

# TRAIL BIKES

ARGUS

WPS

## TESTS

HONDA • YAMAHA • SUZUKI  
KAWASAKI • HUSQVARNA

**HOW TO:**

BUILD A TOOL KIT • EASY TIRE CHANGES  
RIDING GEAR - MAKE IT LAST

**PRO  
RIDING**  
and  
MAINTENANCE  
**TIPS**



# OFF-ROAD'S 1982 TRAIL BIKES

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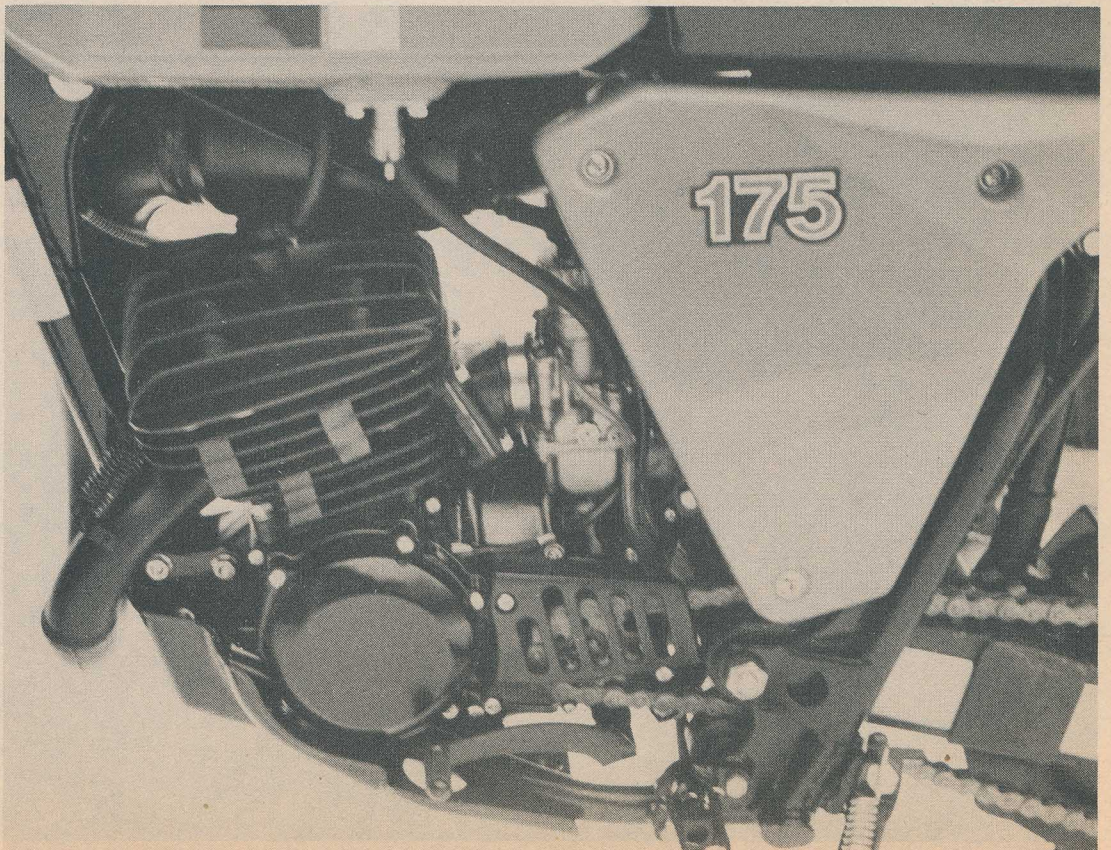
## The Green Ballerina

**R**emember David, the little guy with the slingshot that downed a big bruiser who went by the name of Goliath? Besides being fairly deadly with a sling, little Dave apparently had something else going for him—nobody told him he couldn't drop one of the big guys. Lots of people figured that he couldn't do it—but apparently nobody ever got around to telling David.

We've got a motorcycle here that has about the same personality. The Kawasaki KDX 175, now in its third consecutive year, has downed more of the bigger bikes than any other 175cc bike ever to come down the pike. It's easy to tell how effective the KDX 175 has been at trouncing machinery that, by reason, it shouldn't even share the same trailer with. Just ask any regular enduro rider who campaigns a 250 or Open Class machine, about the KDX 175. The response will be grumbles, complaints, cuss words and lots of nasty looks. People who race against the KDX in enduro and cross-country events have had to put up with the harassment from the Kawasaki for over two years now. They no longer

# KAWASAKI KDX 175

*This tiny little motor puts out a large amount of horsepower. The six-speed gearbox keeps your left foot busy.*



put it in the "just a 175 bike" category. Now it's "those damn KDX 175s."

