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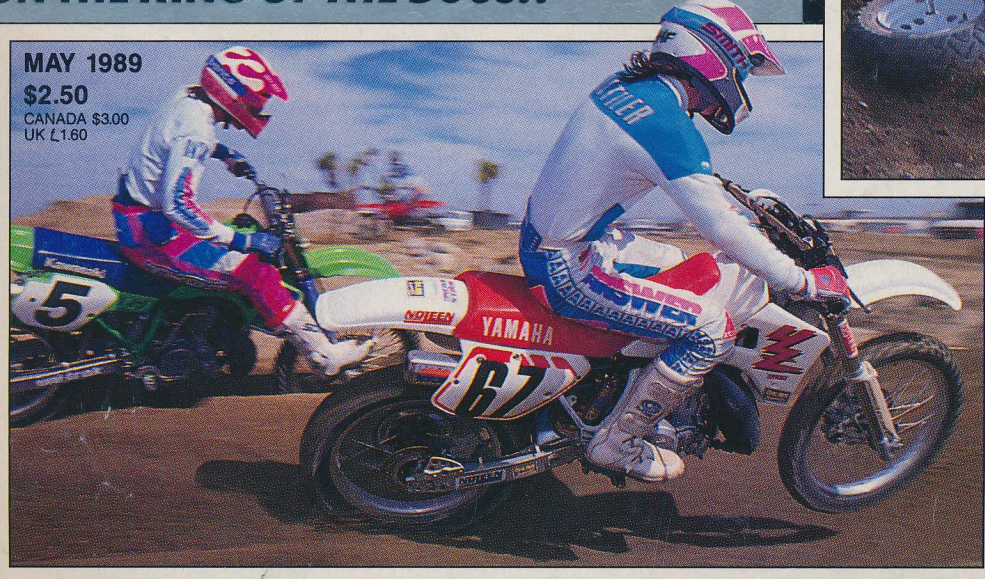
DIRT BIKE

YZ360 vs. KX500!

YAMAHA'S HOT NEW SCREAMER TAKES ON THE KING OF THE 500s!!

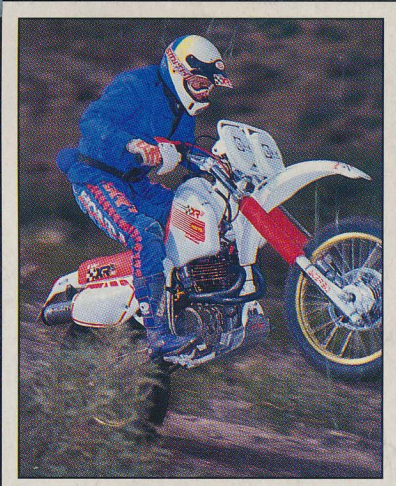


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ISSN 0364-7648



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Riding school was never like this

ON THE COVER:—What better way to shoot the only water-cooled four-stroke sport machine than to capture an exploding water aerial? Steve Casper is in the saddle on the Kawasaki 250 Mojave and Jeff Maas snapped the photo. The Table of Contents photo is of Derek Nye on our DesertRax 250R. Chris Hultner was behind the lens. Cover design by DeWest and color seps by Valley Film.

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.

DIRT BIKE Magazine, ISSN 0364-1546 (May '89) is published monthly by Daisy/Hi-Torque Publishing Company, Inc., with editorial offices at 10800 Sepulveda Boulevard, Mission Hills, California 91345. Subscriptions \$15.98 for 12 issues (one year). Canada add \$5 per year, and all other foreign add \$6 per year for additional postage. Copyright ©1989 by Daisy/Hi-Torque Publishing Company, Inc. All rights reserved. Nothing in this magazine may be reprinted in whole or in part, by mimeograph or any other means, without the express permission of the publisher. Contributors: Photographic submissions must be 5x7 or 8x10 glossy black and white, or 35mm and larger color slides. Please mark each photo with owner's name and address. Manuscripts should be typewritten. Unsolicited contributions, manuscripts, photographs and illustrations must be accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope. Unless special arrangements are made in advance, all published material becomes the sole property of Daisy/Hi-Torque Publishing Company, Inc. The publisher does not assume responsibility for unsolicited material. Second class postage paid at San Fernando, California 91340, and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *DIRT BIKE* Magazine, P.O. Box 9502, Mission Hills, California 91345-9502. Printed in USA.



YZ360 vs. KX500

By the DIRT BIKE Staff

Shootout

In case you missed our last issue, Team Yamaha will campaign in the '89 500 Nationals, but they will be racing YZ250s converted to 360cc instead of the ancient YZ490s. Micky Dymond, Shaun Kalos and Doug Dubach are slated to pilot production bikes featuring the Ohlins-made, Noleen Racing-distributed big-bore kits, but the question is whether or not the lightweight 360s will be competitive with full-blown 500s on the National level.

