

YAMAHA'S NEW YZ125: HARDEST HITTING 125 IN '87

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DIRT BIKE

**KAWASAKI'S INCREDIBLE KX250:
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THIS...GIVE UP!**



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MARCH
1987

**HOW DO
YOU RATE
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RIDER?
TAKE THE
TEST,
PAGE 22**

**PROJECT
IT200:
THE MASTERPIECE
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**HONDA'S
NEW 250X 4-TRAX:
AN XR250 WITH 2 MORE WHEELS?**

ISSN 0863-1546

DIRT BIKE

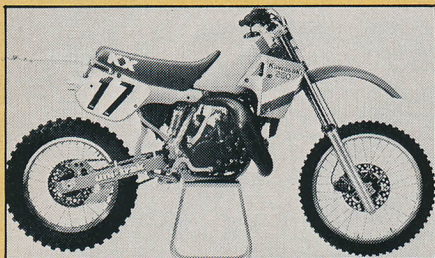
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HUSKY 430 CROSS COUNTRY



YAMAHA IT200 HOP-UP



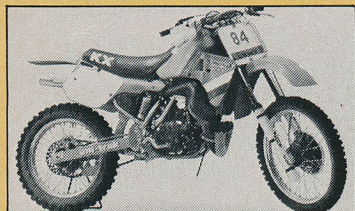
KAWASAKI KX250



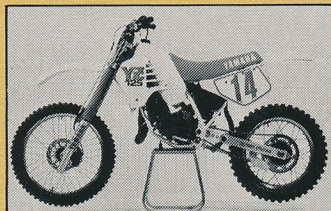
HONDA XR80



HONDA 4-TRAX 250X



BARSTOW TO VEGAS



YAMAHA YZ125

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.

Lee Waldie Craig Scott Chris Koira

ON THE COVER:—Steve Schmitz and Lance Johnson split the newest *Dirt Bike* cover aboard the latest rockets from Kawasaki and Yamaha. Schmitz (top), obliterates a corner on the potent KX250, and Johnson lofts the front end on the quick YZ125. Both photos were captured by "Fearless" Fran Kuhn. DeWest tastefully laid out the design, and Valley Film did the color separations.

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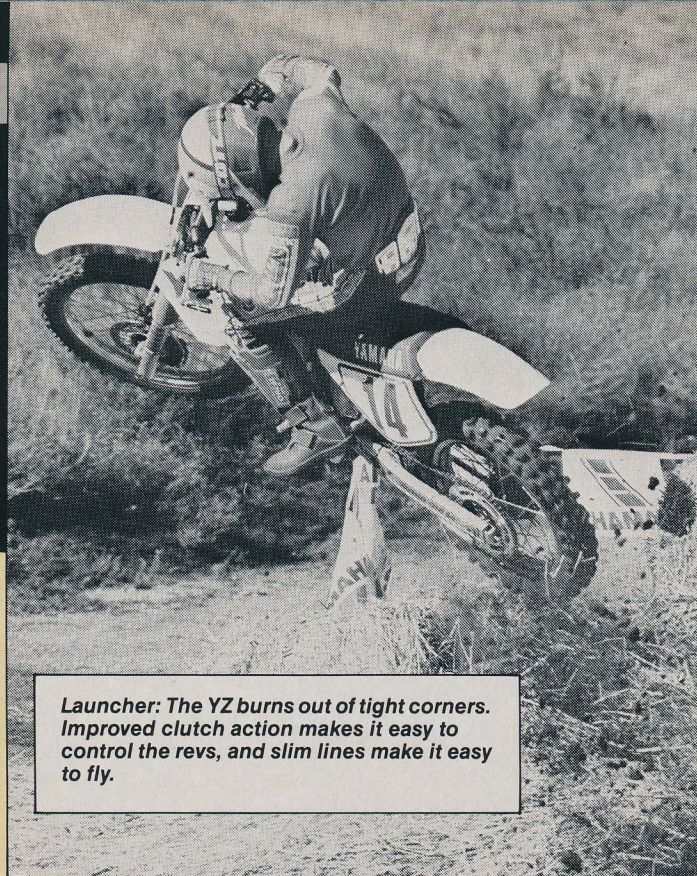


BOMB-SQUAD SPECIAL

YZ125: NO PRETENDER

The threat is real

By the Staff of DIRT BIKE



Launcher: The YZ burns out of tight corners. Improved clutch action makes it easy to control the revs, and slim lines make it easy to fly.



