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**YAMAHA YZ465H:
STILL THE BIG GUN?**

**KTM 125 LC:
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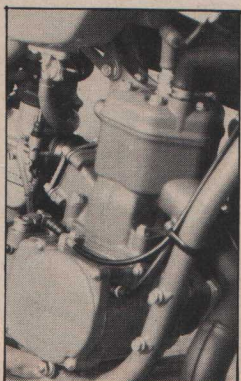
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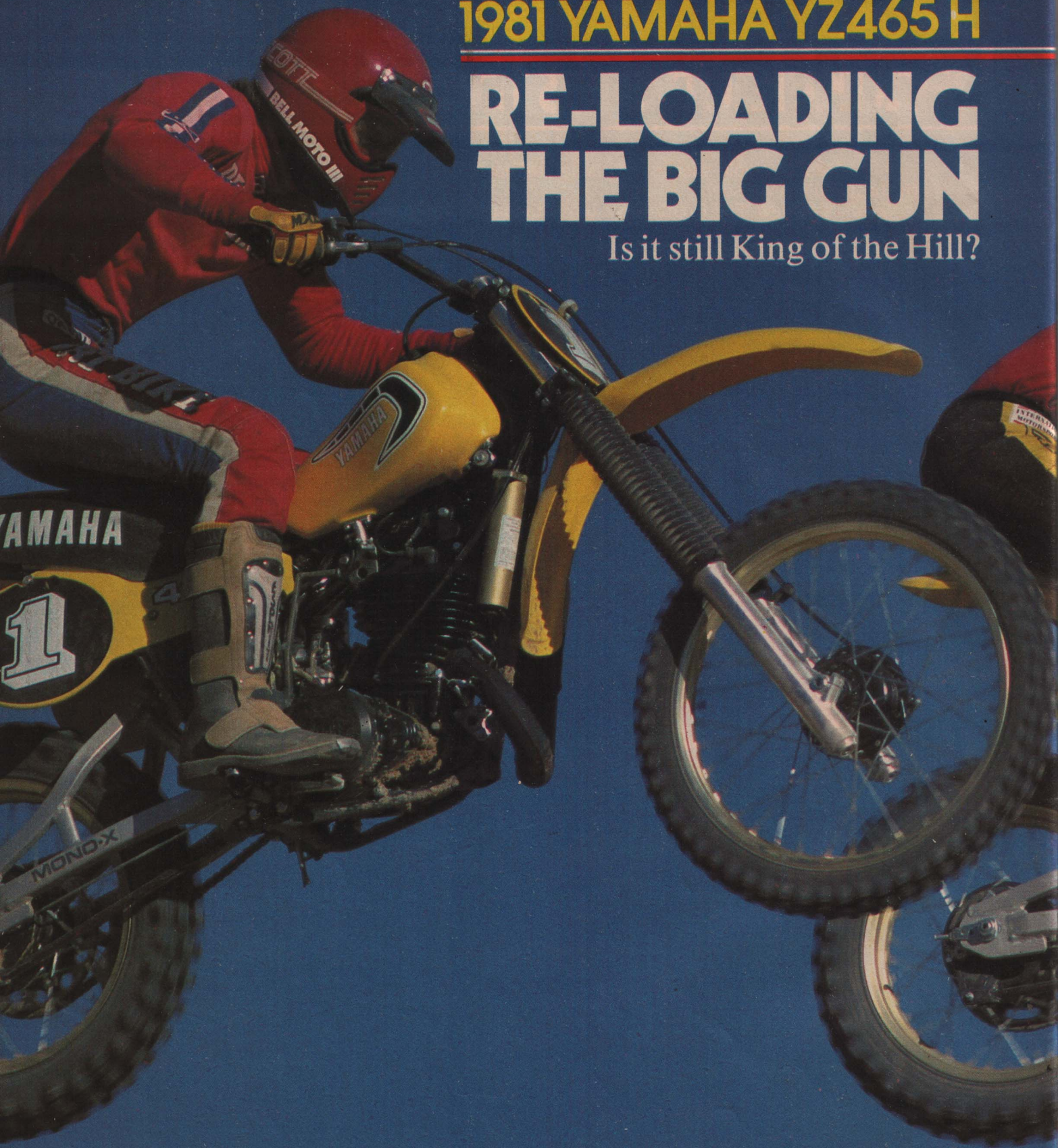
On the cover: — Rod Bush proves that water makes lousy berms. Photo by Paul Clipper.