Magazine testers, like ourselves, have been known to beg, plead and bargain with Kawasaki for the use of a KDX 175. Even the inter-company motor pool, which has about five of the little Green Ballerinas in stock for Kawasaki personnel use, is always out of them. They don't sit for very long on a dealer's floor either.

Why? Because it's a giant killer. Basically put, the KDX 175 has more than enough horsepower and acceleration to stay with machines much larger than itself. When put in an enduro, especially tight sections, it's capable of out-handling, out-stopping and out-doing the competition. That tends to really aggravate 250 and 500cc riders. Of course, it doesn't help matters much when KDX riders flaunt the bike, passing machines which are supposed to be bigger, faster and better.

Matter of fact, during our first riding session with the KDX 175, we brought along one of the better National enduro riders, who has ridden an open class bike in enduros for the past two seasons. When we unloaded the trailer, he walked right past his machine and jumped on the Kawasaki. "I have to ride this, I just have to," he said, "I've been passed, bothered and beaten by these little things for two years now and I just can't stand it anymore. I've got to ride

this and find out what the secret is. There's got to be something to this bike, because they keep beating me." By day's end, after about a 60 mile jaunt, he had talked himself out of his big bore, and was already planning to call the AMA to change from the open to the 175 class for the new season. "I thought that maybe I was slowing down with age" he said, "but now that I've ridden this thing, it's not me that's going slower, it's KDX 175 riders that are going faster!"

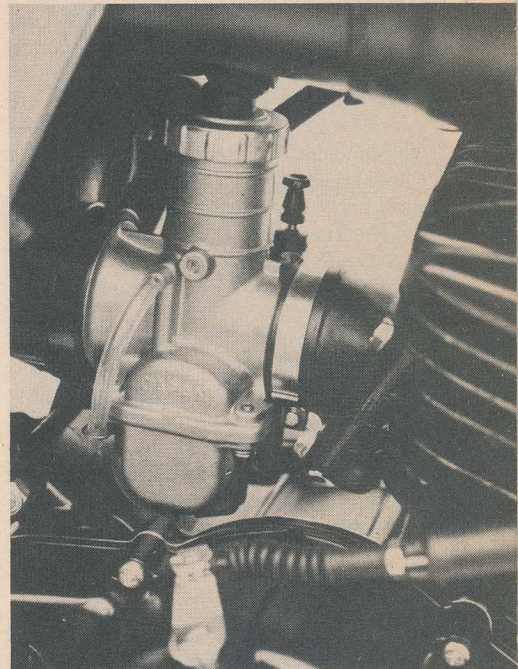
What's the big secret to the KDX? There really isn't one. When the bike was first introduced, Kawasaki put it in a great handling frame, gave the machine very good front and rear suspension (utilizing air/oil forks and a Uni-Trak rear end), and plopped a larger version of the KX125cc motor—adding a flywheel, larger piston and different pipe.

The result is a 175cc engine that, thanks to well-spaced gears, is able to put as much (if not more) horsepower to the ground as most 250cc machines. In an all out drag race, most 250s will barely beat the KDX 175. Put the same two bikes in a tight canyon, on a rocky trail, or in giant whoops and chances are that the Kawasaki will come out on top. It's been proven repeatedly during enduro events that the KDX 175 is one of the best machines to ride if you want to hit those really tough check-points on time.

The 1982 version hasn't changed

much from previous years. Kawasaki has made a few refinements for this year, but for the most part they followed a philosophy of "It works great—don't mess with it." Too bad other companies don't adopt that attitude.

The changes in the 1982 version include a new mounting system for the tripmeter and odometer. It used to break off in past years because of a flimsy connection point. Now it's solidly bolted to the handlebar clamps, and shouldn't commit trail-side suicide anymore. Another nice



*The standard 34mm Mikuni keeps the KDX buzzing along. A larger 36mm carb will increase low end power slightly. The stock carb is good enough for most riders, and is a great match for the engine.*