Flight plan: Neutral in the air, the YZ allows impressive rider gymnastics. Touchdowns are predictable, provided the pilot is experienced enough to hold his trajectory.

Of all the motocross bikes Yamaha has produced, none has had a more turbulent history than the YZ125. The company has had more than its share of success in the eight-liter class, but it suffered a major setback in 1985 when the bike was—next to the water truck—the slowest machine on the track.

The 1986 YZ was a lot better, but there were still a few quirks that slightly tarnished what was basically a good package. What the 1986 Yamaha YZ125 needed most was more attention to detail. With that in mind, we have a bit of good news for YZ fanatics everywhere: Yamaha made attention to detail more than a New Year's resolution—the company actually delivered on its commitment.

LOOKING BACK

Riders who bought 125 Yamahas in 1986 already know about the bike's problems: The motor was good, but not great; there was a potent jolt in the middle of the powerband, but not much after that; the engine displayed an annoying hesitation anytime the bike touched down hard (a problem eventually traced to the design of the main jet's splash guard); and the forks were only average performers. The YZ's shifting and clutch action weren't all that great, either.

Of course, the machine had a lot of good points, too. The rear suspension package was the best of any stock 125, and the level of stability in rough sections was outstanding. Overall, it was the best-handling 125cc racer in 1986.

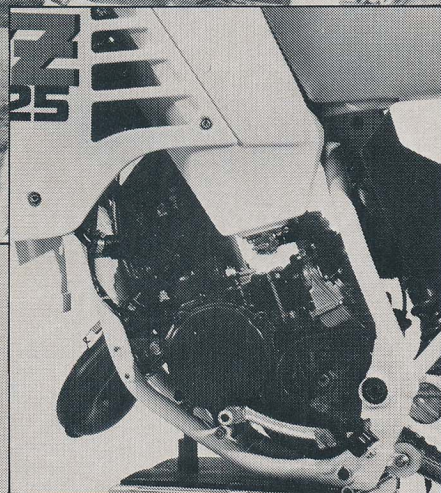
UNDER THE HOOD

Yamaha started its 1987 revisions with engine mods aimed at improving the bike's low-to-mid-range delivery and eliminating the hesitation and popping encountered on hard landings. The latter was rectified by installing a redesigned fuel baffle plate in the

YZ125



Slip and shift: The '87 YZ transmission is still a shade notchy, but more precise than last year's. The lever bends are acceptable, but the metal is too soft. We hated the bars and replaced them with a set of Hannah-bend Answer Product units.



Getting more low-to-mid-range boost was the objective; Yamaha streamlined the intake and exhaust systems to provide better fuel delivery and scavenging. Power is completely competitive. The exhaust header hangs too low—we smashed ours in a deep-grooved turn, pushing the entire unit up into the fuel tank.

carb. The rest of the intake tract was revised to improve breathing efficiency, and the port configuration was altered, as well.

Breathing was improved through use of a larger air filter—the same unit found on the YZ250 and 490 models. An external fly-wheel CDI replaces last year's internal rotor unit, further smoothing the power pulses. The YPVS valve dumps into a new expansion chamber that's capped by a lightweight aluminum silencer. The muffler is now easily rebuildable, thanks to a screw-on end cap.

The rest of the internal changes are minor, mostly aimed at improving reliability. The tranny has new ratios that are slightly wider and more in tune with the engine's revised power output.

MORE NEW STUFF

In terms of sheer firepower, the 1987 YZ125 is outgunned in one way or another by the rest of the Big Four's machines. That's not really bad news, because none of the other machines has the YZ licked in all departments at once. The Kawasaki has slightly more mid-range muscle, the Honda more mid-range and top end, and the

Suzuki will rev into a higher league than the white bike. The Yamaha's strength is in the basement. It pulls with a fierce surge right off the bottom, then tears into a potent mid-range. Top-end overrun isn't a strong point, but the overall spread is very effective for a rider who likes to short-shift. Good off the line, good out of the corners, and good everywhere else—provided you're quick to get the bike into the right gear at the right time. Is it competitive? Yes. This is one bomber that prefers to do its strafing at low altitudes. Keep it there, and it delivers the mail.

