

DIRT BIKE

**KAWASAKI
KDX175**

**1500
MILES
ON A
HONDA
XL250**

**FIRST
TEST:
YAMAHA
FIVE-
STROKE
TT250**

**SUPERCROSS:
MID-BATTLE**



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DIRT BIKE

JUNE 1980

VOLUME 10, NO. 6



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YAMAHA YZ125G MOTOCROSSER

G WHIZ

A Totally New Racer for 1980

By The Dirt Bike Staff

Last year, the YZ125F Yamaha was a decent bike. Not a great one, but a reasonable machine for the money. This year, the G-model must be considered a superb motocrosser. After a short ride, even the most casual tester will be impressed with the YZ125G. Not because it does any one thing in a spectacular fashion, but because there's almost nothing to complain about.

The power is most certainly competitive for a 125 racer, the suspension can be dialed in to suit just about any riding style and the handling is pure magic.

If it sounds like we're babbling with enthusiasm about the "G" model, you're right. Normally, the DB editors tend to prefer bigger bikes—250s and up—but the 125G got ridden a lot.

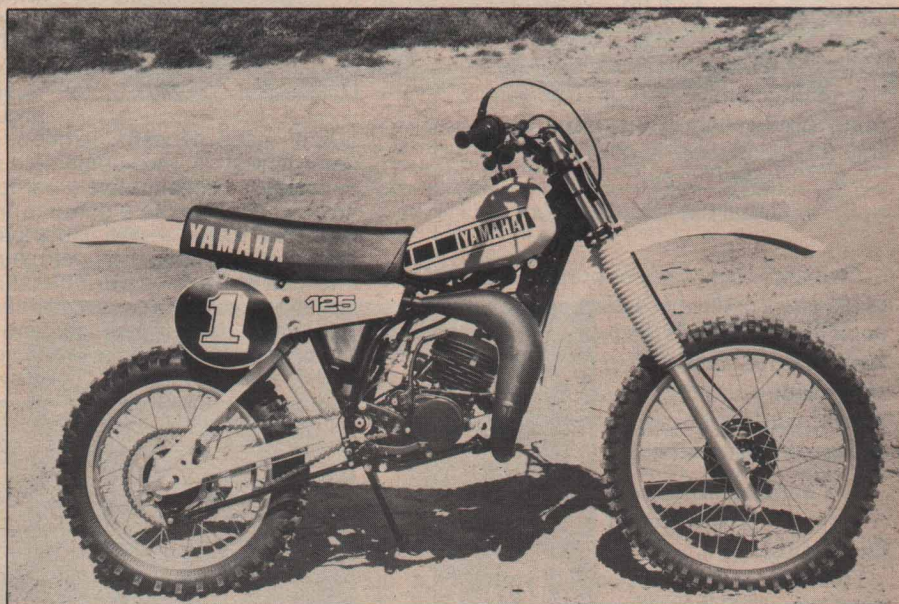
Part of the reason was that the bike was fun to ride. The owner's manual states that the YZ is a feathery-light 187 pounds, and the incredibly accurate and tastefully decal'd DB scales verified that number. This means that the new YZ is the lightest of all the Big Four 125 motocrossers. In fact, full of gas and various oils, the YZ is lighter than a Honda 125 bone-dry.

First impressions

Here's an interesting bit of trivia: Most of the European bikes have the countershaft sprocket and the chain running on the right side of the bike. The Japanese machines invariably run theirs on the left (or shift side). Up until last year, the Hondas were the only racers to have the C/S on the right side. Now, the YZ125G joins the Euro-side bikes, as it, too, has the chain and countershaft sprocket on the right side.

We were told by the Yamaha folks that this was done to make the engine more compact and to save weight. The 250 and 465 YZ do not have this feature, but we expect to see this change incorporated surely within the next two years.

A stroll around the new YZ reveals massive changes and substantial effort



by the factory. An aluminum reservoir for the revamped monoshock is hanging on the downtube, just like on the larger YZs, except that this one is attached to the opposite side.