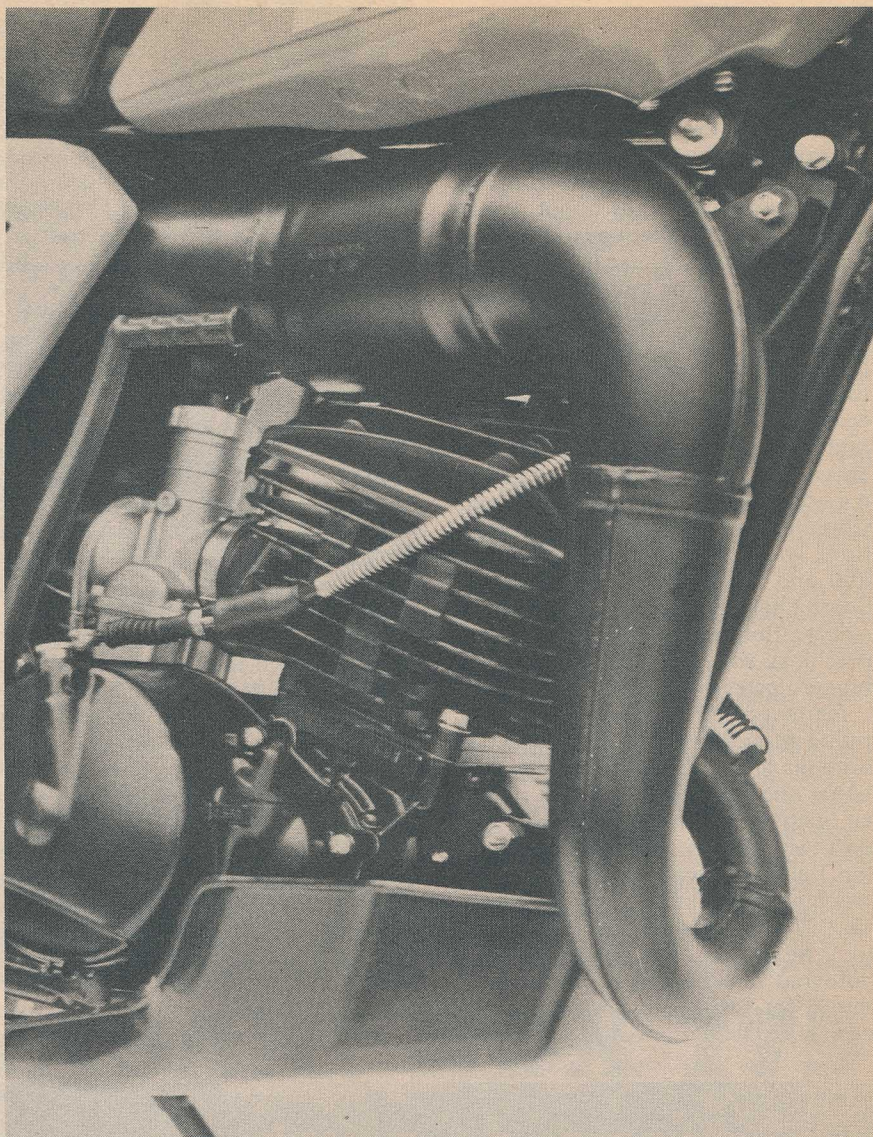


*New for 1982 is a larger more effective silencer. The bike can breathe better and turns higher RPM when it's time for fast riding. The mounting position is also balanced and rugged.*

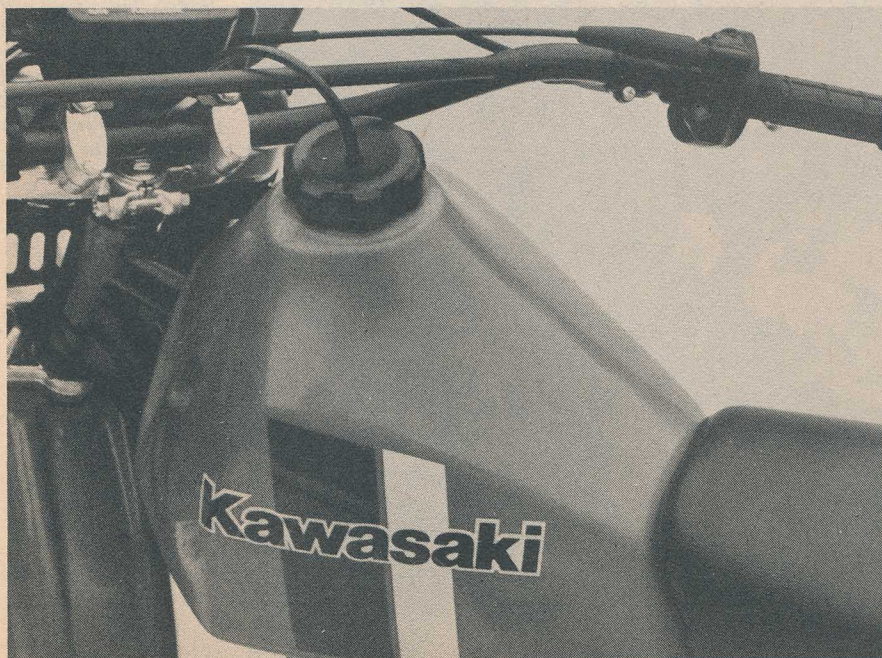
touch, and one that we greatly appreciated was the fact that the front brake cable doesn't get hung around the odometer when you bottom out the forks. On past models some riders would bottom out the suspension, which would cause the front brake cable to loop behind the speedo. When the suspension rebounded, the speedo went winging into the bushes, or the front wheel (depending on how lucky you were that day). The new mounting system has cured that problem, and now the speedo should stay with the bike on the 1982 model.

