

SUZUKI RM250: STAGE 2 ALERT!

DIRT BIKE

MARCH 1982
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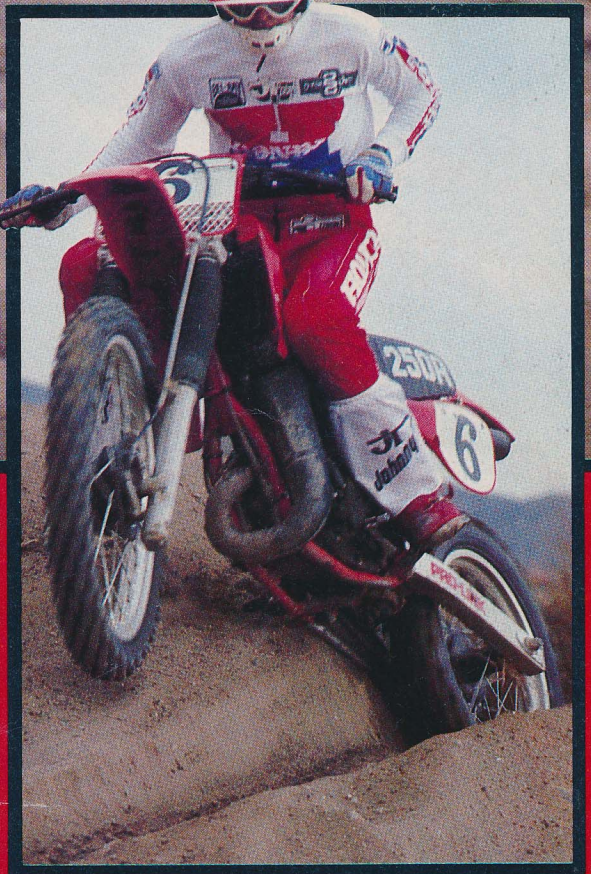
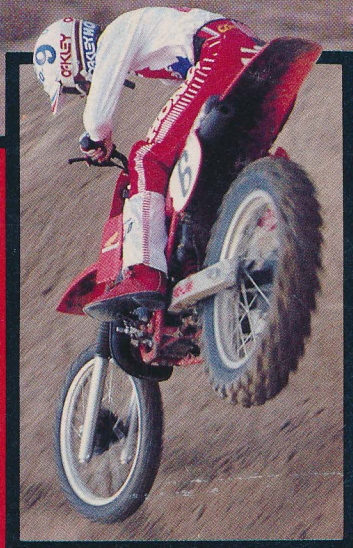
HONDA CR250: DeCoster's magic touch



**Johnny
O'Mara**

KDX 175: Still on top?

LOST POWER? Renew your roost



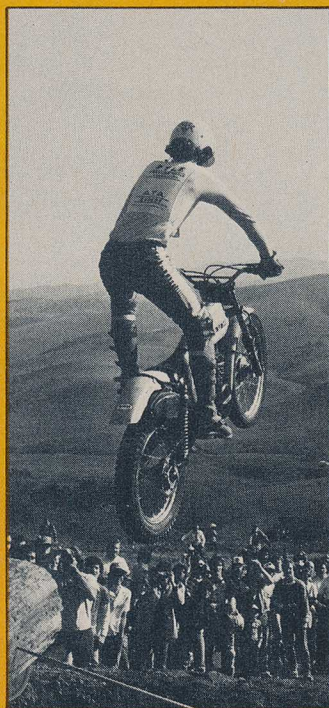
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YZ VS. RM



CAN-AM QUALIFIER



TRIAL DE ESPAÑA



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ON THE COVER: — Johnny O'Mara tries a number of poses on the all-new CR250; and yes, he did go on to win the race. Photos by Paul Clipper and Tom Webb.

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KAWASAKI KDX175A3

STILL KING OF THE HILL?

More horsepower, more torque, more better

By the Dirt Bike Staff



A quick glance at this year's KDX may leave a good number of people wondering whether or not it's been changed at all. It appears to be the same bike, and, indeed, the changes to the chassis and suspension are so slight, they seem unnoticeable. The forks and rear suspension are identical—still 9.8 inches of travel on both ends, with 36mm air-adjustable forks and a steel-bodied, non-adjustable rear shock absorber.

