

# SHOOTOUT! THE HOT 125s CLASH

# DIRT BIKE

AUGUST 1982 • \$1.75 UK90p

**KAWASAKI  
KDX250:  
MXer with  
lights**

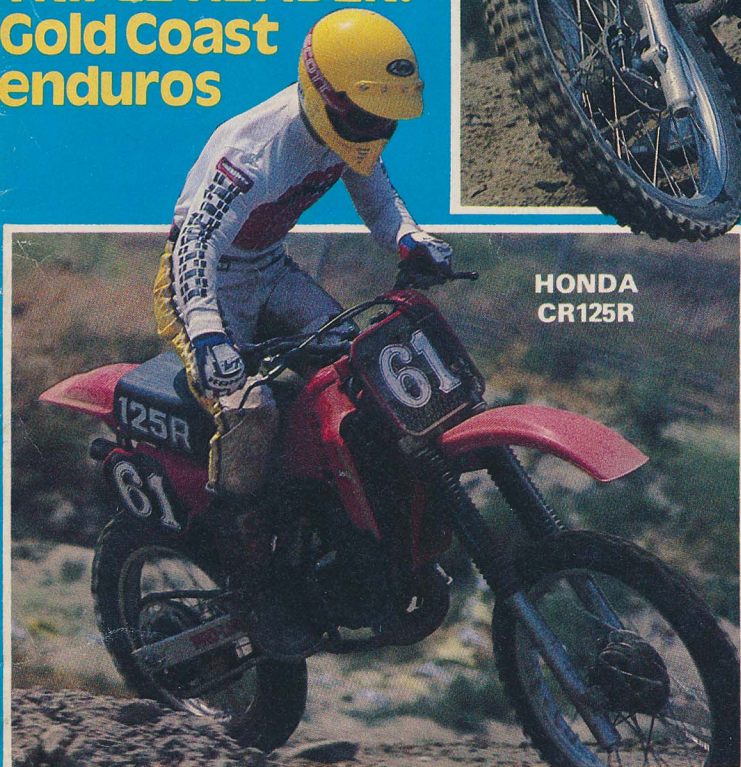


SUZUKI  
RM125Z

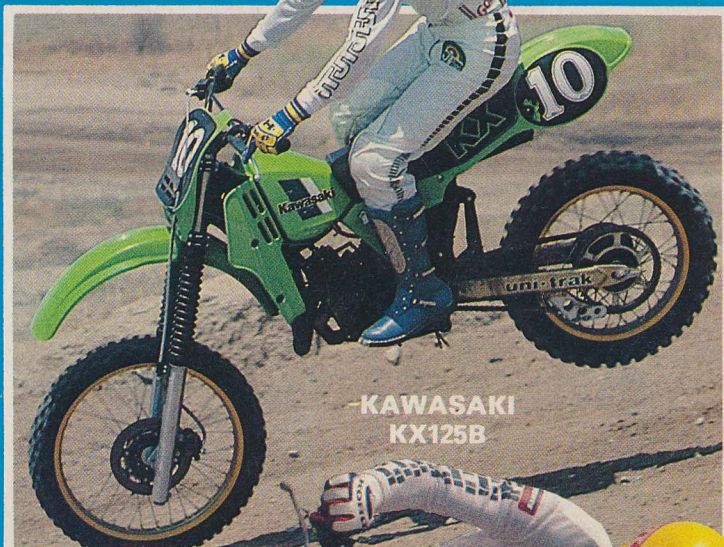
**YAMAHA  
YZ490J:  
Mammoth  
motocrosser**