Another change that Kawasaki incorporated in the 1982 model was in the exhaust pipe and spark arrestor/silencer design. Riders that were "really into" their KDXs discovered that they could extract a little more horsepower from the bike by cutting open the center cone of the exhaust pipe and gutting out the insides. Kawasaki did it for you this year.

Another trick last year was to modify the silencer. The modification didn't hamper the spark arrestor abilities of the silencer, but it did make the bike run faster. The new 1982 silencer is larger, has a larger outlet for exhaust gases, and eliminated the need to go inside the silencer and perform surgery. It's all pre-fixed when you buy the bike.



*One of the few changes in the 1982 Kawasaki KDX175 is a new center cone area in the exhaust pipe. The large diameter helps the mid-range of the powerband area.*



*A rider can squeeze almost a hundred trail miles out of this 2.8 gallon gas tank. The KDX is no gas guzzler. Don't be surprised if the gas tank stickers fall off in a couple of months.*

The only blemish (and admittedly, we're the only ones to complain about it) is a slight lag between second and third gears in the transmission. The little engine, in stock trim, won't allow you to pull third gear on some of the nastier, longer uphill. Second gear is just a tad too slow, and the bike doesn't have the muscle to pull over that hump from second to third. This is only obvious in deep sand hills, like those found in the desert, and on long uphill that require lots of directional changes. If you're not an "A" classified enduro rider, you'll probably never experience the gear lag. Apparently the KDX 175 owners in the eastern portion of the country have never had any problems with gear ratios. Only those of us who are forced to ride the desert notice it—and riders who don't take their KDX 175s into the "dez" think we're nuts.

Even if it didn't have such a potent motor, the KDX 175 would still shine because of its great handling abilities. The machine is extremely stable and predictable, with most of the credit go-

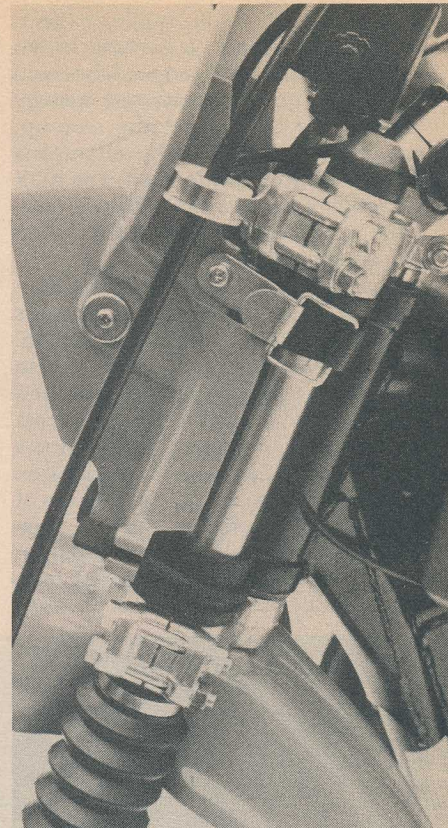
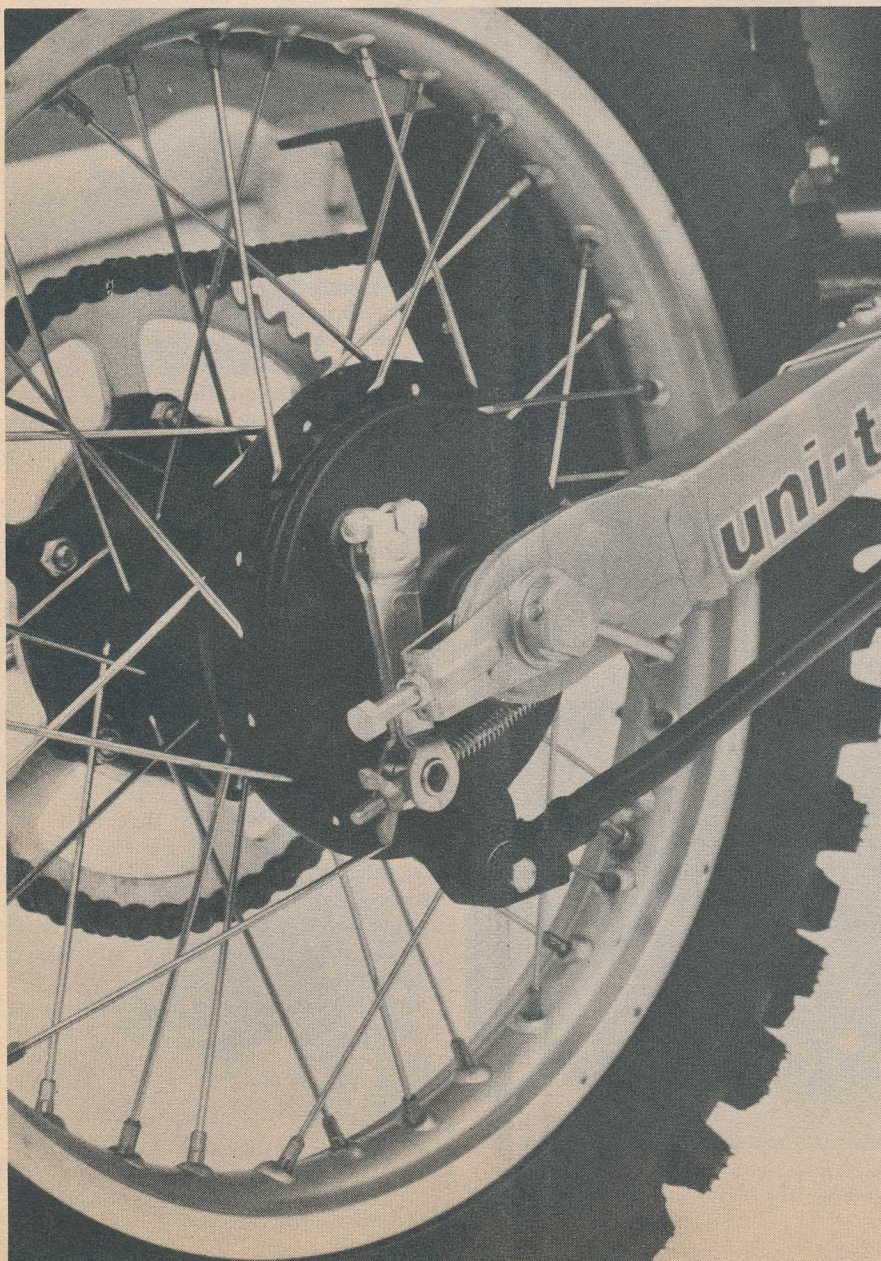
ing to the Uni-Trak rear suspension. Utilizing a one shock/one swingarm system, the KDX 175 goes where you point it, won't hop sideways unless you provoke it, and soaks up more bumps than you'd expect it to. Single rear shocks are one of the best solutions for making motorcycles stable and capable of holding tight lines.