The single downtube frame is still the same, with minor changes in gusseting here and there; as a result, the overall handling of the KDX hasn't changed. We found that the best fork action could be obtained by using 10w fork oil, 10mm higher in the tubes than the stock recommendation. This is with zero air pressure in the forks, of course.

Since the rear end isn't adjustable for damping changes, the only creative tuning we could do was little more than meticulous maintenance. All the linkage points of the Uni-Trak were regularly lubed with a combination of Anti-Seize and waterproof grease. Every time the rear spring action ap-

Forks are 36mm Kayabas with 9.8 inches of travel. Front brake is strong and progressive, fades slightly when wet.

peared to soften (caused by the spring sacking slightly... a very normal condition), we would crank up the preload a hair.

Aside from the above, there was very little other tuning that could be done to the stock suspension. We were interested in using last year's bike in rough desert enduros, and in an effort to increase the amount of suspension travel, we replaced the forks and shock outright. This gave us 11.8 inches at both ends; we forever lost the ability to touch our toes to the ground. We also went to a larger carb and inlet tract modifications. For the full story on all this, scare up a copy of the September 1981 issue of *Dirt Bike*. Everything we changed on the '81 should work on the '82 with little problem.

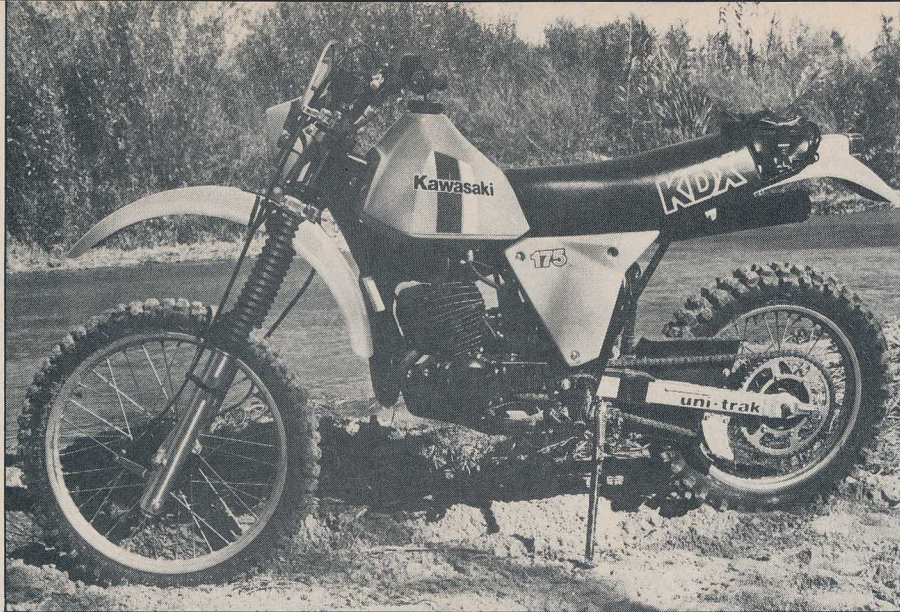
What we wound up with was the ultimate 175. For a real tight woods run, our modified '81 may have been a bit of overkill, but in the desert it was a pure joy to ride. The suspension soaked up everything without a fight;

the handling was perfect, and although the bike was a little peakier than a stocker, it had enough top-end horsepower to grind up anything less than a cliff.

CHANGING TIMES

After all the changing we did on the '81 bike, we had some definite ideas as to how we would prefer the '82 to turn out. Of course, as we said earlier, the suspension is unchanged for this year, but just for the record: It would have been nice to see a KX125 shock and 10½ inches in the rear, 38mm forks and 10½ in the front (11½ would be wild, but a bit much for most riders). Maybe, if we're really good and eat all our vegetables, we'll see these changes next year.

Just what is new? In a nutshell, the carb and cylinder. The carburetor is one of the new, 34mm oval bore Mikunis which appeared on the KX125 earlier this year. The oval bore is used because it gives higher mix velocity than a comparable round bore carb... or so they say. In this case, the carb was used to increase low- and mid-range response—adding a little bit of torque to the slightly peaky 175.