**SUPER SONIC:  
Building a two-  
stage rocket**

**TRIPLE HEADER:  
Gold Coast  
enduros**

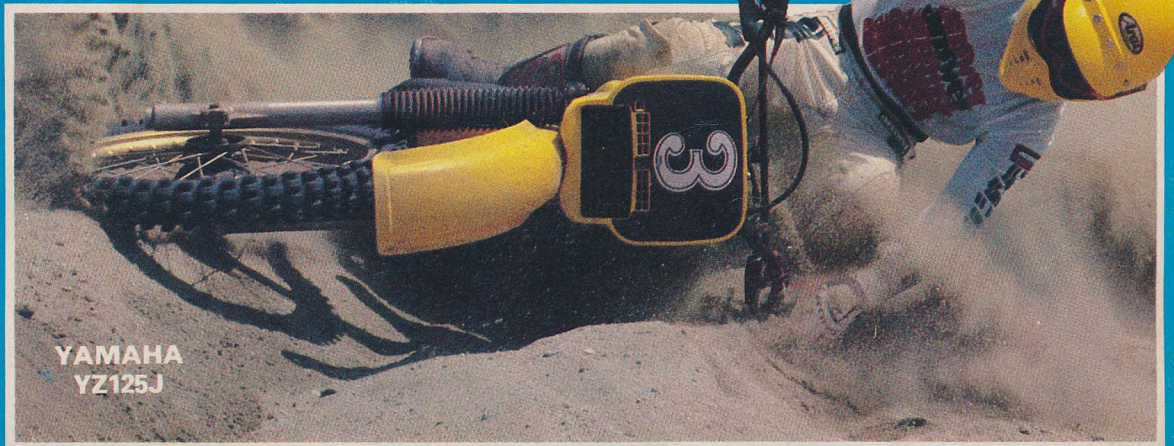


HONDA  
CR125R



KAWASAKI  
KX125B

**YZ100J:  
Sole  
survivor**



YAMAHA  
YZ125J



# DIRT BIKE

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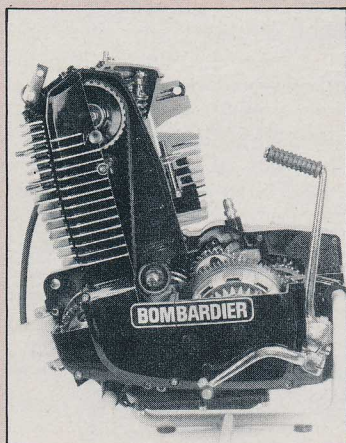
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On the Cover: DB testing crew caught in the act of evaluating the Big Four 125s. For the final verdict, see page 38. Photos by Tom Webb and Paul Clipper; color separation by Valley Film.

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125 SHOOTOUT



PROJECT CAN-AM



KAWASAKI KDX250



SUPERCROSS



**RATING THE WATER-**

# 125 SHO

*Honda CR125R, Kawasaki KX125B1,*

*By the Staff of Dirt Bike*

A full year has whistled on by since our 1981 125 Shootout. For 1982, we have four bikes under the gun, rather than five. The KTM is not included because we'll have a 1983 model to test shortly . . . possibly within a month. It'll be a radically changed machine, according to our KTM sources.

This leaves Honda, Kawasaki, Suzuki and Yamaha in a four-way confrontation

for supremacy in the 125 class. Unlike the 1981 bikes, our current crop of screamers does not include a full-on bummer. You might recall that the '81 Honda was extremely slow and that the KX had a set of forks that would induce blisters through a catcher's mitt (and was also air-cooled).

Rankings for '81 were as follows: The RM was the new champion, with the powerful YZ right on its tail. Kawasaki

placed quite a bit back in fourth, with the Honda running a struggling last. That outrageously expensive KTM placed smack in the middle, mostly because of cost and excessive weight.

So, then, we have fresh machinery to look at this year, as always. All the usual things are considered as we search for winners:

- Power: how much and how usable?
- Handling: in the turns and at speed



## COOLED SCREAMERS

# OTO OUT!

*Suzuki RM125Z and Yamaha YZ125J*

- over rough ground.
- Suspension quality and adjustability.
- Shifting.
- Braking: efficiency and feel.
- Ease of riding.
- Durability: how does it hold up?
- Comfort and layout.
- Effectiveness, stone stock.

Other factors rear their heads. Things like ease of maintenance, parts availability and attention to detail all lend weight at

decision-making time. And that all-important "suggested retail price" is of prime consideration.

As was done with previous points charts, we're giving more weight and importance to the "performance" features of the bike, and less weight to the detail items. This explains Chart #1 and Chart #2. Adding up the points spread in both charts will give you the overall rankings.

An explanation of the assigned points for each category is included. When all the smoke clears and all of the points are added, you end up with the ratings of the bikes. We feel that this is the fairest and most accurate way possible to judge the bikes. One side note: All of these 125s have been ridden and raced regularly since we acquired them, so our findings are not based on a few short days at the track. Rather, they're based on real-world usage.

# 125 SHOOTOUT!



Our 125 test bikes at work on the baked-dry, burnt-out Dunes track.

**HORSEPOWER:** The YZ emerged as the strongest bike of the lot. Much of the punch comes from the unique power valve exhaust setup. In second slot, the Honda delivered a good solid spread of power, but not quite as much as the YZ. The RM had less than the Honda, and the Kawasaki was down a bit from the Suzuki. Very straightforward.

**USABLE POWER:** We gave the Honda the best rating here because of its very smooth spread of power. There were no flat spots anywhere and even though the YZ edged it in sheer output, the Honda exhibited no bogging or flat spots. When you wanted it, it was there. Tied for last were the Kawasaki and the RM. Both had nice, smooth powerbands, but just not enough. We gave the edge for superior low end to the KX, but the RM would rev out smoother and longer.

**FORKS:** Yamaha forks seem to get better each year and the units on our test '82 were no exception, earning a solid 10.0 for first place. The worst forks of the lot were found on the Honda. For some reason, Honda has never made a satisfactory set of legs. The adjustable compression damping feature on the CR also seems to be a useless gimmick with little or no appeal. In the middle of the pack, we find the KX and the RM with decent forks that respond well to small changes of fork oil level and viscosity.