As with the larger bikes, the YZ shares the new-style frame and the lighter, shorter monoshock. Not only was a bunch of weight saved here, but weight was also moved down lower on the bike. This reduced the top-heavy feel many riders have complained about on the monos over the years.

Our bike always took three or four kicks to get fired up, hot or cold. Reaching the kickstarter is fairly easy, even for a shorter rider, as the YZ125 feels much lower than its listed saddle height of 37 inches. The bike settles down a bit under the rider's weight and a five-foot, seven-inch person will have no trouble touching the ground with both feet while seated.

The standard mono springs will let the rear end of the bike sag too much for a rider over 140 pounds or so, but Yamaha does offer an optional heftier spring that works quite well for heavier riders. We even had a 200-pound

test rider (guess who?) ride the bike with the heavier spring and it felt right for him.

With the standard spring, the YZ did not steer as accurately as we'd like. The rear end broke loose under acceleration and slewed from side to side when exiting a flat corner under power. Still, if the bike was ridden in a loose, wide-open manner, it would fly through the corners without any sensation of the bumps coming through to the rider.

With the heavier spring on the mono, the bike hooked up much better at the rear and the front end went where it was pointed without a hint of pushing, or washing out. Some of the feel of the bumps would then come through to the rider, but the increase in steering accuracy was more than worth it.

Power

Finally, the YZ125 is not "average" on power output for a 125. While the "G" model does not have a lot down low (what 125 does?), it has a lot of beans in the upper rpm range and won't fall on its face if over-revved. There's not a whole lot of mid-range, but enough to prevent any gaps between



Jimmy Holley uncorks the YZ's abilities with this 9.75 one-and-a-half-twisting auger.

gears. In other words, the new "G" model is running a classic 125 engine all the way. It's strictly an rpm factory and likes to rev.

Combined with the plush suspension and the fine-line steering, this makes for a bike that can literally be ridden flat-out around most courses. Of course, gear selection is critical with an rpm motor, and deep sand will make the rider work the engine to its limit. The power output is totally competitive stone stock. In a drag race to the first turn, the YZ rider will be giving little or nothing away to the other bikes in its class.

To get an idea of exactly how all the 125s stack up, stay tuned to this station, as we'll have a 125 shootout in the next few months. Here, we'll race all of the bikes head to head and give you a clear rating.

Problems

It's no secret that Yamaha had some grief with the first batch of YZ125s that were released to dealers early in the year. Seizures were too common to ignore. It was suspected that the barrels were bad, but most of the grief seems

to have been traced to gas frothing in the carb. Apparently, the carb was hitting the engine cases at higher revs, causing the gasoline to froth and bubble. This effectively changed the air/gas ratio and resulted in upper end seizures by the bucket-full. A service bulletin was released, and in case you have an early YZ and have not been informed, here's the data:

YZ125G

Carburetor Modification

The float bowl dowel pin support on the bottom of the left-hand side of the carburetor (as you sit on the motorcycle) hits the transmission under extreme riding conditions. The carburetor vibrates and causes the gasoline to foam. In order to prevent the gasoline from foaming, a slight modification is necessary to the carburetor. Follow the procedures given below.

Affected Models

All YZ125G Procedure

1. Drain the fuel from the carburetor.

WARNING:

Do not drain gasoline onto a hot engine.

2. Disconnect and remove the carburetor.
3. File or grind 3mm off the left-hand float bowl dowel pin support.

NOTE:

Do not get metal chips in the carburetor. Thoroughly clean the carburetor body.

4. Seal the hole in the dowel pin support with epoxy glue.
5. Reinstall and reconnect the carburetor.

Pre-Mix Ratio

Use a fuel/oil ratio of 16:1 (32:1 for Novice riders).

According to the Yamaha service people, this has cured most of the seizure problems, but some savvy tuners have told us that the YZ125 should be run on bean oil to play it safe. Bean oil gravitates toward hot spots, and, while messy to use and filthy in an engine, seems to offer extra protection in highly stressed racing engines, according to our sources.

We haven't had any trouble with our



Jimmy Holley, seen here during a little easy, mild recreational riding.