At first glance, the front forks look too small and flimsy. We'd gotten used to the larger 40 and 43mm forks on motocross bikes, and to go back to these small 38mm forks seemed a step down. But given the light weight of the bike, and its overall small dimensions the front forks are more than adequate for the job. There's just under ten inches of travel in the front forks—you'll find yourself using all of it, even with the assistance of air pressure. But the forks don't contort, twist or bend while you're riding. They are light enough to keep overall

bike weight down, yet strong enough to handle whatever you manage to slam into.

Kawasaki has never changed the brakes on the KDX 175 since it was introduced in 1980. They still stop well, don't fade easily and have a good progressive feel. The front brake is on par with the best in the industry—Yamahas brakes. The rear brake, a full floating system that isn't attached to, or hampered by, the swing-arm, takes a little getting used to. For the first hundred miles, most KDX 175 riders lock up the rear brake on a regular basis. The main reason is that they're not used to a full floating brake, which doesn't skip or lock over bumps like a conventional motorcycle.

Most bikes have rear brakes which are a compromise—you stop through a combination of traction and skidding. Because the KDX 175 hugs the ground better than most bikes, it also



*The headlight can be instantly removed by popping off the four rubber straps. The forks are air assist units, with valves located under rubber caps.*

allows the rider to be a little stingy with the rear brake. A little brake pedal pressure does the same job on the KDX 175 as a lot of pedal pressure does on other bikes. After adjusting to the "power rear brake" the locking-up problems disappear and most riders find themselves fine-tuning their braking abilities because of the good design.

The airbox system was changed last year, and the 1982 model has an even better air filter hidden inside. The airbox draws from the top of its housing, allowing you to submerge the bike almost to the bottom of the seat before drowning out the engine with water. The first year KDX 175s used to pop the airbox out of the frame, due to the mounting points. When the bike landed after an extremely harsh jump, the frame would flex just enough to force the airbox about an inch out the left side. The new design has eliminated the "suddenly removable" airbox.