**REAR SUSPENSION:** No doubt about it, the Full Floater rear end remains the best available. It has the amazing ability to feel good on the small bumps and, at the same time, has enough to handle the giant whoops. It's adjustable on the

rebound stroke, but getting to the preload ring can be a hassle. It's also the most fade-resistant shock of the group.

We ranked the YZ at the bottom because the rate rise is moderate and the bike is delivered with a too-soft spring, even though there are optional springs available. The YZ shock is the most adjustable of the lot, with compression and rebound variations available. It can be made to work passably and does not seem to fade much when working hard.

At midpack you can find the KX and the CR, with the KX slightly superior to the CR. Of these four, the CR shock would fade quickest and stay faded for a long time. Also, it has a compression adjustment feature, but no rebound adjustment available, which we find confusing.

**ACCELERATION: BASIC DRAG RACE THROUGH THE GEARS:** By the time all four bikes are wound out in sixth gear, the YZ will have three or more lengths on the field and anywhere from five to eight miles per hour on top end. It's a full-on bullet! Often, during our through-the-gears efforts, the Honda would lurch out of the hole and put a length or more on the YZ, but as soon as the upper gears were reached the YZ would take a deep breath and boogie on by.

At the tail end of the group, we would invariably find the KX, but not that far behind the RM until fifth and sixth gears were reached. When the YZ is running a few more teeth on the rear sprocket (something quite a few YZ racers do), it accelerates even harder and *still* has top

end on all of the bikes. One side note: On any sort of a long uphill, the power of the YZ stands out even more and will cleanly pull the other three machines.

**TURNING:** We rated the KX and the YZ at 10.0 on turning ability. Both bikes handle flat corners well, without any hint of washout or pushing. Trailing the field, the RM required that the rider get way up on the tank to keep the front end under control. The Honda seemed to work well just about everywhere, except in deep sand, where the front end tended to tuck under and plow badly.

All four bikes worked reasonably well smacking off berms. There was some head shake on the KX when diving into bumpy turns and it was not happy on long, flat sweepers. Both the KX and the YZ had the ability to easily stuff it under the other two bikes, it seemed.

**STABILITY AT HIGH SPEEDS**

**OVER ROUGH GROUND:** Both the KX and the RM worked well in the upper gears over cobby terrain. Whoops were almost ignored by these two stable machines. That steep fork angle of the YZ let the bike shake its head at speed and demanded a great deal of concentration from the rider. The tallish Honda just never felt comfortable at higher speeds, even though it never did anything violent. It merely moved around enough to unsettle the riders.

**SHIFTING:** It took just a tap of the left foot to get gears changed on the RM, shifting up or down. As more time was put on the bike and the gearbox oil changed a few times, shifting became very smooth. Our riders had the most hassles



*The Honda had good punch at the bottom, allowing the rider to navigate deep sand with relative ease.*



*Although the KX wasn't the powerhouse of the class, it did have a strong motor that could take plenty of abuse.*



*Because the RM had the least amount of low end, it had to be screamed in the sand. You have to keep it buzzing.*



*In power-robbing conditions, the YZ was the winner. Its motor, with the help of the Power Valve, pulled the strongest.*

# 125 SHOOTOUT!



*Jumping the Honda proved that it was very neutral in the air. Rider position wasn't critical, making it easy to control.*



*It didn't matter how out of shape the KX rider became when approaching a jump; once in the air the long bike would self-correct.*



*Because the Suzuki was the lightest bike, riders had no trouble manhandling it in the air. Front end wanted to climb, however.*



*The heaviest and most ponderous of the 125s was the YZ. Rider comfort was good, as was its straight-line takeoff ability.*

# 125 SHOOTOUT!



Beck Philman pushes the Honda to the limits of traction.



DIRT BIKE ad stroke Scott Wallenberg, KX125.



RM125Z, full throttle, second gear.



As with all of the small-bore bikes, letting the revs drop when crunched into a sandy turn resulted in an immediate halt.

## EVALUATION CHART #1

SCALE: 1.0 to 10.0

	HONDA	KAWASAKI	SUZUKI	YAMAHA
HORSEPOWER	9.5	8.5	9.0	10.0
USABLE POWER	10.0	9.0	9.0	9.8
FORKS	8.6	8.8	9.0	10.0
REAR SUSPENSION	8.8	9.0	10.0	8.6
ACCELERATION, BASIC DRAG RACE	9.8	8.8	9.2	10.0
TURNING	9.6	10.0	9.4	10.0
STABILITY AT HIGH SPEEDS IN ROUGH	9.6	10.0	10.0	9.3
SHIFTING	9.7	8.8	10.0	9.2
BRAKES	9.8	10.0	8.6	9.8
EASE OF RIDING	9.2	8.8	10.0	9.0
DURABILITY	9.5	9.0	9.8	10.0
COMFORT AND LAYOUT	9.4	8.5	10.0	9.0
EFFECTIVENESS, STOCK	9.6	9.0	10.0	9.0
TOTALS	123.1	118.2	124.0	123.7

Even though it is not the fastest bike of the lot, the RM emerges here as the winner, based on the virtue of being the most complete package of the four shootout bikes. It's a balanced bike, with no major flaws and can be successfully raced in stock trim. There are more than a few engine specialists around ready and willing to extract more horsepower out of the RM. This is an easier task than trying to make a faster bike handle better, we feel. For this reason, the RM must be considered the best out-of-the-crate racer, especially in the longer races, where the light weight and superb suspension mean more and more.

