

**YZ250L: SIZZLING SUPER STOCKER!**

**DIRT BIKE**

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# DIRT BIKE

FEBRUARY 1984  
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**KAWASAKI KX80:  
FASTER THAN  
A 125?!!**

**NATIONAL ENDURO  
CHASE: "SNAKE"  
RATTLES & ROLLS**

**HONDA  
CR500R:  
IT SCARES  
MAGOO!**

MIKE BELL

**HONDA  
XR250R:  
MORE TORQUE,  
LESS PORQUE!**

**BAILEY'S HOT TIPS:  
"BURN THAT CLUTCH!"**



ISSN0044-1546



# DIRT BIKE

FEBRUARY 1984

VOLUME 14, NO. 2



KAWASAKI KX250



SAN DIEGO SUPERCROSS HONDA CR500



KAWASAKI KX80

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**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.

**ON THE COVER:**—"Too Tall" Mike Bell styles for the ever-alert DB cameras. Aboard the YZ250, Mike gets aggressive on the production/works Yamaha. Photo captured by Paul Clipper. Inset photo of Clipper getting muddy on the XR250R by R. Sieman, who, incidentally, didn't shoot last month's cover, as previously credited. Stating that "A cover credit is the only thing I live for!" Clipper wants you to know that the January YZ shot was actually his. Valley Film gets the credit for transposing the dots into a real picture.

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# RUN FOR THE MONEY

*A production racer for the factory boys*

Yamaha jolted the motorcycle world when they made public their decision to pilot production-based equipment for the '84 season. Why? we asked ourselves. Are their riders that much better? No. The declaration is based on the faith they have in their new MX lineup. Their conviction lies in the belief that their bikes are competitive with other "works" machines.

We liked the '83 YZ250K. An explosive motor coupled with a sound suspension package made it a prudent choice for the racer. Once we had a few thousand shifts under our belts, the gremlins surfaced. Broken frames, leaking impeller shafts, broken head stays and seats pulling from their mounts cropped up with alarming regularity.

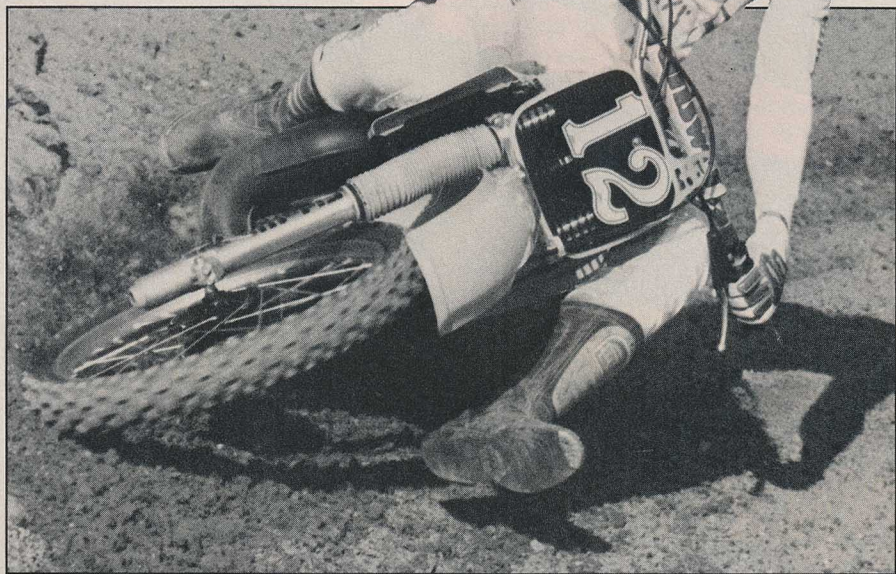
In October, we ran a fix-it report/go-faster story on the YZ. The weak points were strengthened, and some fire was added to the motor. Life on the YZ improved, as did our outlook on the machine. We looked forward to the release of the '84 YZ. With the factory guys planted on stockers, we hoped Yamaha had an ace up their sleeve.

"Confused" is the best way to explain our first thoughts on the '84 L model. Updated plastic and little else. Doesn't look too good for old Broc, we thought. A less-than-tolerant Ed Scheidler batted us upside the head and started in. In reality, the bike is born again; just the skin is the same. Everything, including the forks, shock, rear lever ratio, tank, seat, pipe, ignition, porting, wheels, grips, transmission, airbox, silencer, water pump, side plastic and drive chain, has been changed.

## MUG PUNCHER

The good news is that this year's engine is quite a bit healthier than last year's stocker, and it has more muscle than our worked-on K model. Major gains are mainly down low and in the middle portion of the powerband. A new three-port exhaust, plus the addition of a seventh inlet port, helped jolt the powerplant. These, with a new pipe (that runs on the right side rather than the left) and an ignition with nearly the same curve as the YZ60 unit, clearly improved the thrust potential on the YZ.