Probably the most surprising fact for first-time KDX 175 riders is the

*This full floating rear brake system doesn't suffer from suspension chatter in the bumps. The steel swingarm can be replaced with a lighter and stronger aluminum unit.*

powerband. As you might expect, most of the muscle is located in the very top of the RPM range. When you want it to go fast, just start heavily fanning the clutch, get the revs up, row the gearbox, and by all means leave the throttle wide open. The KDX responds by screaming down a trail, gobbling up terrain a lot quicker than you'd expect.

That's no eye-opener for most people. All 175s are that way. It takes some prompting to get them buzzing. But the KDX differs in that it also possesses some mid and low end torque, something you'd never expect from such a small size motor. Not a whole lot mind you—it won't pull tree stumps out of your uncle's 40 acres of turnips, but when you make a mistake, put yourself into a situation where you're a gear tall and a day late, the bike doesn't flog around because

there's zero horsepower down in the low rpm range.

The KDX engine has a large, heavy flywheel that resides on the left end of the crankshaft. This flywheel effect at low speeds helps to keep the engine running at low rpm, without choking to a stop. At low rpm, the weight of the spinning flywheel aids the engine in retaining its internal momentum. The result: it doesn't choke to a sudden halt when you choose the wrong gear.

This flywheel advantage is one of the reasons that the KDX 175 Kawasaki works well for both racers and play riders. It's the kind of machine that allows the serious rider to do some fast trail blazing, but at the same time, the bike can be ridden by those who are a little timid and don't enjoy the wide open throttle riding methods. The KDX, when put into service as a leisure trail machine,

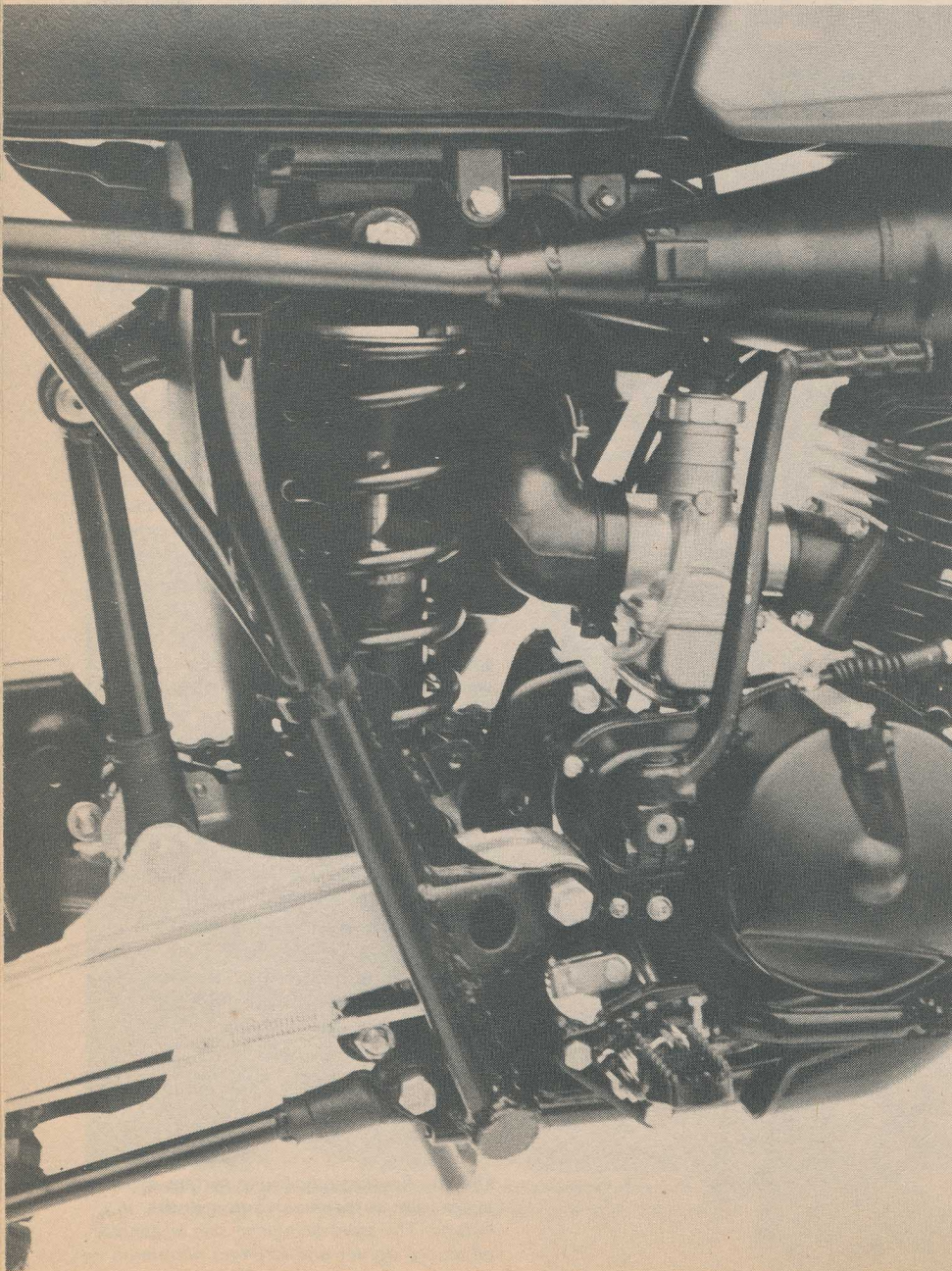
won't throw your wife, mother or girlfriend down on the ground at the first opportunity. The same good handling, good brakes, and cooperative powerband allow lesser riders to get just as much enjoyment out of the bike as the grizzled veteran racer who's blood doesn't start pumping until he reaches 9,500 rpm in fourth gear.

