

KAWASAKI
KX80E3

CRASH GATE CRASHER!

More firepower for the leader

By the DIRT BIKE mini Staff



Airborne stability is no problem on the relatively large KX.

Kawasaki's KX80 flat won everything last year. Every shootout in every magazine, and nearly every race a decent rider entered. The bike was not perfect; sheer horsepower was the key to all that winning, and in the end we all asked the obvious question—would Kawasaki maintain that awesome lead for '85, or would the boys in the back room try to outdo themselves once again?

MORE GRINDING, MORE MOTOR

Now that the new bike is here, Kawasaki's intentions are obvious. Rather than sit on their tails, they have chosen to try to dig even more power out of this highly stressed engine. They didn't really do anything exotic—probably because they're already running out of metal inside that small cylinder. The intake and exhaust ports have been re-profiled, the expansion chamber has been redesigned, and a thicker intake reed has been installed; all in an effort to broaden the powerband and increase the mid-range punch.

And it seems they've succeeded. Our testers report that the new KX doesn't feel significantly slower overall, but the increase in bottom end has made the bike just slightly easier to ride. Rather than frantically try to downshift every time the KX falls off the powerband, as in '84, the new engine allows a much more controlled attack. Riders report much more grunt overall, and in fringe situations it is possible to remain in a gear and use the clutch to get the back wheel spinning, rather than take the time to downshift.

In an effort to keep the clutch in one piece, two more plates have been added—one friction and one steel—and the clutch is not more difficult to pull, even with the extra hardware. The transmission remains the same, which is good. The KX won points last year for slick shifting, and it is just as slick for '85.

BOUNCE FACTOR

Much attention has been paid to the KX's rear suspension. The first change that greets the eye is a brand-new aluminum box-section swingarm, replacing the steel unit of last year. What isn't as obvious is the 15mm longer length of said swingarm. Zerk fittings are now installed at all the grease points for easier maintenance, and a compression damping adjuster has been added to the shock.

The improvement is noticeable. The rear suspension is slightly firmer, which it needed, and now riders can tune in the compression damping to match the bumps on the track. Nothing significant has been done to the KX forks, and our testers complained once again that they were too soft. The back end also is slightly soft, but we didn't receive so many complaints about it this year. Still, considering the amount of travel available, KX pilots still swear that it is worth buying new springs for both ends, rather than switching to a different brand of bike. A very loyal lot, they are.



KAWASAKI KX80E3

Kawasaki had the most horsepower in the 80cc class last year, and this year they went for more low-end power. The KX will still rev, but bottom-end response is much better.



Naturally, with the soft suspension the handling is slightly confused. The bike tends to wallow under a heavier rider, and it doesn't deliver a great amount of confidence. One of our riders brought out a modified KX for comparison purposes, and his bike won the hearts of all. With both ends set up for the rider's weight, the handling improves dramatically.

BITS AND PIECES

Our testers didn't seem too concerned about it, but their fathers were thrilled—the airbox has been changed for '85, and it's no longer necessary to remove the *bike* from the *air filter*. The box lid is not designed like the bigger KXs, and it makes a huge difference to those who have to clean filters.

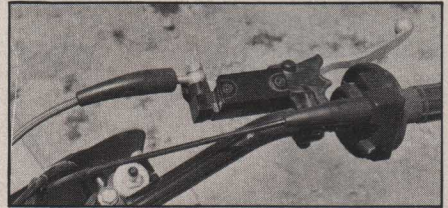
Two quick kicks was the maximum effort ever needed to get the KX lit off. All our riders praised the location of the kickstarter.

The brakes are still eye-poppers. Non-KX riders had grief with them at first; they would get on the brakes too soon and then have to gas it into the corner when the bike stopped too short. One finger will deliver a front wheelie with this disc.

Long travel means high saddle, and shorter riders may not be too comfortable on the KX. All riders would be well advised to replace the bars with something lower—not



Kawasaki mini riders everywhere love the front disc. For the racing speeds the KX attains, this brake is necessary.



The master cylinder and plumbing for the disc brake is cobby and rather vulnerable. Most riders rig up some sort of guard.



A new swingarm and retuned suspension are improvements for 1985. Our testers praised it for longer travel and a cushier ride.

KAWASAKI KX80E3

Engine type	Liquid-cooled 2-stroke	Wet weight, no fuel	136.25 lbs.
Bore and stroke	48mm x 45.8mm	Tire size and type:	
Displacement	82cc	Front	80/90-17 Dunlop
Carburetion	29mm Mikuni	Rear	110/90-14 Dunlop
Factory recommended jetting:		Suspension, type and travel:	
Main jet	200	Front	Kayaba oil/spring forks, 255mm (10.03 in.)
Needle jet	P-2	Rear	Uni-Trak, adj. reb. damping, 260mm (10.23 in.)
Jet needle	6EJ3-3	Intended use	Mini motocross
Pilot jet	30	Country of origin	Japan
Slide number	2.0	Retail price, approx.	\$1079
Fuel tank capacity	4.7 L (1.24 gals.)	Distributor/Manufacturer:	
Lubrication	Pre-mix	Kawasaki Motors Corp.	
Gearbox ratios:		2009 E. Edinger Ave.	
1	2.846:1	Santa Ana, CA 92711	
2	2.125:1	Overall rating of bike, keeping intended use in mind:	
3	1.722:1	Handling	Very good
4	1.428:1	Front suspension	Good
5	1.217:1	Rear suspension	Very good
6	1.083:1	Power	Excellent
Gearing, front/rear	14/50	Cost	Good
Ignition	CDI	Attention to detail	Very good
Recommended spark plug	NGK B9EG	Effectiveness, stone stock	Very good
Silencer/spark arrester	Yes/no		
Wheelbase	1240mm (48.81 in.)	This rating system is included to aid in comparison of bikes	
Ground clearance	310mm (12.20 in.)	in the same displacement and intended-use categories.	
Seat height	820mm (32.28 in.)	Comparing the ratings of two dissimilar machines is a	
Rake/trail	28°/90mm	meaningless exercise in futility.	

one of our testers liked them. A few riders complained about the shape of the saddle, but they all agreed that they'd put up with it, because the bike was so fast.

STILL ON TOP?

So, the obvious question is, how much improvement is enough? More low end and mid-range, lighter weight and a stronger rear suspension are good improvements, but the rest of the 80cc class has not exactly been asleep. From our observations, the KX is still *the* bike to ride in the mini class, but the green machines aren't enjoying quite as much of a lead as they had last year. You have to pay closer attention to the KX setup this year, but the rewards are still worth it. With the right rider aboard, the KX is still a clear winner. □