Right on the tail of the CR and RM, we have the powerful YZ125J. Almost by virtue of its extraordinary powerplant, the YZ rides high in the standings. Since we've been testing these four bikes, the DB testers have attended and participated in numerous Sportsman races, and, in the majority of these, it's been a YZ parade in the charge to the first turn. The RM might be a more polished package, but raw horsepower will get you to the lead in a big hurry. The RM rider is invariably faced with the task of getting around the YZ rider. In a short race, this may not be possible.

by shorter riders. The safety saddle is the only sensible one around, with the tank depressed slightly to allow a natural contour.

Most of our riders thought the feel of the Honda was in the ballpark. A few complained about slightly odd-shaped bars with too much rise, but this is an easily correctable problem. The CR is a tallish bike and shorter riders did not feel at home on the machine.

### EFFECTIVENESS, STOCK STOCK:

You may note in the photos that some of the test bikes are running non-stock items (aluminum mufflers, etc.). Our evaluations are based on standard bikes, tuned and jetted for maximum performance. Basically, this category evaluates how the bike will perform as a standard racer, within the normal race preparation framework. This would include dialing in the suspension for the rider's weight and skill level, and even running good tires rather than stock rubber.

The only reason the YZ is placed behind the CR in this category is that the rear end requires a heavier spring before the YZ is correct and competitive for all but the lightest riders. We place the CR second behind the RM because it can be raced hard *as is*, even though it's not as fast as the Yamaha. A sensible spread of power also makes the Honda versatile and easier to ride than the YZ, under a wider variety of conditions.

Holding fourth spot in the Effectiveness Category is the KX. While it's a good bike, it's down a bit on power, compared to the other hardware in its class, and does not have enough other redeeming virtues to offset that. It's not far off the pace . . . just far enough to make it less effective.

So, at the end of the first Evaluation Chart, we have the RM slightly in the lead over the YZ, with the CR right on its tail. Team Green is a bit back.

**EASE OF MAINTENANCE:** It's easier to work on the KX than the other bikes. Things are more out in the open and easy to get to. Both the Honda and the Suzuki are tied for second with 4.8, and both have fairly complex air cleaner setups. The YZ brings up the rear mostly because of a radiator mounted on the forks and coolant fed through the steering head.

**ATTENTION TO DETAIL:** This encompasses all of the little things that make a bike a finished package. Three of the four bikes are detailed to the max, with the KX only slightly behind them in that department. All things considered, these bikes are beautifully detailed, with excellent guides, controls, plastics and hardware. The KX had a few gruesome welds, as did the Honda, but one could not find a loser in this category.

**STARTING EASE:** While this is largely dependent on the state of tune of the particular bike, we found that the RM invariably lit off with a minimum of fuss. A kick or two was all it took, once the bike was jetted properly. In direct contrast, the YZ was often a sluggish starter and took a good number of boots to get things stirred up.