For riders who tend toward the "wring its neck" style of riding, there are a few things that you can do to take the Kawasaki from a semi-giant killer to a National caliber mount. For about fifty bucks you can install an extended travel fork kit to get up to 11.5 inches of front wheel travel. That should be enough to get anybody through the trials and tribulations of a National Enduro event without complaints.

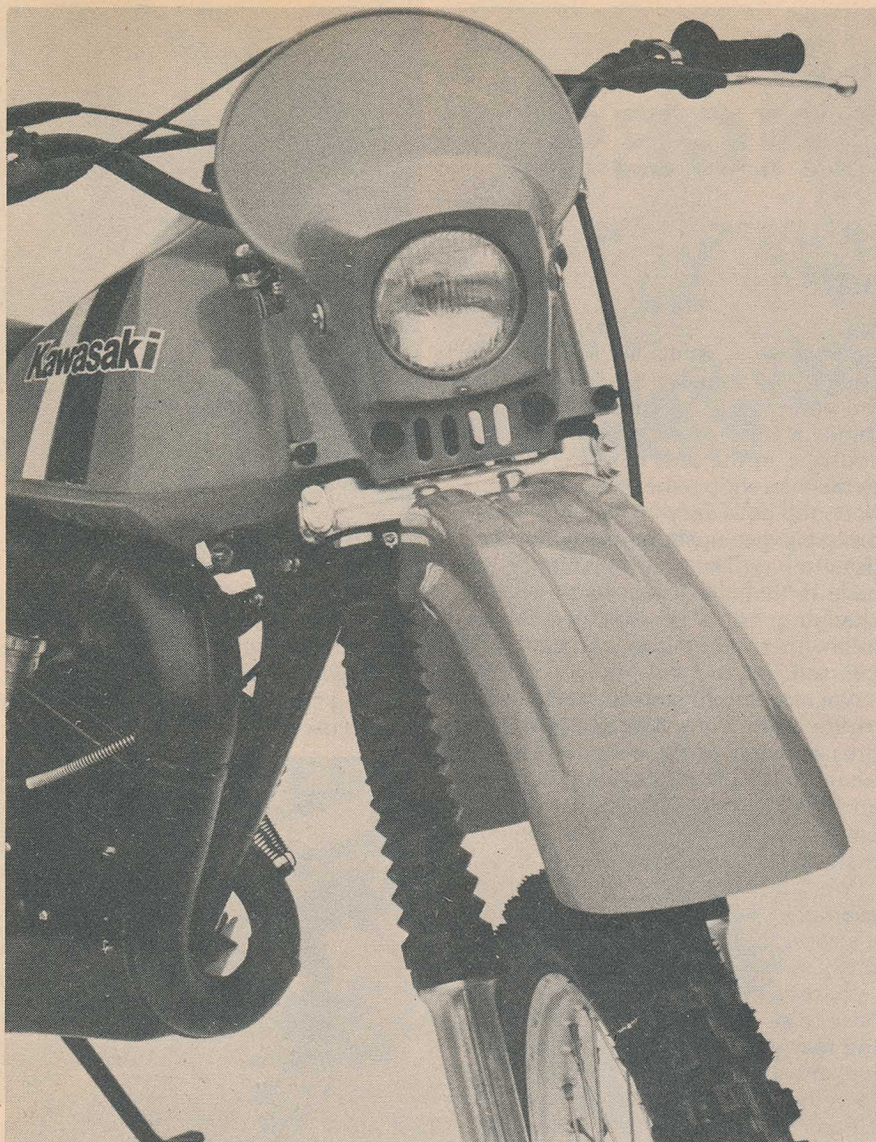
In the rear suspension department there are two ways that you can go. The 1982 KX 125 has a new improved rising-rate rear suspension system, rather than flat rate of previous years. The KDX has the flat rate. You can buy the rising rate system for the KDX 175 as an accessory (a non-Kawasaki item), or get the KX 125 parts directly from your dealer. The difference between the two is hard to describe but easy to notice when you ride. The first few inches of travel are a little softer, making for a more comfortable ride, and the last inches of travel are progressively harsher, soaking up the killer bumps that you may encounter. Rising rate, for the serious enduro rider, is the way to go.