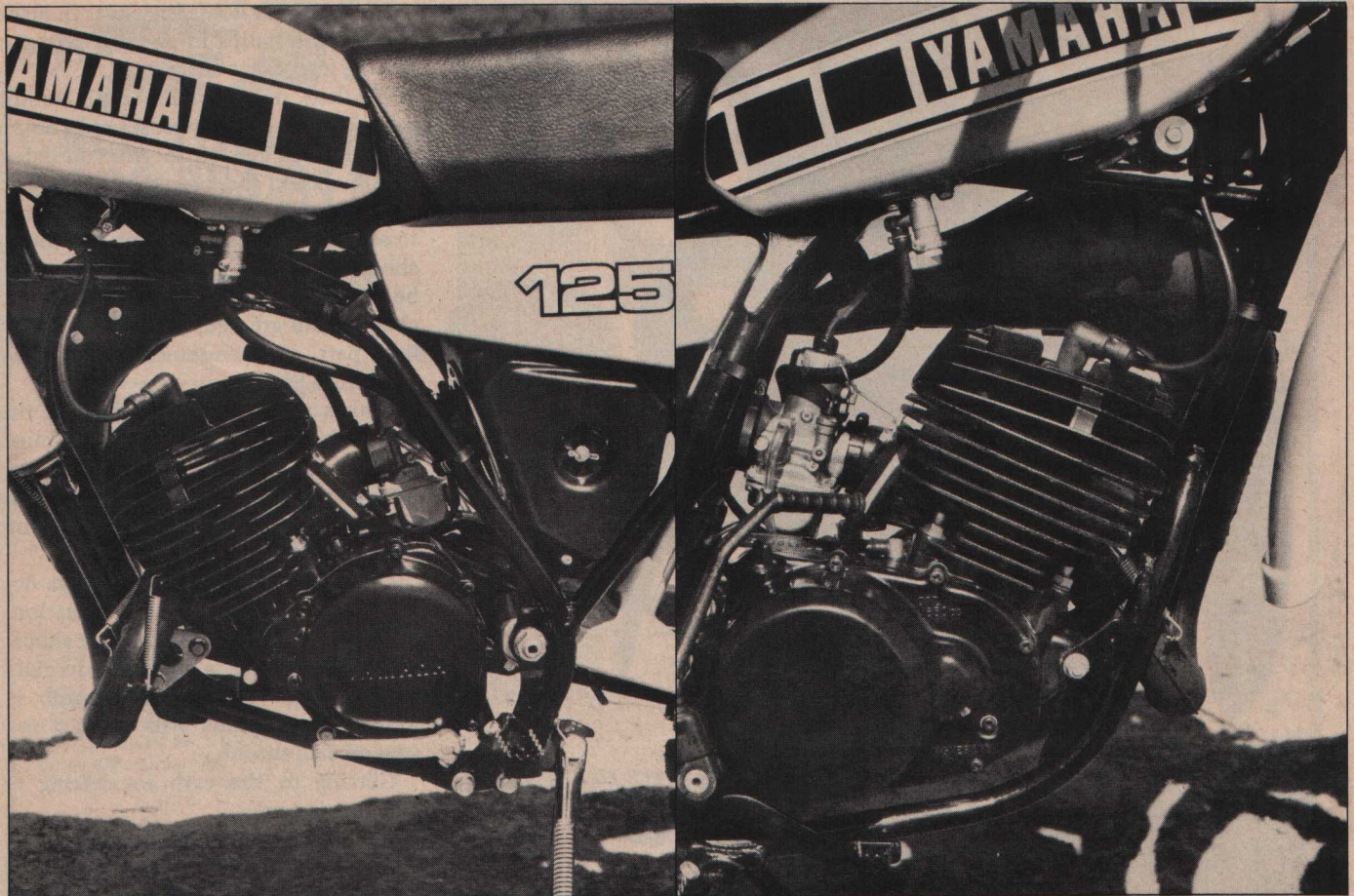
bike yet, and we plan to run it for a few months on Yamalube R at about a 20:1 ratio and see what happens. If we have any difficulties, we'll report them to you in the 125 shootout.