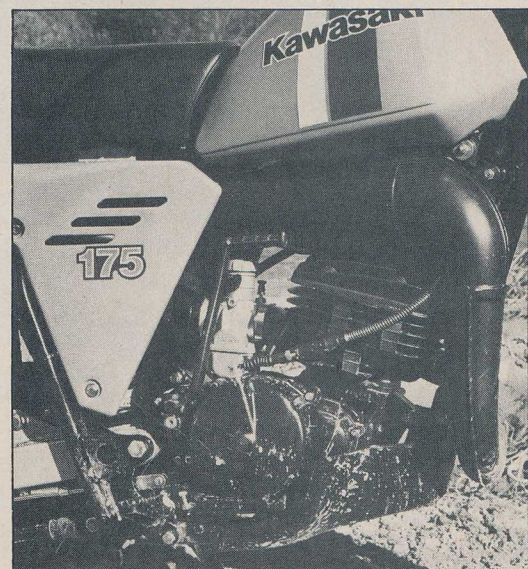


Rear end sports new "Uni-Trak" stickers, and otherwise remains the same. Rear brake arm can take a lot of abuse from rocks, without breaking.

KAWASAKI KDX175A3

ENGINE TYPE	Reed-valve, two-stroke
BORE AND STROKE	66mm x 50.6mm
DISPLACEMENT	173cc
HORSEPOWER (CLAIMED)	N/A
CARBURETION	34mm oval Mikuni
FACTORY RECOMMENDED JETTING:	
MAIN JET	157.5
NEEDLE JET	R-2
JET NEEDLE	5F53-3
PILOT JET	.20
SLIDE NUMBER	3.0
RECOMMENDED GASOLINE	Premium
FUEL TANK CAPACITY	10.5 liters (2.8 gallons)
FUEL TANK MATERIAL	Plastic
LUBRICATION	Pre-mix
RECOMMENDED OIL	Kawasaki two-stroke
OIL CAPACITY, TRANS.	.55 liter (.58 quart)
AIR FILTRATION	Oiled foam
CLUTCH TYPE	Wet, multi-plate
TRANSMISSION	Six-speed
GEARBOX RATIOS:	
1	2.69:1
2	1.68:1
3	1.28:1
4	1.04:1
5	0.86:1
6	0.75:1
GEARING, FRONT/REAR	12/52
IGNITION	CDI
PRIMARY KICK SYSTEM?	Yes
RECOMMENDED SPARK PLUG	NGK B9ES
SILENCER/SPARK ARRESTER	Yes/yes
EXHAUST SYSTEM	Up-pipe, right side
FRAME, TYPE	Single downtube
WHEELBASE	1460mm (57.5 inches)
GROUND CLEARANCE	300mm (11.8 inches)

SEAT HEIGHT	37 inches
STEERING HEAD ANGLE (RAKE)	28 degrees
TRAIL	120mm (4.7 inches)
WEIGHT WITH ONE GALLON GAS	228 pounds
RIM MATERIAL	Aluminum alloy
TIRE SIZE AND TYPE:	
FRONT	3.00 x 21 Bridgestone
REAR	4.00 x 18 Bridgestone
SUSPENSION, TYPE AND TRAVEL:	
FRONT	Air/spring Kayaba 250mm (9.8 inches)
REAR	Uni-Trak 250mm (9.8 inches)
INTENDED USE	Off-road, enduro
COUNTRY OF ORIGIN	Japan
RETAIL PRICE, APPROX.	\$1549
DISTRIBUTOR:	
Kawasaki Motor Corp.	
2009 East Edinger Avenue	
Santa Ana, California 92705	
PARTS PRICES, HIGH-WEAR ITEMS:	
PISTON ASSEMBLY, COMPLETE	\$37.30
RINGS ONLY	10.80
CYLINDER	121.73
SHIFT LEVER	10.22
BRAKE PEDAL	17.32
FRONT SPROCKET	11.22
OVERALL RATING, 0 TO 100, VARIOUS CATEGORIES, KEEPING INTENDED USE OF MACHINE IN MIND:	
HANDLING	98
SUSPENSION	95
POWER	99
COST	98
ATTENTION TO DETAIL	97
EFFECTIVENESS, STONE STOCK	98



Oval bore Mikuni carb and a new tri-port cylinder are the big changes for '82. Kick-starter is strengthened over last year's booter; is much more resistant to bending.

Whether or not the carb is mainly responsible, the engine has picked up some low-end grunt. The new engine has a much larger intake area (a "Tri-Port Intake" they call it), and the combination of the two changes has made for a big improvement in power delivery.