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1981 YAMAHA YZ465 H

RE-LOADING THE BIG GUN

Is it still King of the Hill?





Last year, the YZ465 was the undisputed horsepower king of the Open Class. It had more beans than any other big bike around. Drag race the yellow YZ against any other bike and it would usually win. Gear it up to Baja speeds, and the YZ would waltz away from the pack with room to spare.

The YZ sat on top of the heap with an arrogance that drove the other manufacturers to distraction. The YZ was King Cheese. The Big Gun. Oh sure, other classes had their speedsters, but there is only one Heavyweight Champion of the World. Nobody remembers who the Bantamweight Champ is, but they can sure tell you that Ali whupped Frazer and when Spinks jinxed Ali. The Big Guns get the Big News.

Therefore, we approached the YZ-465 with a certain amount of pre built-in respect. But we also had to judge the YZ against a rush of new talent for 1981. It seems that 1981 is the year of the *big bike*. Every major manufacturer has charged into the breach with

1981 YAMAHA YZ465 H

heavy technology for the cubic inches.

Bear witness: We have a 495 KTM in the wings, a 490 Maico pulling over 47 horsepower at the rear wheel, and 430 Husky with a silky smooth power band and buckets of low-end torque. Honda even got into the fray with a 431 Darth Vader model. Suzuki is shrouding their RM465 with secrecy, and Kawasaki is updating their Bradmobile. Interesting, to say the least.

Naturally, one must ask how the new YZ fares against the rest of the field. The bottom line is this: The YZ is vastly improved but the competition has not sat on their haunches.

What's new on the YZ?

Lots. The most obvious change is hanging up front. A massive set of KYB legs grace the 3.00 x 21 wheel. While the action of the 1980 forks was excellent, there was still some flex, especially in muddy or deep sand conditions. Those new forks are 43mm big, which is enough for the current demands of today. Travel is the same as last year at 11.8 inches. Even though some other bikes offer a bit more travel, we don't feel that it's needed as long as the travel that's offered is good travel.

All of our test riders were impressed with the smooth action of the new forks. We had a 1980 YZ465 with us during our first day of testing, and when switching from bike to bike, the difference in front-end rigidity could be readily felt. One side benefit of the strong forks: Front braking was more predictable. The 465 comes with a double-leading shoe braking setup, and it's a tremendously powerful unit. On the 1980 bike, a heavy application of front brake on bumpy ground could cause a wiggle induced by fork flex. This was scary enough to make many riders back off the adjustment and "soften" the front brake action. On the new bike, the rider can just squeeze the lever until the big yellow beast stands on its nostrils without a hint of wiggling.

We ran no air in the forks, as per usual Yamaha practice. We did, however, add an extra 10 millimeters to the fork oil level. This reduced the fork dive under heavy braking without sacrificing smoothness.

The rear suspension on the new 465 offers the same travel, but there are more rebound damping adjustments available and there are also handy punch marks showing the basic setting

positions. A slightly larger reservoir lets the Mono-X unit run cooler. With a minimum of fiddling, just about any sort of rear-end action can be dialed in. This is probably the easiest-to-adjust bike on the market. Most riders will want to crank in a bit more preload as things settle in. Do this in small increments though, as big jumps can and will effect the fork action and steering mannerisms.