The 125G engine is a very powerful, stressed powerplant and any rider would be well-advised to stay right on top of it. Letting the rings get loose and sloppy will hasten a wasted motor. This holds true for all of the 125s, with the possible exception of the KX125. As one wit said, horsepower makes heat and the Kawasaki is the coolest-running engine of the lot.

Hot Laps

We made our best starts on the YZ by using low gear, even on dry and flat ground. While it was possible to start in second, it was just too risky a deal. Shifting was smoother on this bike than with previous YZ125s. You did not have to back off the throttle for a fraction to get to the next gear. We did miss the first-to-second shift a few times during the testing, but we were able to slap up and down through the rest of the gears with a confidence next to arrogance. By and large, a pleasant gearbox.

Because of the pronounced lack of low-end power, we found ourselves



Here is the highlight of the whole package. This powerplant is one of the strongest units of any one-two-five yet.

using the clutch brutally on several sections of the test tracks. The clutch held up to this abuse quite nicely, thank you.

The "G" bike was probably more fun on a string of "S" turns than anyplace else. Here, the light weight and quick handling allowed the rider to literally throw the bike in the line he wanted and to scream the brains out of the engine at full rpm while doing so. On sweepers and faster corners, the bike could be pushed past the limit of reasonable traction until the man/machine combo started skittering to the outside. Then, all it took to maintain control was a foot down and a waggle on the bars. If any bike ever made the rider feel like an indestructible superman, this one did.

Suspension

You want travel? We got travel. At the rear, 11.4 inches do a stunning job. No more is needed, and anyone who asks for more is kidding himself. Up front, 11.8 inches are available. As with the bigger Yamahas, both front and rear are adjustable to suit just about anyone. The rebound damping can be adjusted without tools, just by reaching under the saddle and turning a knob. Preload can also be changed, but

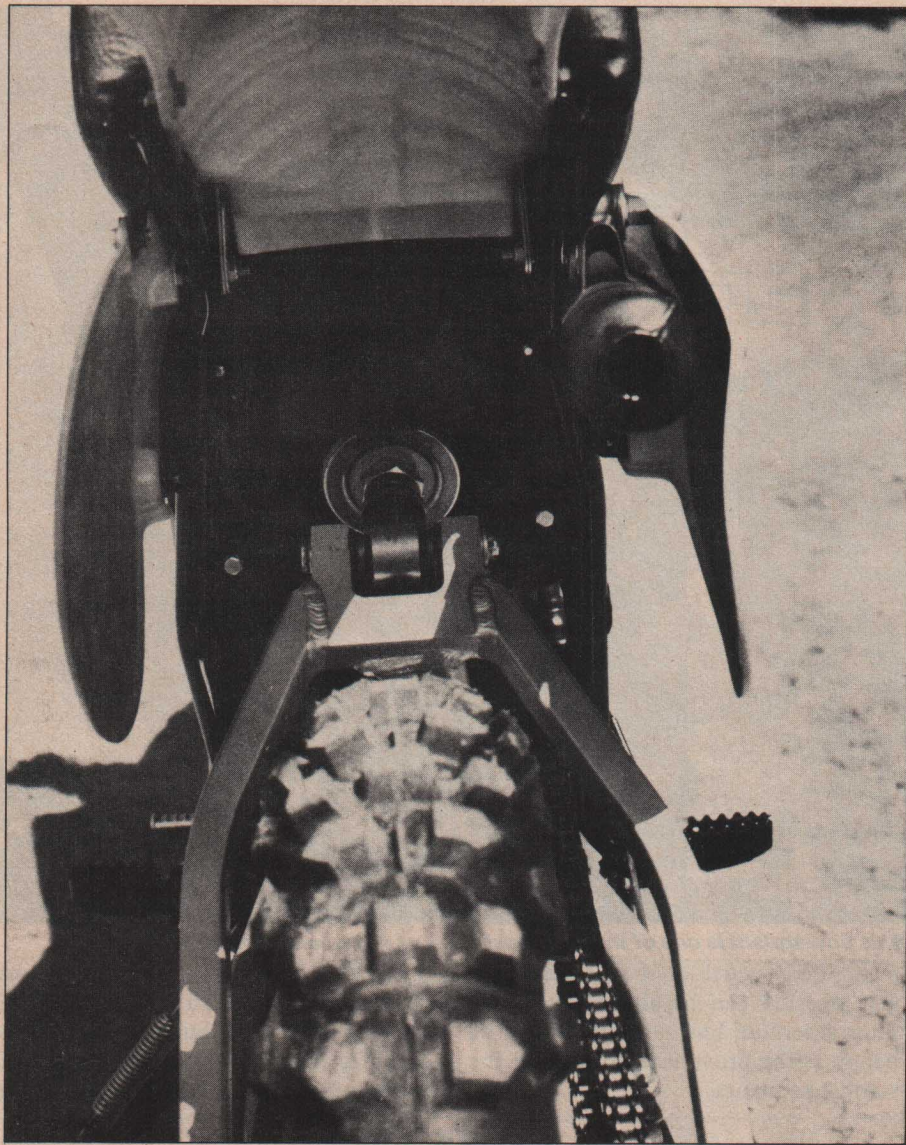
a supplied wrench does that job. Nitrogen pressure can be altered in the remote reservoir, but most riders will be happy as the proverbial clam with the standard settings.