As with most of our tests, the first place we rode the KDX was on break-in day at Indian Dunes. Indian Dunes is nearly all sand, and the first thing we noticed was a tendency to spin the rear wheel at a much lower rpm than we were used to. At first we thought that the KDX was slower, but the problem was simple: the bike was pulling so hard at low rpm we couldn't get it to hook up. A quick change to harder ground opened our eyes... as long as

the surface offered good traction, the bike would literally rocket out of the turns. Wheelies were no problem, just crack the throttle open and the front end was clawing for the sky.

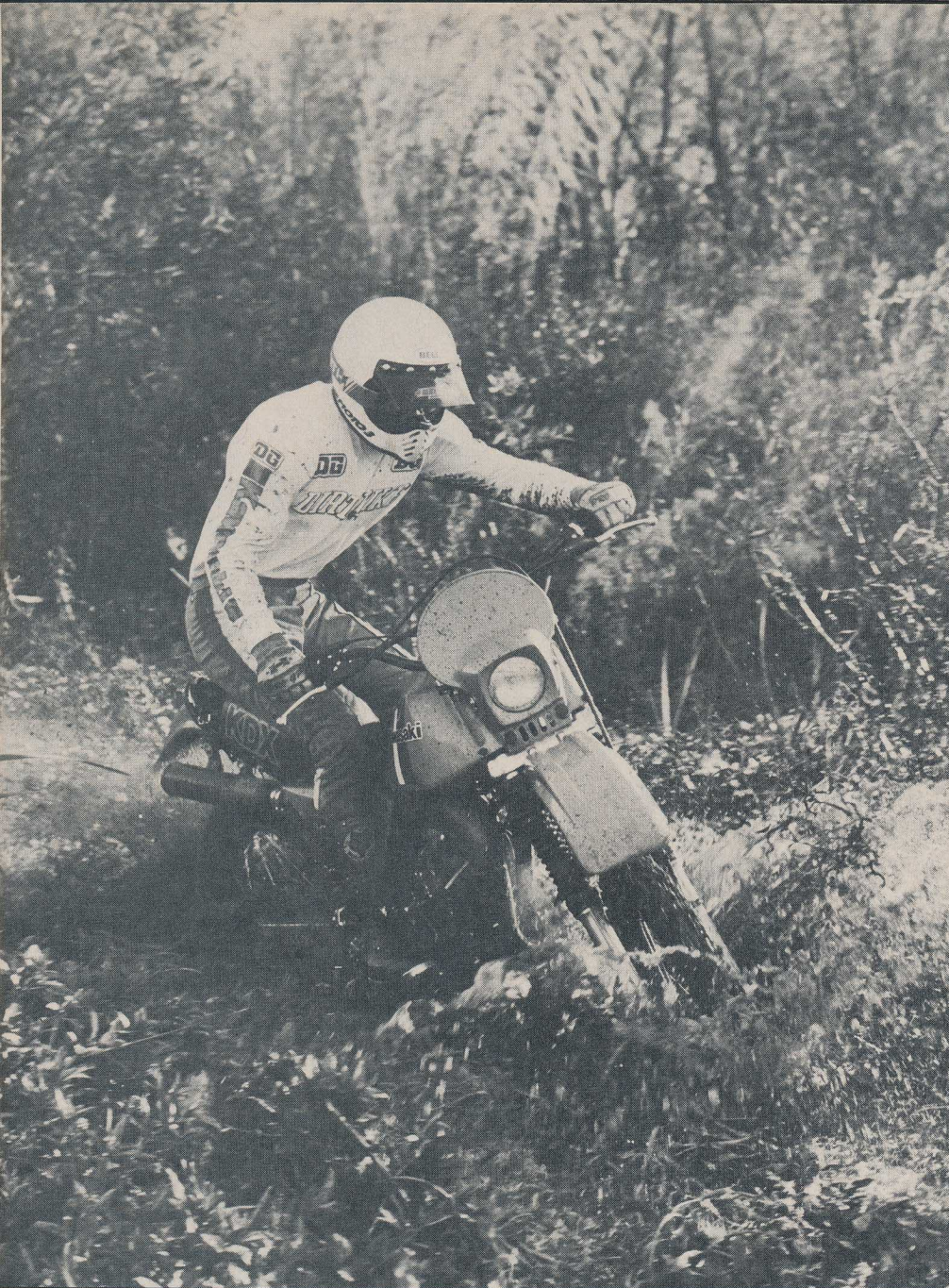
Soon after the first day, the KDX wound up as an entry in a local two-day enduro. This is where we started feeling the benefits of the new engine arrangements. In tight canyons and short, quick uphill, where quick acceleration was critical, the KDX was easier to ride than the older models. In many places where we'd need a lower gear to keep the speed up on the older bike, we could just leave the shifter alone and tweak the throttle for the blast over the top. As far as low-end torque goes, you couldn't ask for much more than what the '82 KDX

had to offer.