There's also a little porting that can be performed on the cylinder and better tires are always a safe investment. But past those few touches (a total of about \$400 at most), you can bring the bike to full potential without hampering the reliability factor.

The Kawasaki KDX 175 also kills those rumors about 175cc machines wearing out quickly. We raced a whole season on a KDX 175, entering 17 enduros, each of which was at least 100 miles long. We changed the rings twice, changed the pistons once, bought a new air filter halfway through the season, and put Metzeler tires on it twice. Try that with just about any other Japanese bike—regardless of engine size. Besides the more than 1700 race miles, we put at least another 800 miles of trail riding on our little green racer. It was passed around by some of the best bike thrashers we know, and nobody could bring the KDX to its knees.



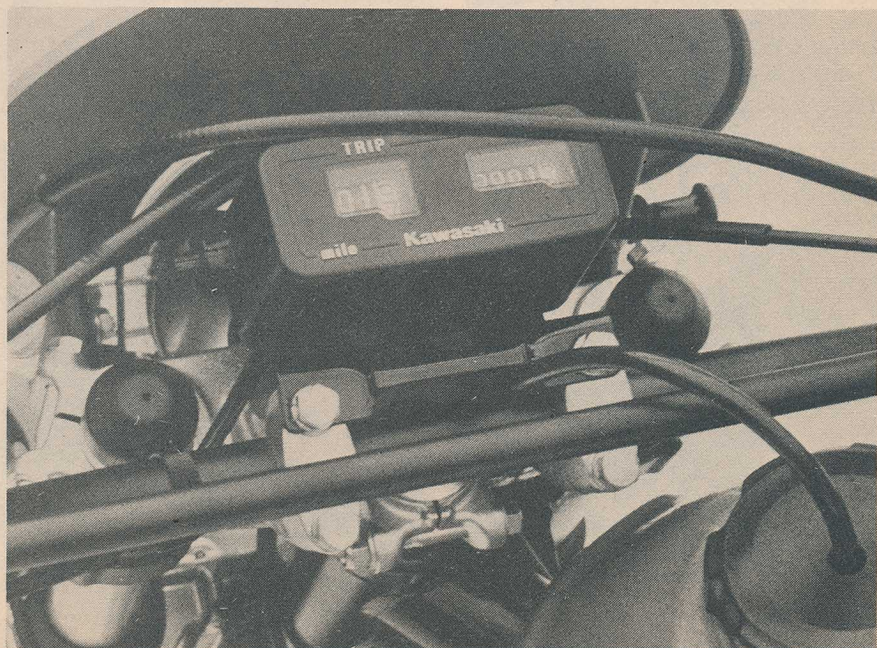
*Stripped of its sidepanel, the Uni-Trak shock system can be seen. The Uni-Trak consists of a shock, rocker arm and pushrods. Travel on the rear end is 9.8 inches.*



*The wide front fender keeps mud out of your eyes. The headlight is one of the most compact and durable units available from a manufacturer.*

Overall, there's only one bike on the horizon that could even threaten the Kawasaki KDX 175 for the title of King of the 200 class. Suzuki is currently working on the PE175, a new Full Floater system that is rumored to be extremely fast. Will it be able to beat the Kawasaki? We don't know, because we haven't been able to ride one. But after spending three years with the Kawasaki, the Suzuki's going to have to be one fantastic motorcycle to topple the KDX 175. ●

|                   |                                     |
|-------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Engine Type       | single-cylinder<br>2-stroke         |
| Bore and Stroke   | 66mm x 50.6mm                       |
| Displacement      | 173cc                               |
| Compression Ratio | 7.6:1                               |
| Transmission      | 6-speed                             |
| Carburetor        | 34mm Mikuni                         |
| Wheelbase         | 57.5 inches                         |
| Seat height       | 34.8 inches                         |
| Ground Clearance  | 11.8 inches                         |
| Front Suspension  | air/oil/spring, 9.8 inches travel   |
| Rear Suspension   | oil/gas Uni-Trak, 9.8 inches travel |
| Gas tank capacity | 2.8 gallons                         |
| Riding range      | approx. 125 miles                   |
| Front tire size   | 3.00 x 21                           |
| Rear tire size    | 4.10 x 18                           |



*The odometer on the KDX used to break off, so this year Kawasaki redesigned the bracket mounting system. The odo has a resettable trip meter for riding enduros, along with accumulative mileage.*