Noleen installed the \$1206 kit (which includes a spare piston, rings and gaskets) on our '89 YZ250 (for \$145 labor), along with an Ohlins piggyback rear shock (\$495) and heavier fork springs (\$49.95), and revalved

the USD forks for more progressive action. A taller countershaft was installed to smooth out the additional torque into forward thrust. After break-in we put the bike through motocross and off-road torture tests, then shot it out with the open-class champion, the Kawasaki KX500, to see how it stacks up to the full 500s.

FOR A FISTFUL OF TORQUE

Starting the 360 requires a healthier kick than the YZ250, and it takes more kicks to get lit when cold. During warm-up everyone noticed an increase in vibration over the 250, but it was not annoying. Underway, the immense increase in torque was instantly noticeable, even with the 15-tooth countershaft. The bike is much more explosive when it comes on the power valve, then it flattens

out faster than the 250. It still pulls into the upper revs, but the actual curve feels much flatter, and it falls off faster. Short-shifting is the hot setup for riding this machine; it wants to be ridden more like a 500 than a 250.

Rear damping action is excellent over whoops, G-outs and jumps, but action is still stiff over small ripples and square-edged holes. This seems to be a function of the rear leverage ratios and spring rate. Action up front is much improved; the stiffer springs and high-speed damping eliminate fork bottoming and reduce headshake, while the lighter low-speed damping and 0mm of preload smooth action over small bumps.

Overall, the Noleen YZ360 is easier to ride than the stock YZ250. It vibrates a bit more



but handles much better and requires less attention to shifting and clutching than the 250. Torque is awesome and reminds us of the '89 CR500R, while the light weight of the 250 is retained.

YZ360 vs. KX500

For fairness in testing, we installed fresh Bridgestone M62s on both bikes. Kickstarting the YZ360 is much easier than cranking over the big KX500; this is a definite advantage in races with dead-engine starts. Vibration of the KX and YZ is equal, which is to say much less than the YZ490.

Drag-racing the YZ360 and KX500 resulted in four wins for the YZ and six for the KX out of ten tries. The YZ requires less concentration on clutch and throttle control than the KX, but the green machine has a

clear advantage as we stretched out into the upper gears. On short-start straights the YZ has the advantage, and the KX is dominant on long-start straights. Likewise, in wide-open desert events the KX500 has the top-speed advantage.

Motocross testing was conducted on a rough, brutally whooped sand track. The YZ360 consistently turned faster lap times, and riders were able to turn more laps on the YZ than on the heavier KX500. Testers preferred the Kawasaki suspension, due to the smoother ride on square-edged holes, and dug the KX stability over the whoops, but the lighter YZ was much easier to turn and preload over bumps. The nimble YZ360 made pivots and railed the berm with less effort than the longer and heavier KX500,

although the KX was more stable over the whoops. Riders were able to cut more laps on the YZ360, as fighting the KX in turns sapped energy more quickly.

DOES MICKY HAVE A CHANCE?

If Micky gets healthy, he definitely has the machinery to run with Johnson, Stanton, Ward and Lechien in the 500 Nationals. The Noleen YZ360, although down on horsepower compared to full 500s, is extremely easy to ride and doesn't tire the racer as quickly as the monster 500s. The bike is so light that Team Yamaha may even have to add a steel skid plate to the bike just to make it AMA-legal. For local motocrossers and off-road racing at all levels, the YZ360 is almost an unfair advantage in the open class!




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COLORS: White with Blue and Yellow graphics
White with Red and Blue graphics
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SIZES: 6 $\frac{1}{2}$, 7, 7 $\frac{1}{4}$, 7 $\frac{1}{2}$, 7 $\frac{3}{4}$, 8, 8 $\frac{1}{2}$, 8 $\frac{3}{4}$

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Nothing Else Comes Close.



YZ360 vs. KX500



Noleen converted our YZ250 into an AMA-legal 360 (except for weight) and they reworked the YZ USD forks and installed an Ohlins rear shock. Aside from porting and an assortment of works parts, this is the bike Micky Dymond will ride in the 500 Nationals.

Cornering the YZ360 is much easier than the KX500, but the YZ isn't as stable on the straights, especially in sand. The full 500s accelerate faster but also tire the rider faster than the lighter 360.

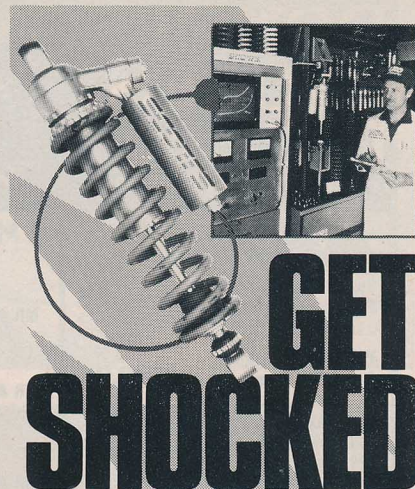
Flicking the YZ360 around is much easier than trying to muscle a full 500; in fact, the YZ360 is so light that 2-3/4 lbs. need to be added to meet the 500 National weight limit of 225 lbs. ▶



Drag-racing the YZ360 and KX500 ten times resulted in six KX wins to the 360's four wins. On top-end (with stock gearing) the KX500 will run away and hide but the YZ holds its own on short-start straights and on tight tracks.