**PARTS PRICES:** We based this on the usual things a rider would use during a

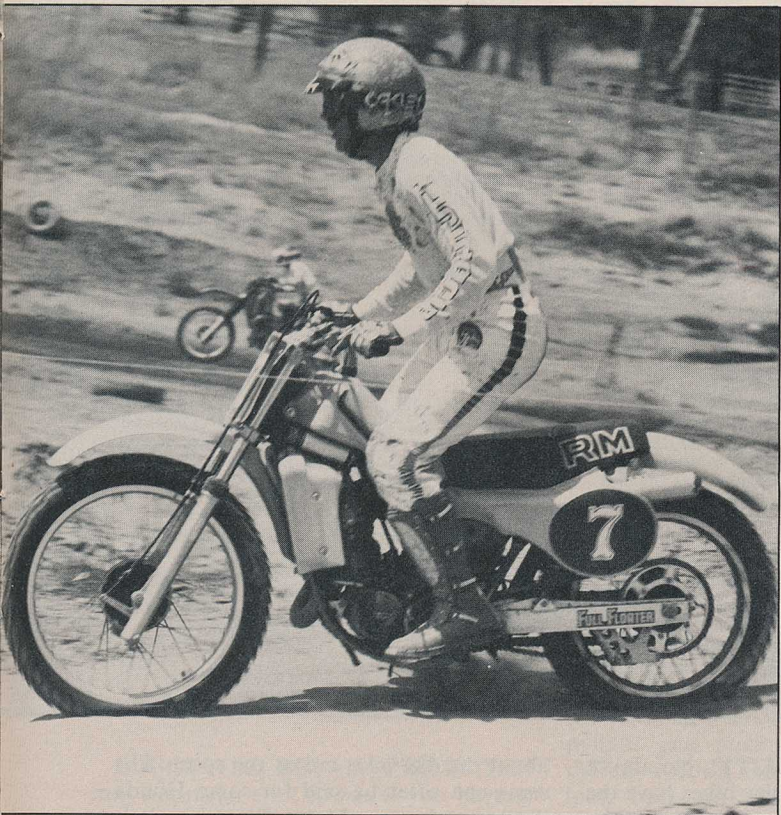




*The Honda had adjustable compression damping both front and back. The Pro-Link featured a fairly high rate of progression which allowed for soft action over small bumps and firmed up over the crunchers. Shock fade was noticeable in long motos.*



*Kawasaki relocated the rocker arm and struts on the Uni-Trac to provide a rising-rate rear suspension for '82. This was a definite improvement, as the KX seemed to be one of the most stable bikes over high-speed sand whoops.*



*Suzuki's Full Floater seemed to work better than the others over really rough, gnarly whoops. Its rear shock allowed for rebound adjustment and also proved to be the most fade resistant. Fine tuning of the forks to suit different tracks was accomplished by small changes of oil level.*



*The Yamaha proved to have the best forks. At the rear it's a different story, though. The rate of rise in the Mono-X was very moderate, causing the YZ to be fitted with a spring that was adequate for small bumps, but too soft for hard landings. Bottoming out, like this, was common.*



## HONDA CR125R

**ENGINE TYPE** . . . . . Water-cooled, reed-valve, two-stroke, single  
**BORE AND STROKE** . . . . . 55.5mm x 50.7mm  
**DISPLACEMENT** . . . . . 122cc  
**CARBURETION** . . . . . 34mm Keihin  
**FACTORY RECOMMENDED JETTING:**  
**MAIN JET** . . . . . #150  
**NEEDLE JET** . . . . . None  
**JET NEEDLE** . . . . . 28C  
**PILOT JET** . . . . . #68  
**SLIDE NUMBER** . . . . . 4.0  
**RECOMMENDED GASOLINE** . . . . . Premium, 92 octane  
**FUEL TANK CAPACITY** . . . . . 1.7 gal.  
**FUEL TANK MATERIAL** . . . . . Plastic  
**LUBRICATION** . . . . . Oil in gas, pre-mix at 20:1  
**RECOMMENDED OIL** . . . . . Hondaline injector oil

**OIL CAPACITY, GEARBOX** . . . . . 700cc  
**AIR FILTRATION** . . . . . Oiled foam  
**CLUTCH TYPE** . . . . . Wet, multi-plate  
**TRANSMISSION** . . . . . Six-speed  
**GEARBOX RATIOS:**  
**1** . . . . . 2.417:1  
**2** . . . . . 2.000:1  
**3** . . . . . 1.611:1  
**4** . . . . . 1.350:1  
**5** . . . . . 1.136:1  
**6** . . . . . 1.000:1  
**GEARING, FRONT/REAR** . . . . . 13/51  
**IGNITION** . . . . . CDI pointless  
**PRIMARY KICK SYSTEM?** . . . . . Yes  
**RECOMMENDED SPARK PLUG** . . . . . NGK BR0-EG  
**SILENCER/SPARK ARRESTER/QUALITY** . . . . . Silencer only, average noise

**EXHAUST SYSTEM** . . . . . High-pipe, right side  
**FRAME TYPE** . . . . . Single downtube, split cradle

**WHEELBASE** . . . . . 56.1 in. (1425mm)  
**GROUND CLEARANCE** . . . . . 14.6 in. (370mm)  
**SEAT HEIGHT** . . . . . 38.6 in. (980mm)  
**STEERING HEAD ANGLE (RAKE)** . . . . . 26°  
**TRAIL** . . . . . 3.9 in. (98mm)

**WEIGHT WITH ONE GALLON GAS** . . . . . 214.5 lbs.

**RIM MATERIAL** . . . . . Aluminum alloy  
**TIRE SIZE AND TYPE:**  
**FRONT** . . . . . 3.00 x 21 knobby, Bridgestone, M-21  
**REAR** . . . . . 4.00 x 18 knobby, Bridgestone, M-22  
**SUSPENSION, TYPE AND TRAVEL:**  
**FRONT** . . . . . Air/oil 38mm, adjust. compr. damping, 11.6 in. travel  
**REAR** . . . . . Pro-Link, rising rate, single-shock, adj. compr. damping, 12.2 in. travel

**INTENDED USE** . . . . . Motocross  
**COUNTRY OF ORIGIN** . . . . . Japan  
**RETAIL PRICE, APPROX.** . . . . . \$1598

**DISTRIBUTOR:**  
 American Honda Motor Company, Inc.  
 100 West Alondra Boulevard  
 Gardena, California 90247  
 (213) 321-8680