The operating range on the Power Valve has been changed. There is also a new piston and reed valve. New transmission ratios have been tightened up to eliminate



*Mike Bell helped with the testing and felt that the manners of the 250 were in line with the works bikes. He felt he could win on one!*

a gap between third and fourth gear. In fact, first and second are unchanged, and third, fourth and fifth are all closer. Now there are no gaps to plague the rider, but at the same time it tops out rather quickly. This will hurt the dez and GP riders.

Icing the inner workings of the engine is a new side-breather airbox. The volume has been increased almost threefold over last year's unit. Also, the new airbox is easy to service and easier to get to. Simply pop off the left-side cover and you're home.

By adding a bushing to the inner case and extending the impeller shaft, a two-bearing surface has eliminated the leaking-case problems of the '83. No more chocolate milk in the tranny. Again, this *was* a weak area.

## PUMPING IRON TO THE WEAK SPOTS

Because broken frames are ugly for business, Yamaha added the needed muscle in strategic areas. The entire steering head has been beefed, as has the head stay. The one-piece stay has been canned in favor of a stronger two-piece unit. By adding 5mm to the thickness of the under cross tubing, the rigidity around the shock linkage has been increased. Other frame changes include a new weight bias that places more of a load up front to aid the cornering habits.

Up front, the forks have sprouted compression adjusters. The damper rods are aluminum instead of steel, and the damping has been rethought. Stanchions that are 10mm shorter than the K model's have shaved some weight. Travel is still 300mm.

In the back yard, a shorter shock and a new lever ratio save weight and alter the damping manners of the rear end. The shock still has both compression and rebound damping adjusters, but the compression knob has been moved from under the tank to the reservoir. This means trackside changes are within finger reach. Travel is 320mm.

Disc brakes and straight-pull spokes are the latest buzz words in motocross technology. Rather than hop on the spoke bandwagon, Yamaha engineered their own design. Labeled Z-spokes, they are long, and stretch from the rim, then Z through the hub, and back to the opposite rim side. Ours stayed tight throughout the test and required little in the way of maintenance. The hubs are full-width and appear heavy. They are not. In fact, the weight is identical to the '83 wheels.

Yamaha paid close attention to the weight details this year. That's not to say the K model was fat. At a trim 220.5 pounds, only the KTM 250 was lighter. We propped the L model on the motley DB



## YAMAHA YZ250L

perfect harmony with a well-planned throttle. Now it's natural, more cut and thrust. It won't turn under a Honda, but then again, it doesn't suffer from a severe headshake at higher speeds.

This should go down in history as the first year that stiffer springs, both fore and aft, *will not* be mandatory for faster or heavier riders. The forks firm up and settle just enough, with faster riders needing only an oil-level increase to keep things in line. Rearward, the stock spring is just fine. Simply set the sag (95mm to 100mm) and hit the track.

Stock, the oil level in the forks is 160mm from the top of the tubes with the springs out and in the collapsed state. We went to 140mm. The compression adjustment was left stock. The rear unit is fine for riders weighing 140 to 150 pounds. Any heavier, and a healthy boost in preload will be warranted.

Both suspension ends work as a team. They sponge up the gnarlies without any bizarre hops. The fork action is "right," swallowing and digesting grim terrain in fine fashion. A revised Monocross rear is far superior to last year's effort, sweeping a fade-free path past most any jolt. While it's not sitting up with the RM Floater, it's close, and it is Yamaha's best effort to date.

scales and were shocked. Only 216.5 pounds! Somehow they shaved four pounds off the YZ, making it the lightest 250 of the year! So far . . .

### TRACKSIDE CHALK TALK

Once we got the YZ around the Saddleback track, it became apparent that the Yamaha has a slam-dunk motor. It fires off the bottom and soars into the mid-range with a serious smack. It rips out of the hole like a canary glued to a rocket sled. Then, quite abruptly, it checks out. Signs off. Goes off the air. Just past the fat middle hit, you must shift.

Short-shifting isn't bad. It takes more concentration to ride than, let's say, a Honda. Tight tracks can be mastered by riding normally. You work the powerband, shifting before you're robbed. Faster tracks require more toe work. Stay fat in the surge, or get dusted—simple as that. One problem here is the reluctance of the YZ to slip from gear to gear. Again, the shift action is notchy and hard. We played with the shifter height, trying to gain leverage to make it easier. Forget it.

With tighter gear ratios and a bullish motor, the YZ will run with any kid on the block, from turn to turn. Starts are a different story. Even with a perfect gate, don't expect to lead going into the first turn. You'll be right up there, but the Hondas will outpull the docile upper Rs of the YZ.