Thankfully, the new engine isn't all torque. The bike will still rev out like a 125 racer, and even though the transmission is identical to last year's effort, the bike feels as if the gearing has been lowered. It takes less time to get up to top speed, and the new KDX will use all of sixth gear without a struggle, even on a slight uphill grade.

RIDIN' FOOL

While all this high-speed engine work is going on, the suspension is getting a good workout. More power equals more workout in anybody's book, and we would like to have seen more travel and bigger forks on the KDX. The forks still soak up an amazing amount of abuse for their size, but they do flex slightly in bad whoops and



The new engine has plenty of torque, just right for flailing around in your local bog.

rocks. They are supposed to be unchanged from last year's forks, but ours felt as if the damping characteristics had been worked on, and they delivered a slightly smoother ride than the older KDXs. In the desert, you may wish for something longer and stronger, but for an eastern woods run, they should be nearly perfect.

The rear end, however, is starting to show its age. The steel-bodied shock will work fine in woods runs and spirited trailriding, but if you ride hard over gnarly terrain most of the time, you're going to want another shock. Really, the rest of the bike is so exceptional, it is sad that we haven't seen a shock change in three years. We've ridden KDXs with KX125 shocks installed, and the difference is like night and day.

The KDX's handling is still excellent. The front end sticks well—even with the stock tires—good rubber, but not great. With a Dunlop K139, or Metzeler, on the front, it is pure magic. With the long swingarm and wheelbase, the KDX is still the bike to beat through the whoops. It takes a lot of effort to get out of shape on this bike. And if you manage to get into tank-slappers with it, you know you've done something horribly wrong.

BITS AND PIECES

Problems of the past: Many, many people have reported cracking gas tanks on the original 175, the '80 model. Slight hairline cracks would form under the front brackets on the tank, and would start leaking fuel. This problem has been cured on the

'81 and '82 bikes, but just to be sure, add some foam padding between the backbone and the tank. This is a good idea on any bike, as a matter of fact.

More problems: We have heard of some frames cracking at the front downtube. Again, all on the other bikes. We rode a dozen enduros on the '81 with no problems. The front gusseting has been increased on the '82, so there is little danger of this trend repeating itself.

Shifting quirk: For some reason, fourth gear on the KDX will not tolerate a sloppy shift. When you upshift into fourth, it must be a solid boot on the lever, or you'll get a false neutral. We've noticed this problem on both the '81 and '82 bikes, but have yet to break a transmission. Not a serious problem, just an occasional nuisance.

The KDX still has a vibration problem. There's something about the engine that causes it to buzz like a hive of angry bees. The only problem we experienced from it was a loosening of engine mount bolts. Keep them tight; don't spare the Loctite.

One other change on the new KDX. It uses a larger silencer, the new one appears almost identical to the one on the KDX250. If you had an aluminum silencer on an '81 bike, and want to switch it to the new bike... well, sorry about that.

A new design of a gas cap is perched on top of the tank. A more gnarly, gripping surface makes it easier to loosen after a rough day on the trail.

Believe it or not, the KDX has a new shifter—with a non-folding tip! For shame, Kawasaki, for shame! Put aside a few more bucks for an aftermarket shifter.

Although we at *Dirt Bike* pledge allegiance monthly to the Suzuki odometer as an infallible enduro instrument, we have to admit that we rode a dozen enduros last year, using the stock KDX odometer, with no problems—except for the last race. After all those rides, we finally wound up pulling out the reset knob at a mileage marker. Still, that's a darn good record.

CURTAIN CALL

In summation, we like it. The power is better than ever; the suspension is starting to show its age; the handling is still perfect. In our opinion, the KDX could use a few more improvements, but it's far from disappointing in its present version. The best? Well, we haven't seen anything better... not yet. □