## KAWASAKI KX125B1

**ENGINE TYPE** . . . . . Single-cylinder, water-cooled, reed-valved, two-stroke  
**BORE AND STROKE** . . . . . 56 x 50.6mm  
**DISPLACEMENT** . . . . . 124.6cc  
**CARBURETION** . . . . . Mikuni oval bore 38mm x 29mm  
**RECOMMENDED JETTING:**  
**MAIN JET** . . . . . #165R  
**NEEDLE JET** . . . . . R6  
**JET NEEDLE** . . . . . 5E31-3  
**PILOT JET** . . . . . #20  
**SLIDE NUMBER** . . . . . 3.0  
**RECOMMENDED GASOLINE** . . . . . Premium, 92-plus octane  
**FUEL TANK CAPACITY** . . . . . 7.6 liter; 2.0 gal.  
**FUEL TANK MATERIAL** . . . . . Plastic  
**LUBRICATION** . . . . . Oil in gas, pre-mix, 20:1  
**RECOMMENDED OIL** . . . . . Kawasaki lube

**OIL CAPACITY, GEARBOX** . . . . . 550cc  
**AIR FILTRATION** . . . . . Oiled fuzzy foam  
**CLUTCH TYPE** . . . . . Wet, six-plate  
**TRANSMISSION** . . . . . Six-speed, left side-shift  
**GEAR BOX RATIOS:**  
**1** . . . . . 2.307:1  
**2** . . . . . 1.750:1  
**3** . . . . . 1.400:1  
**4** . . . . . 1.181:1  
**5** . . . . . 1.041:1  
**6** . . . . . 0.954:1  
**GEARING, FRONT/REAR** . . . . . 13/50  
**IGNITION** . . . . . CDI pointless  
**PRIMARY KICK SYSTEM?** . . . . . Yes  
**RECOMMENDED SPARK PLUG** . . . . . NGK B9EV  
**SILENCER/SPARK ARRESTER/QUALITY** . . . . . Silencer only / not too quiet

**EXHAUST SYSTEM** . . . . . High-pipe, right side  
**FRAME, TYPE** . . . . . Single downtube

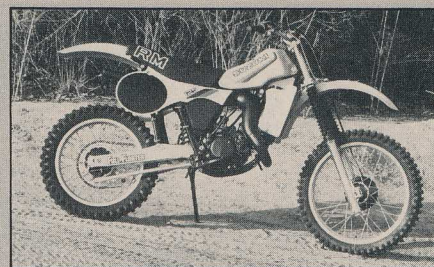
**WHEELBASE** . . . . . 1490mm (57.0 inches)  
**GROUND CLEARANCE** . . . . . 350mm (14.0 inches)  
**SEAT HEIGHT** . . . . . 930mm (36.75 inches)  
**STEERING HEAD ANGLE (RAKE)** . . . . . 28°  
**TRAIL** . . . . . 121mm (4.7 in.)

**WEIGHT WITH ONE GALLON GAS** . . . . . 205 pounds (dry 199 pounds, oil in forks and gearbox)

**RIM MATERIAL** . . . . . Aluminum alloy  
**TIRE SIZE AND TYPE:**  
**FRONT** . . . . . 3.00 x 21 Bridgestone knobby  
**REAR** . . . . . 4.00 x 18 Bridgestone knobby  
**SUSPENSION, TYPE AND TRAVEL:**  
**FRONT** . . . . . 41mm KYB forks, 305mm travel (12.0 inches)  
**REAR** . . . . . Uni-Trak, single-shock, with aluminum swingarm, externally adjustable rebound damping, 305mm travel (12.0 inches)

**INTENDED USE** . . . . . Motocross  
**COUNTRY OF ORIGIN** . . . . . Japan  
**RETAIL PRICE, APPROX.** . . . . . \$1629

**DISTRIBUTOR:**  
 Kawasaki Motor Corp.  
 2009 East Edinger Ave.  
 Santa Ana, California 92705



## SUZUKI RM125Z

**ENGINE TYPE** . . . . . Two-stroke, water-cooled  
**BORE AND STROKE** . . . . . 54.0mm x 54.0mm  
**DISPLACEMENT** . . . . . 123cc  
**CARBURETION** . . . . . 32mm Mikuni  
**FACTORY RECOMMENDED JETTING:**  
**MAIN JET** . . . . . #270  
**NEEDLE JET** . . . . . Q-6  
**JET NEEDLE** . . . . . 6FP35-3  
**PILOT JET** . . . . . #30  
**SLIDE NUMBER** . . . . . 2.0  
**RECOMMENDED GASOLINE** . . . . . Premium 92 Octane  
**FUEL TANK CAPACITY** . . . . . 1.7 gallons (6.5 liters)  
**FUEL TANK MATERIAL** . . . . . Plastic  
**LUBRICATION** . . . . . Premix, 20:1  
**RECOMMENDED OIL** . . . . . Suzuki CCI