### GRINDERS:

#### EAT THE BUMPS

With the change in weight bias, the YZ will now corner in a more down-to-earth fashion, meaning you don't have to overload the front end plus keep your body in

*A healthy blast off the bottom lets the YZ catapult out of the corners. Since the tank and seat combo have been slimmed down, the bike feels more manageable.*



*With the rake pulled in and the weight trimmed down, the bike can be flicked at random with confidence.*



## YAMAHA YZ250L

### HUNT AND PECK

We never had to put a wrench on the carb to change a jet. It comes dead-on. No gasping, choking or hesitation. A new intake manifold redirects incoming gases, making for a better flow.

The piston is entirely different from the '83. A new ring groove and a changed pin-boss recess make it impossible to use an '84 piston on the K model.

An aluminum silencer finally hits the showroom YZs. It's very light and has an aluminum inner core. Keep an eye on the inside, as some of them have broken up.

For some reason, the clutch action is easier than past efforts. Using one finger is a cruise and quite effortless. This is the way it should be.

New side panels won't break like the throwaway models on the K. A new flexible plastic material resists cracking.

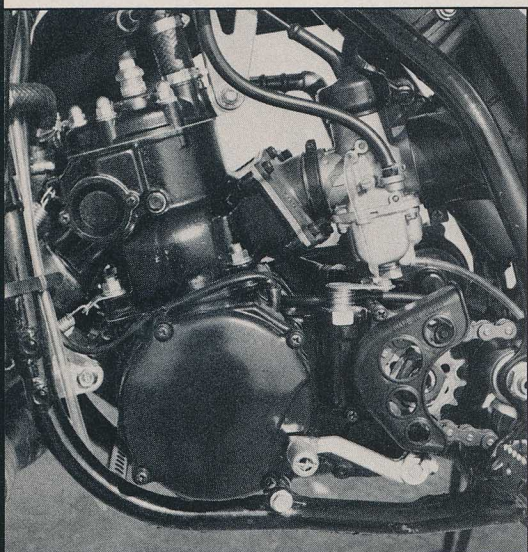
A softer compound on the grips makes them livable—not as good as Honda grips, but usable. The stock bars sweep back and cramp your arms. We opted for a set of Answer bars, the RH III bend. One of the few carry-overs from the K to the L model is the front numberplate. You can't put the AMA numbers on it because of the lower vented portion.

There's a radiator guard on the left cooler. Plenty of people were crashing and ripping the big-bucks radiator unit right off their bikes. They tell us the guard should prevent this problem.

That crummy stock chain has been replaced with some good stuff. Thicker plates make for increased life and little stretch. Too, the chain guide is longer and features a better tunnel to keep the chain riding straight. This should help eliminate tossed chains and cracked cases.



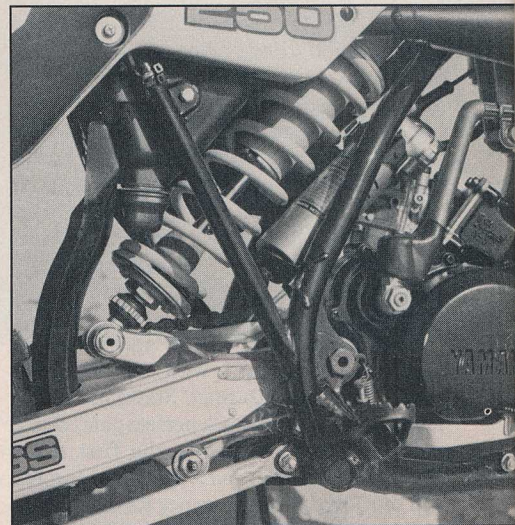
*After a trip to the DB scales, we found that the bike weighs in at an amazing 216.5 pounds. That's lighter than any other 250 motocrosser to date. Dan White thought it felt more like a 125 than a 250.*



*Still Power Valved, the YZ engine's strength is off the bottom and into the mid-range. Past that point it signs off a little early. Shifting is still too notchy for our likes.*



*Yamaha added compression damping adjusters to the forks this year. Their action is improved and was liked by all testers. The new Z-spoke wheels proved strong and never required much maintenance.*



*Zerk fittings and an easily accessible compression adjuster on the shock make Monocross dialing and maintenance easier to live with. The rear end works excellently. It responds and feeds on gnarly terrain.*



The radiator wings have been pulled in, slimming the appearance of the entire front end. A new tank is narrower, yet holds more fuel than the '83. This, with a more sensible seat junction, makes for easier and more comfortable rider transitions up on to the tank. The seat itself has beefier mounts on the back and a new lock-in mode up front.