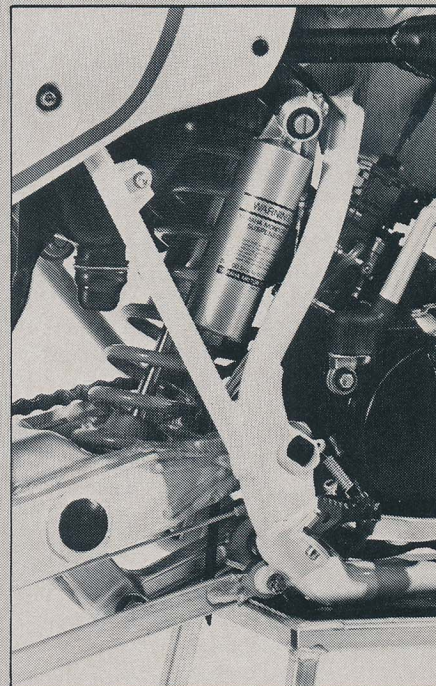
SIX PACK

Yamaha transmissions haven't been the best the past few years, but the latest 125 box isn't all that bad. It's not as smooth as a Honda, but it does get the job done without too much stress on the rider. If your concentration level drops, the tranny has a tendency to slip into neutral. It takes a deliberate effort to make clean jumps between cogs, but the action is precise. Pay attention to what you're doing, and you won't have any problems.

Yamaha also managed to eliminate the grabbiness that plagued last year's clutch. The pull is light, and the engagement is gradual enough to offer excellent control. It's capable of handling a high level of abuse. All in all, the transmission/clutch package is more than enough to satisfy most riders. We liked it enough not to worry about it.

HOT HANDLES

The 1987 YZ125 is still a handler. Like last year's bike, its strongest point is incredible stability in the rough. You can handle terrain on this bike that Honda pilots would lose their lunch over, and you can do it



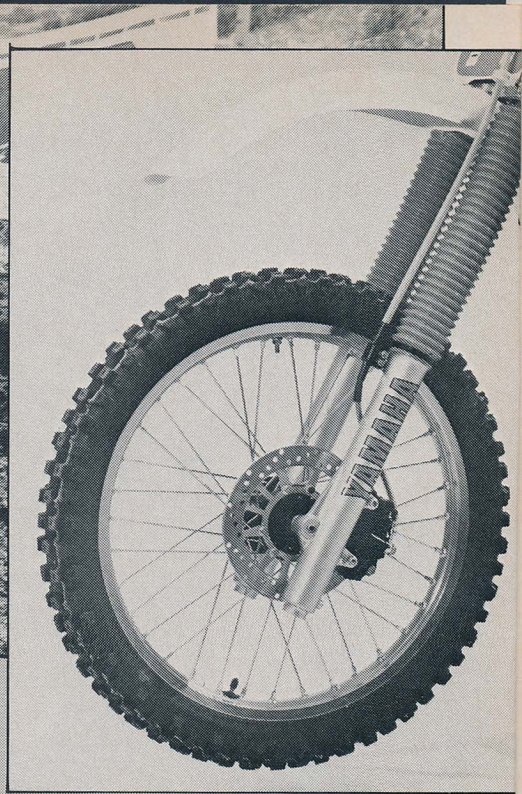
Good ratios, good damping, good lap times: The BASS Monocross isn't the most supple package around, but it's incredibly stable and consistent.

without breaking out in a sweat. Most of the credit has to go to the rear suspension. The shock exhibits good damping characteristics, and the revised leverage ratios of the linkage system float the rear across potholes and jumps without twisting the bike into a flying pretzel. Yamaha riders will make time on everyone else if the track is really ugly. One feature we didn't care for was the



Yamaha has managed to produce a bike that's both stable in the rough and precise in the corners. Only a Honda will turn tighter.

YZ125



Another set of initials: Yamaha calls its new fork valving "Variable Damping" or "VD." Even with the revised setup, the action is harsh.

Mono's harshness. It could still benefit from more supple action, especially on the low-speed compression damping curve. In short motos, riders will become uncomfortable; in long races, they'll tire more quickly. Depending on the pilot's level of experience, this could be a very sticky point.

Still, it's a lot better than last year's suspension. The rest of the handling package is good, and with the same frame as last year's, the bike still wails in the corners. Basically, it goes where you point it. No problems there.