**OIL CAPACITY, GEARBOX** . . . . . 0.85 quarts (800ml)  
**AIR FILTRATION** . . . . . Foam element  
**CLUTCH TYPE** . . . . . Wet multi-plate  
**TRANSMISSION** . . . . . Six-speed  
**GEARBOX RATIOS:**  
**1** . . . . . 2.333  
**2** . . . . . 1.750  
**3** . . . . . 1.411  
**4** . . . . . 1.190  
**5** . . . . . 1.045  
**6** . . . . . 0.956  
**GEARING, FRONT/REAR** . . . . . 12/51  
**IGNITION** . . . . . Suzuki PEI  
**PRIMARY KICK SYSTEM?** . . . . . Yes  
**RECOMMENDED SPARK PLUG** . . . . . NGK B9EGV  
**SILENCER/SPARK ARRESTER/QUALITY** . . . . . Silencer only / loud

**EXHAUST SYSTEM** . . . . . High-pipe, through frame  
**FRAME, TYPE** . . . . . Single downtube, split cradle

**WHEELBASE** . . . . . 1440mm (56.7 inches)  
**GROUND CLEARANCE** . . . . . 345mm (13.6 inches)  
**SEAT HEIGHT** . . . . . 36.8 inches  
**STEERING HEAD ANGLE (RAKE)** . . . . . 30 degrees  
**TRAIL** . . . . . 121mm (4.76 inches)

**WEIGHT WITH ONE GALLON GAS** . . . . . 202 lbs. (87 kg)

**RIM MATERIAL** . . . . . Aluminum  
**TIRE SIZE AND TYPE:**  
**FRONT** . . . . . 3.00x21 IRC  
**REAR** . . . . . 4.10x18 IRC  
**SUSPENSION, TYPE AND TRAVEL:**  
**FRONT** . . . . . 285mm (11.22 inches) Kayaba forks  
**REAR** . . . . . 312mm (12.28 inches) Full Floater

**INTENDED USE** . . . . . Motocross  
**COUNTRY OF ORIGIN** . . . . . Japan  
**RETAIL PRICE, APPROX.** . . . . . \$1659

**DISTRIBUTOR:**  
 U.S. Suzuki  
 3251 East Imperial Highway  
 P.O. Box 1100  
 Brea, California 92621

normal year of riding: pistons, rings, sprockets, etc. Because the YZ and RM are more popular, there seems to be a greater flow of replacement parts and lower prices in general for them. While the KX and CR are not grossly out of line, a few items are fairly pricey.

**PARTS AVAILABILITY:** No doubt about it, the most popular bikes have the greatest inventory of spares available. This makes the YZ and RM owners lucky. Team Green is improving steadily in this department, but there are still too many Kawasaki dealers who could care less

about the dirt bike end of the sport. The same can often be said for some Honda dealers, who would much rather hold another fairing on a Gold Wing than scare up a gasket set for a CR. Also, the hop-up parts situation is clearly superior for YZ and RM owners.



## YAMAHA YZ125Z

ENGINE TYPE ..... Liquid-cooled, two-stroke single with reed intake and YPVS exhaust  
 BORE AND STROKE ..... 56mm x 50mm  
 DISPLACEMENT ..... 123cc  
 CARBURETION ..... VM34SS Mikuni (5 x 400)  
 FACTORY RECOMMENDED JETTING:  
 MAIN JET ..... 260  
 NEEDLE JET ..... 00  
 JET NEEDLE ..... 6F21-3  
 PILOT JET ..... 65  
 SLIDE NUMBER ..... 2.5  
 RECOMMENDED GASOLINE ..... Premium, 90 octane minimum  
 FUEL TANK CAPACITY ..... 8.2 liters (2.2 gallons)  
 FUEL TANK MATERIAL ..... Plastic  
 LUBRICATION ..... Oil in gas, pre-mix "R"/24:1  
 RECOMMENDED OIL ..... Yamalube

OIL CAPACITY, GEARBOX ..... 850cc 10W/30  
 AIR FILTRATION ..... Oiled foam  
 CLUTCH TYPE ..... Wet, multi-plate  
 TRANSMISSION ..... Six-speed, constant mesh  
 GEARBOX RATIOS:  
 1 ..... 32/13 (2.461)  
 2 ..... 26/14 (1.857)  
 3 ..... 24/16 (1.500)  
 4 ..... 25/20 (1.250)  
 5 ..... 21/19 (1.105)  
 6 ..... 20/20 (1.000)

GEARING, FRONT/REAR ..... 12/46  
 IGNITION ..... Hitachi CDI  
 PRIMARY KICK SYSTEM? ..... Yes  
 RECOMMENDED SPARK PLUG ..... Champion N-34  
 SILENCER/SPARK ARRESTER/QUALITY ..... Silencer only, average noise

EXHAUST SYSTEM ..... High-pipe, right side  
 FRAME, TYPE ..... Single downtube, split cradle