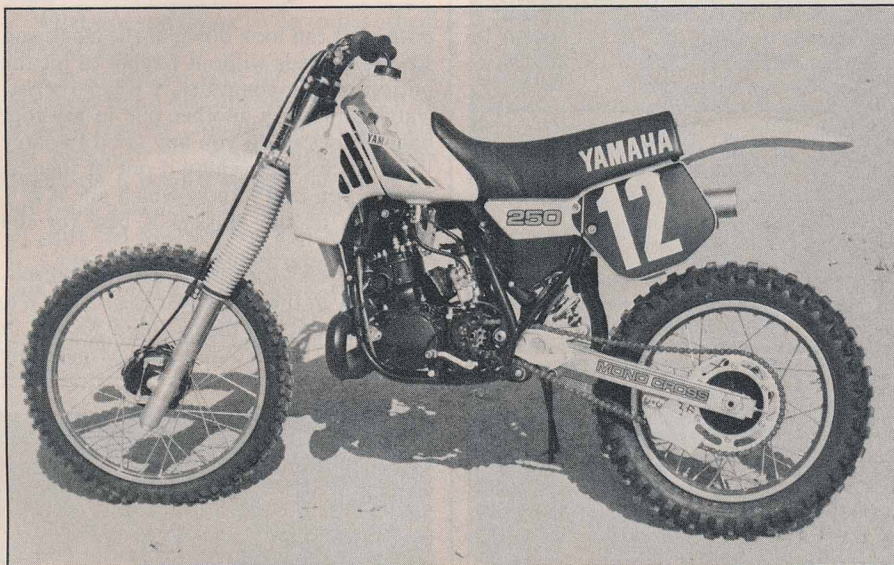
Both front and rear brakes are stronger. Finding fault with their stopping power is nit-picking, but there is some rear-wheel chattering. The front is progressive and quite intense. Still, you can adjust the amount of play in the lever and lessen the fear factor on dry, slippery tracks. Hear that, Honda?

### THE FINAL TALLY, POR FAVOR

What Yamaha has done is present the public with a finished competitive package. Out of the crate, the bike can and will win. The suspension is efficient and will not rupture your confidence like some bikes. It tracks, absorbs and performs.

The motor cracks off the bottom and snorts through the mid-range. A little more on top would be welcomed by faster riders, but as it stands, it packs a strong wallop.

For years now, Yamaha riders have put up with various odd traits born into the YZs. They adjusted and learned to live with the flaws. The '84 YZ has no strange vices. You just hop on and ride—competitively! □



### YAMAHA YZ250L

Engine type	Liquid-cooled, 2-stroke, reed valve
Bore and stroke	68mm x 68mm
Displacement	246cc
Horsepower (claimed)	N/A
Carburetion	VM38SS Mikuni
Factory recommended jetting:	
Main jet	290
Needle jet	P-6
Jet needle	6F45-3
Pilot jet	60
Slide number	3.0
Recommended gasoline	Premium 92+ octane
Fuel tank capacity	8.5 L (2.25 gals.)
Fuel tank material	Plastic
Lubrication	Pre-mix
Recommended oil	Yamalube, at 40:1
Oil capacity	0.85 L (0.90 qt.)
Air filtration	Oiled, foam type
Clutch type	Wet, multi-disc
Transmission	5-speed
Gearbox ratios:	
1	2.142:1
2	1.750:1
3	1.444:1
4	1.200:1
5	1.000:1
Gearing, front/rear	13/48
Ignition	CDI
Primary kick system?	Yes
Recommended spark plug	N-86 Champion
Silencer/spark arrester	Yes/no
Exhaust system	Up-pipe, right side
Frame, type	Semi-double cradle
Wheelbase	1470mm (57.9 in.)
Ground clearance	340mm (13.4 in.)
Seat height	950mm (37.4 in.)
Steering head angle (rake)	28°

Trail	119mm (4.69 in.)
Wet weight, no fuel	216.5 lbs.
Rim material	Aluminum alloy
Tire size and type:	
Front	90/90 x 21 Bridgestone M37
Rear	138/80 x 18 Bridgestone M38
Suspension, type and travel:	
Front	KYB, 300mm (11.8 in.)
Rear	Monocross, 320mm (12.6 in.)
Intended use	Motocross
Country of origin	Japan
Retail price, approx.	\$2429
Distributor/Manufacturer:	
Yamaha Motor Corp.	
6555 Katella	
Cypress, CA 90630	
Parts prices, high-wear items:	
Piston assembly, complete	\$42.55
Piston rings only	15.60
Cylinder	210.50
Shift lever	25.00
Brake pedal	32.45
Front sprocket	9.50

Overall rating of bike, keeping intended use of machine in mind:	
Handling	Excellent
Front suspension	Very good
Rear suspension	Very good
Power	Very good
Cost	Very good
Attention to detail	Very good
Effectiveness, stone stock	Very good

This rating system is included to aid in comparison of bikes in the same displacement and intended-use categories. Comparing the ratings of two dissimilar machines (four-stroke vs. MXer, 175 enduro vs. 80cc mini) is a meaningless exercise in futility.

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