Here's a little trick you might want to pass on to a friend. The 125 shock will bolt on to the bigger YZs, and apparently the compression damping rating is softer on the 125 shock, resulting

YAMAHA YZ125G Specifications

NAME AND MODEL	Yamaha YZ125G
ENGINE TYPE	Reed valve, two-stroke
BORE AND STROKE	56 x 50mm
DISPLACEMENT	123cc
HORSEPOWER (CLAIMED BY FACTORY)	N/A
CARBURETION	Mikuni VM32SS
FACTORY RECOMMENDED JETTING:	
MAIN JET	300
NEEDLE JET	P-8
JET NEEDLE	6F22-3
PILOT JET	60
SLIDE NUMBER	3.0
RECOMMENDED GASOLINE	Premium
RECOMMENDED OIL (MFR.)	Yamalube
FUEL TANK CAPACITY	1.72 gallons
FUEL TANK MATERIAL	Plastic
GAS/OIL RATIO	32:1
LUBRICATION	Pre-mix
AIR FILTRATION	Oiled foam
CLUTCH TYPE	Wet, multi-disc
TRANSMISSION	Six-speed, constant mesh
GEARBOX RATIOS:	
1	2.461
2	1.857
3	1.500
4	1.250
5	1.105
6	1.00
GEARING, FRONT/REAR	12/48
IGNITION	CDI
PRIMARY KICK SYSTEM?	Yes
RECOMMENDED SPARK PLUG	Champion N-59G
SILENCER/SPARK ARRESTOR/ QUALITY	Yes/no/acceptable
EXHAUST SYSTEM	Up-pipe, right side
FRAME, TYPE	Single downtube

WHEELBASE	1430mm (56.3 inches)
GROUND CLEARANCE	340mm (13.4 inches)
SEAT HEIGHT AT TANK	940mm (37.0 inches)
STEERING HEAD ANGLE	29 degrees
TRAIL	125.5mm (4.94 inches)
WEIGHT WITH ONE GALLON GAS	197 pounds
RIM MATERIAL	Aluminum alloy
TIRE SIZES:	
FRONT	3.00x21 Bridgestone
REAR	4.10x18 Bridgestone
SUSPENSION:	
FRONT, TYPE AND TRAVEL	Air forks, 300mm (11.8 inches)
REAR, TYPE AND TRAVEL	Monoshock, 290mm (11.4 inches)
INTENDED USE, MFR	Motocross
COUNTRY OF ORIGIN	Japan
PRICE, APPROX.	\$1329
PARTS PRICES, HIGH-WEAR ITEMS:	
PISTON ASSEMBLY, COMPLETE	\$33.90
RINGS ONLY	\$12.38
CYLINDER	\$125.30
SHIFT LEVER	\$8.56
BRAKE PEDAL	\$8.84
FRONT SPROCKET	\$5.50
DISTRIBUTOR:	
Yamaha International	
6555 Katella Ave.	
Cypress, California 90630	
OVERALL RATING, FROM 0 TO 100, VARIOUS CATEGORIES, KEEPING INTENDED USE OF MACHINE IN MIND:	
HANDLING	97
SUSPENSION	98
POWER	98
COST	95
ATTENTION TO DETAIL	99
EFFECTIVENESS, STONE STOCK	98