LOOKING AHEAD

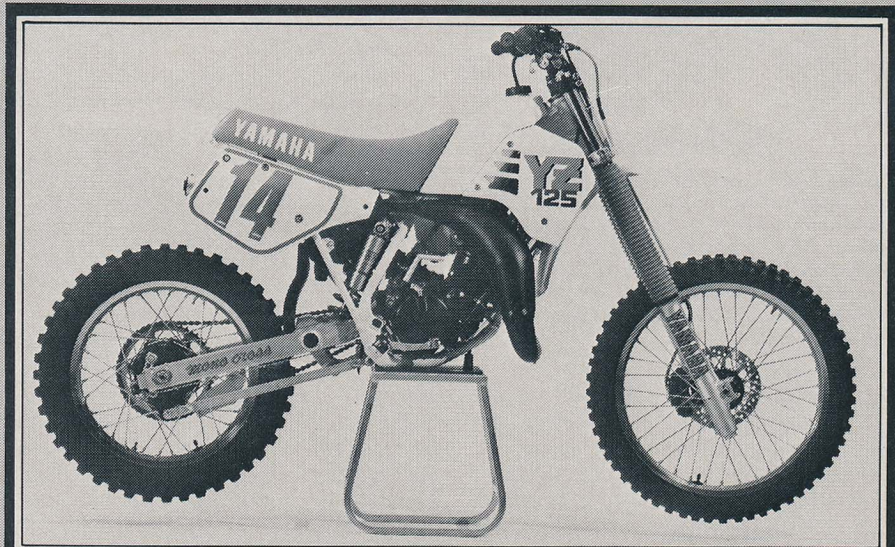
The forks are harsh. Yamaha introduced another set of initials to the world of motocross with its Variable Damping (VD) system. We'd rather it had introduced a better pair of forks. The new tubes certainly can't be classified as bad performers, but they do pump up your forearms on the way to the checkers. The idea behind the VD system is to provide supple damping in a fork that resists bottoming. The fork does resist bottoming, but the damping isn't that close to the mark. We'll have to work on them for a while before figuring out what the problem is. Overall, they're average at best.

MORE DETAILS

The bike's fit and feel are good. Most riders were right at home aboard the YZ, but we did have a few minor complaints. One of the test pilots kept hooking the top of his boot under the right side of the gas tank. The levers are too soft and bend the first time they touch down. The bars are poor—not fit to be found on any Yamaha product. They have a weird stock bend, but that changes the first time the bike falls over. Then they have a weird custom bend. Even if you feel comfortable with the stock configuration, they probably won't survive a whole moto. The tires are great on hard tracks, and good in medium terrain. Chain and sprocket life has been good, though the chain does stretch out quite a bit when new. Keep a close eye on the spokes for the first few rides—they loosen in a hurry.

THE LAST LAP

Yamaha's attention to detail has paid off. Last year's bike was capable of winning in the right hands, and Yamaha simply took the 1986 package and fine-tuned it. It works, and it will win races again in 1987. If you like Yamahas and have money to spend, buy this bike. You won't regret the decision. □



1987 YAMAHA YZ125T

Engine type	Single-cylinder, liquid-cooled, 2-stroke	Silencer/spark arrester	Yes/no
Bore and stroke	56.0mm x 50.0mm	Wheelbase	1450mm (57.1 in.)
Displacement	123cc	Ground clearance	350mm (13.8 in.)
Carburetion	34mm Mikuni	Seat height	935mm (36.8 in.)
Factory recommended jetting:		Rake/trail	27.5°/115mm
Main jet	270	Claimed weight	199 lbs.
Needle jet	Q-2	Tire size and type:	
Jet needle	7DJ1-2	Front	80/100-21 Bridgestone M23
Pilot jet	50	Rear	100/100-18 Bridgestone M22
Slide number	3.0	Suspension, type and travel:	
Fuel tank capacity	7.5 L (1.65 gal.)	Front	Variable Damping Telescopic, adj. comp., 305mm (12.0 in.)
Lubrication	Pre-mix	Rear	BASS Monocross, single KYB shock, adj. comp./reb., 315mm (12.4 in.)
Gearbox ratios:		Intended use	Motocross
1	2.583:1	Country of origin	Japan
2	2.000:1	Suggested retail price	\$2299
3	1.600:1		
4	1.333:1		
5	1.181:1		
6	1.086:1		
Gearing, front/rear	13/50	Distributor/Manufacturer:	
Ignition	CDI	Yamaha Motor Corp.	
Recommended spark plug	NGK B9EGV, B9EG or Champion N-84, N84G	6555 Katella Ave.	
		Cypress, CA 90630	

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