LAP TIMES: YZ360 VS. KX500

RIDER/BIKE	LAP 1	LAP 2	LAP 3	LAP 4	LAP 5
Trittler/KX500	58.30	57.92	58.37	58.39	58.73
Trittler/YZ360	58.01	57.56	57.73	58.19	57.83
Grant/KX500	104.71	103.68	104.23	104.51	104.47
Grant/YZ360	103.82	103.21	103.51	102.97	103.07



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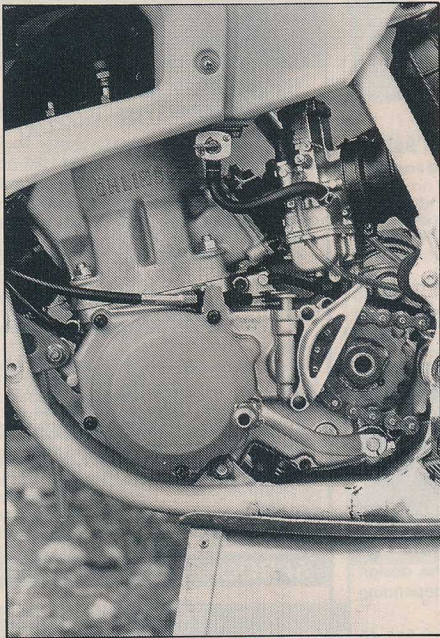


2625 Honolulu Ave., Montrose, CA 91020

Mark Blackwell suffers hearing loss.

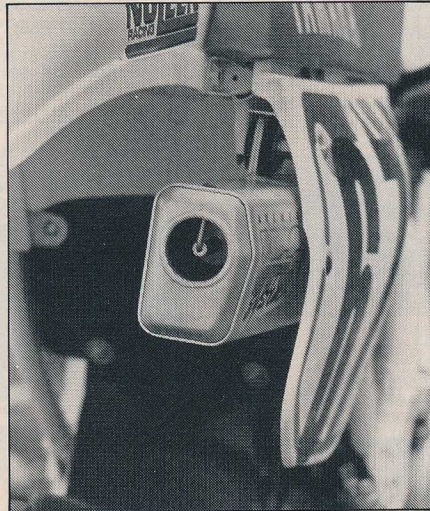
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YZ360 vs. KX500

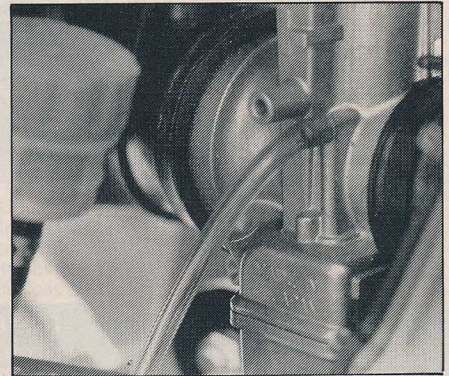
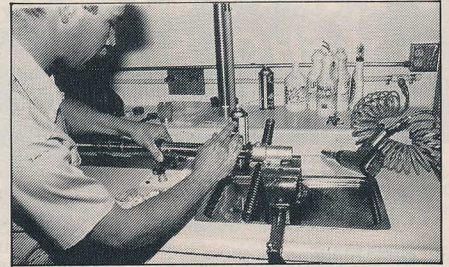


Where the 250 power valve acts as the top edge of the exhaust port, the 360 setup is like a booster port. A pencil-sized rod that has an elongated port through its length blocks a booster port above the exhaust port. When the revs build, the rod turns and "opens" the sub port, effectively raising port height.

Noleen stiffened fork action with heavier spring and more progressive high-speed compression valving; they decreased harshness by lightening low-speed compression, going to 0mm of preload and thoroughly lubing the friction points. ▶



Torque is increased with the 360cc kit and we further enhanced low- and midrange with Answer's new Variable Flow Control muffler, which increases back pressure at low revs and decreases noise output (Dec. '88 DIRT BIKE).



An '88 YZ250 intake manifold and reed assembly are needed to convert the '89 YZ and we had trouble with our airbox boot pulling off of the carb until we replaced the wimpy stock clamp with an automotive hose clamp. □

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module in conjunction with the patented "Cobra Diaphragm," Hush Puppies work like no other spark arrestor silencer before.

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