Monoshock preload and damping adjusting has never been easier. Just slip a wrench onto the nuts at the end of the shock, turn it a notch either way, and you've changed the preload of your mono. Damping requires two fingers turning a knob ... and that's it!

in smoother reaction over square-edged and chatter bumps.

We ran no air in the forks and stayed with the standard oil level and viscosity. We also experimented with heavier springs, but we feel the steering accuracy is best with the standard fork springs in those legs. If precise turning is not all that important, say for desert racing, then the heavier springs might be considered.

By and large, though, we'd recommend that most riders resist the urge to tamper with the suspension, with the exception of using the heavier mono spring. This, we do recommend highly. The difference in rear wheel hook-up and steering accuracy is phenomenal.

We felt that the action of the suspension components was first-rate. Both ends of the bike handled everything from stutter-bumps to giant whoopers

without protest. No money will have to be spent on the bike's suspension, even for Expert class riders. In fact, Jim Holley won the Golden State Series on a bone-stock YZ125G, just like our test bike.

Bits and pieces

The bars angle back sharply and most of the test riders had to resist the urge to tilt them up and forward. However, if you just ride about 20 minutes with the bars, they'll start to feel comfortable.

You'll find the pegs back a bit on the YZ compared to other bikes. This makes the bike easier to stand on, but also makes for a light front end when jumping. It's very easy to lift the front end up over bad bumps with the rear-set pegs and way-back bars.

We found the air filter easier to service on the 125 than the bigger bikes. A

single wing nut holds the cover in place and the filter slips in and out without getting forced out of shape.

We had no problems with motor mount bolts coming loose and the engine vibrated very little. Are you listening, Kawasaki and Suzuki?

Most riders pay very little attention to servicing the hardware on the monoshock. The pins and bushings should be taken apart on a regular schedule, cleaned and greased. Consider it a normal part of maintenance, just like cleaning a filter.

Brakes were excellent. We bent the rod on the rear brake at first, but found that this was not needed once we got used to the pedal feel. That front stopper was possibly the single best unit we've ever experienced.

Lever are the standard Yamaha dog-leg items; comfortable, but a bit long. The rubber cover on the throttle should be trimmed with a razor blade right where it rubs on the rider's thumb, as long riding sessions will cause a raw spot on said thumb.

Getting to the carb for jetting or cleaning is easy.

Good-quality plastic is everywhere on the bike and lo! Yamaha finally figured out how to keep the decals on their tanks for a reasonable period of time. The rear fender should be longer, or curve down a bit at the rear, or both.

As with most of the race bikes we've been testing lately, we installed a Boyesen dual reed in place of the stocker and noticed a solid increase in low-end response and mid-range power. They're definitely worth the investment.

Our wheels seated quickly, and we spent very little time messing with the spokes. We were pleasantly surprised with the performance of the tires, Bridgestones, until we burned them out in a few hours of riding. Then, we placed the ever-popular Metzeler 3.00x21 up front and took the narrowish 4.10x18 off the rear and ran a 4.50x18 split-knob Dunlop in its place. As expected, performance in the turns was greatly improved.

The bottom line

Quite frankly, we didn't expect this from Yamaha. Our minds were sort of already made up before we got the "G." We expected an improved "F" model. What we got was an entirely new bike. And, an effective one. You'll have to wait until the shootout before we give you an in-class rating, but for now, we can say that the 1980 Yamaha YZ125G is a fast, forgiving and fantastic machine. □