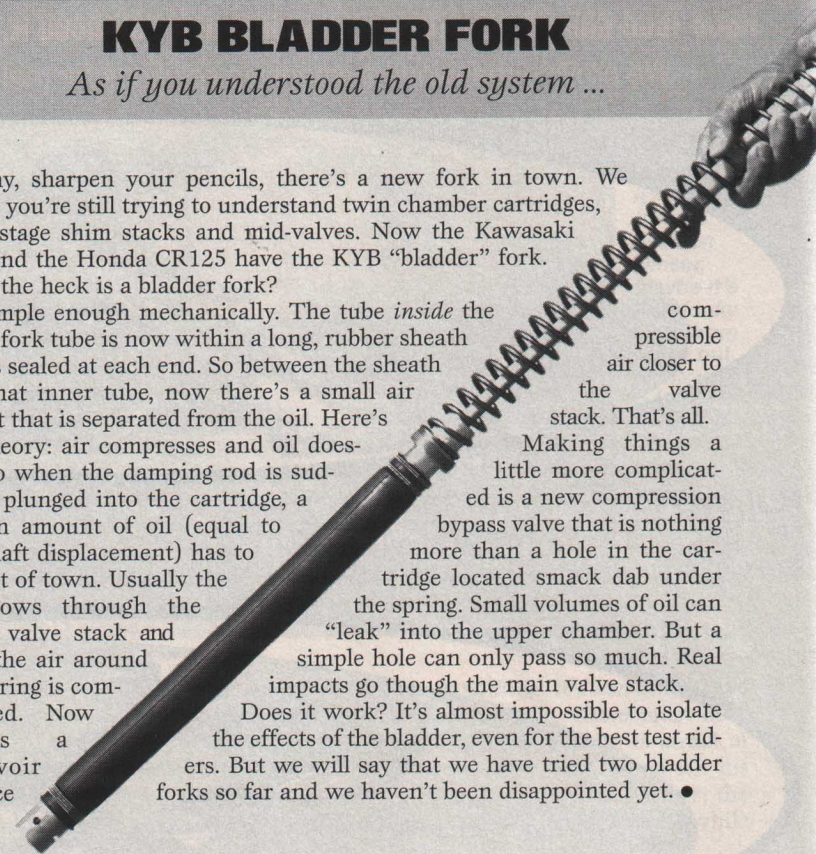
*As if you understood the old system ...*

• Okay, sharpen your pencils, there's a new fork in town. We know, you're still trying to understand twin chamber cartridges, multi-stage shim stacks and mid-valves. Now the Kawasaki KXs and the Honda CR125 have the KYB "bladder" fork. What the heck is a bladder fork?

It's simple enough mechanically. The tube *inside* the lower fork tube is now within a long, rubber sheath that is sealed at each end. So between the sheath and that inner tube, now there's a small air pocket that is separated from the oil. Here's the theory: air compresses and oil doesn't. So when the damping rod is suddenly plunged into the cartridge, a certain amount of oil (equal to the shaft displacement) has to get out of town. Usually the oil flows through the lower valve stack and then the air around the spring is compressed. Now there's a reservoir of nice

compressible air closer to the valve stack. That's all. Making things a little more complicated is a new compression bypass valve that is nothing more than a hole in the cartridge located smack dab under the spring. Small volumes of oil can "leak" into the upper chamber. But a simple hole can only pass so much. Real impacts go through the main valve stack.

Does it work? It's almost impossible to isolate the effects of the bladder, even for the best test riders. But we will say that we have tried two bladder forks so far and we haven't been disappointed yet. •



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97 10.28	97 48.65	97 217.02	97 264.67	97 108.52	97 7.94	97 46.80				
98 10.28	98 48.65	98 217.02	98 264.67	98 108.52	98 7.94	98 46.80				
99 10.28	99 48.65	99 217.02	99 264.67	99 108.52	99 7.94	99 46.80				
YZ 125/96 9.50	YZ 125/96 36.72	YZ 125/96 264.31	YZ 125/96 264.87	YZ 125/96 86.28	YZ 125/96 7.95	YZ 125/96 39.00				
97 9.50	97 36.72	97 264.31	97 264.87	97 86.28	97 7.95	97 39.00				
98 9.50	98 36.72	98 264.31	98 264.87	98 86.28	98 7.95	98 39.00				
99 9.50	99 36.72	99 264.31	99 264.87	99 86.28	99 7.95	99 39.00				
YZ 250/96 36.50	YZ 250/96 55.08	YZ 250/96 258.59	YZ250/96 278.06	YZ 250/96 109.71	YZ 250/96 7.95	YZ 250/96 39.00				
97 36.50	97 55.08	97 258.59	97 278.06	97 109.71	97 7.95	97 39.00				
98 36.50	98 55.08	98 258.59	98 278.06	98 109.71	98 7.95	98 39.00				
99 36.50	99 55.08	99 258.59	99 278.06	99 109.71	99 7.95	99 39.00				
FIBER PLATES	ALLOY PLATES	CLUTCH CABLES	CLUTCH LEVERS	FT. BRAKE LEVERS	BRAKE PEDAL	FRONT PADS	SWING ARM BEARINGS	RT. RADIATOR	RT. RADIATOR	
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97 7.25	97 9.99	97 13.99	97 15.88	97 17.95	97 58.18	97 48.08	97 18.03	97 290.75	97 ---	
98 7.25	98 9.99	98 13.99	98 15.88	98 17.95	98 58.18	98 44.37	98 18.03	98 290.75	98 ---	
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98 8.99	98 6.99	98 19.87	98 15.88	98 17.95	98 100.15	98 36.95	98 15.31	98 261.32	98 292.20	
99 8.99	99 6.99	99 19.87	99 15.88	99 17.95	99 100.15	99 36.95	99 15.31	99 261.32	99 292.20	
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