WHEELBASE ..... 1465mm (57.68 inches)  
 GROUND CLEARANCE ..... 350mm (13.78 inches)  
 SEAT HEIGHT ..... 940mm (37.0 inches)  
 STEERING HEAD ANGLE (RAKE) ..... 27.5 degrees  
 TRAIL ..... 118mm (4.65 inches)

WEIGHT WITH ONE GALLON GAS ..... 210 pounds (200 dry)

RIM MATERIAL ..... Aluminum alloy  
 TIRE SIZE AND TYPE:  
 FRONT ..... 3.00 x 21 IRC Z Mark III knobby  
 REAR ..... 4.10 x 18 IRC knobby  
 SUSPENSION, TYPE AND TRAVEL:  
 FRONT ..... Telescopic, air/oil, 300mm (11.8 inches)  
 REAR ..... Mono-X, single-shock, rising-rate, 310mm (12.2 inches)

INTENDED USE ..... Motocross  
 COUNTRY OF ORIGIN ..... Japan  
 RETAIL PRICE, APPROX ..... \$1699

DISTRIBUTOR:  
 Yamaha Motor Corporation  
 6555 Katella Avenue  
 Cypress, California 90630

**SUGGESTED RETAIL PRICE:** This may not mean a lot to you if you have a hot discount deal going at your favorite dealer, but it's a very real thing to consider when a bike is new and just out. The most expensive bike of the group is the YZ at \$1699, followed by the Suzuki



You may notice a few non-stock items on our test bikes. Over the six-month testing period we changed tires, levers, bars and other goodies on a regular basis.

### EVALUATION CHART #2 SCALE: 1.0 to 5.0

	HONDA	KAWASAKI	SUZUKI	YAMAHA
EASE OF MAINTENANCE	4.8	5.0	4.8	4.5
ATTENTION TO DETAIL	5.0	4.8	5.0	5.0
STARTING EASE	4.7	4.8	5.0	4.5
PARTS PRICES	4.8	4.8	5.0	5.0
PARTS AVAILABILITY	4.0	3.5	5.0	5.0
SUGGESTED RETAIL PRICE	5.0	4.5	4.0	3.5
SPECIAL FEATURES	4.8	5.0	4.8	5.0
TOTALS	33.1	32.4	33.6	32.5

### COMBINED CHARTS #1 AND #2

GRAND TOTAL	156.2	150.6	157.6	156.2
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RM at \$1659. Third place is held by the \$1629 Kawasaki, and the bargain of the group is the Honda, going for a mere \$1598. This gives you a one-hundred-dollar spread between the machines, which may not seem like a whole lot. Unless, that is, you don't happen to have that particular hundred bucks on you; then it means a lot.

**SPECIAL FEATURES:** All of the test riders mentioned the outstanding brakes on the KX. Points for that. Naturally, the tremendous adjustability of the Yamaha suspension added to its qualities. In fact, all four of the bikes are bristling with quality and excellent design concepts.

### ADDING IT ALL UP— MAY WE HAVE THE ENVELOPE, PLEASE?

When the numbers are totalled, they back up our feelings about the bikes, right on the button. The Suzuki RM125Z emerges as the winner, not by virtue of power, but by being a more complete and finished racing machine. Tied for second place are the Honda and the YZ, with 156.2 points each. During the early phase of the shootout, we were leaning toward the YZ as the overall winner, but the extra pounds and mediocre rear suspension moved it down one notch. Still, as we look back on the shootout, the YZ powerplant is quite likely the stand-out item.

Locked into last spot is the Kawasaki. Not a bad bike, it still must be rated against the other racers in its class.

During our last shooting session, the four DB test riders were asked which of the machines would be the best for riders at levels of Novice, Intermediate and Expert, in a 45-minute moto. Here are their thoughts:

	NOVICE	INTERMEDIATE	EXPERT
SUZUKI	SUZUKI	SUZUKI	HONDA
HONDA	HONDA	HONDA	SUZUKI
SUZUKI	SUZUKI	SUZUKI	HONDA
SUZUKI	SUZUKI	SUZUKI	HONDA

All of the riders also noted that no matter which bike was chosen, it would have to get around the all-powerful YZ.

One of the testers summed it up nicely. "I'd like to have that YZ motor stuffed into the RM chassis, with the Kawasaki brakes."

The riders agreed that in the typical shorter motos found around the country, the YZ would be difficult to beat based on power alone.

So, as the smoke clears, we see the Suzuki holding on to another win by the slimmest of margins. Tied for second we have the YZ and the most serious Honda 125 production motocrosser yet. A very good but slightly flawed KX brings up the rear. It's more than clear that the RM cannot hold on to another win next year without major improvements. It's clear, as well, that horsepower alone is not enough to be a winner in the 125 class anymore. It's also alarmingly clear for the competition that Honda is finally getting some direction and is the most improved bike in this class over last year's efforts. □