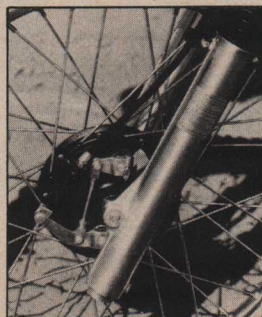
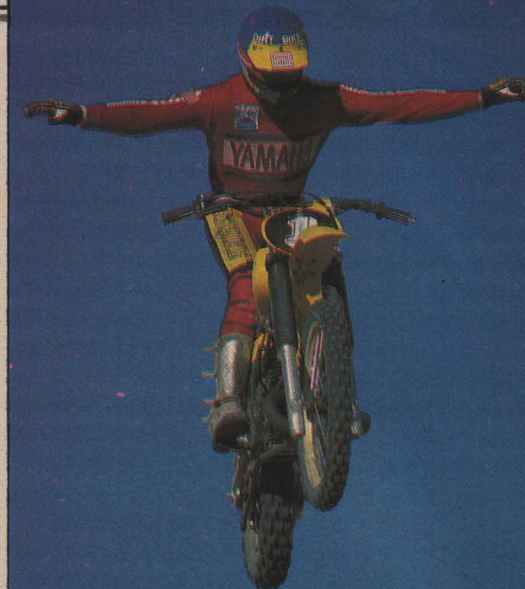
By the end of our first day of testing, we had the suspension working just right . . . without spending one dime for optional springs, exotic oils or trick kits.

Power? Sure, but . . .

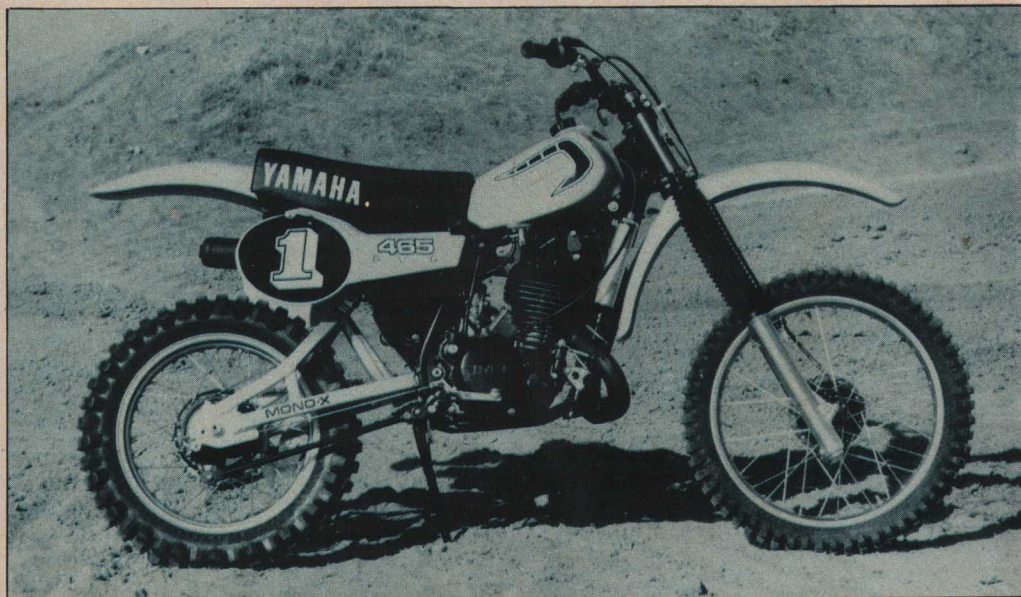
The folks at Yamaha stated that the 1981 YZ465 put out just a fraction more peak horsepower than last year's bike. This means we're still talking right about 42.5 horsepower. However, they noted that they're pulling a lot more down low and at midrange.

One of the complaints about the "G" model was that there was a hitch in the power delivery. While the bike would pull fairly hard off the bottom—right around 4,000 rpm—it would snap into warp drive and rocket to peak revs very suddenly. This meant that you either had to ride below the "hitch" and torque the bike or ride above it and buzz the engine. If you did ride through the "hitch," then you had to do so gingerly. Woe be unto the rider who had the YZ465G come alive while he had the bike leaned over for a corner.

On the 1981 bike that hitch is gone.



Truly massive 43mm forks give a smooth ride, with no flex to be found. Travel is right in the ballpark, at 11.8 inches. As with recent Monos, both pre-load and rebound damping can be changed without a major hassle. This year, there are more available damping adjustments.



A casual glance indicates a decal change and little more. Closer inspection shows big forks and a multitude of small, but important, detail improvements.



With the power on, the YZ465H would snap through sandy corners quickly. T. Webb demonstrates.

Now, the YZ465H pulls rather evenly from the basement all the way to peak revs. There's only one problem. The delivery of power at the bottom is rough, uneven and comes on bang-pop-bang—like a bike that's slightly too fat on the pilot jet. Once past the low rpm roughness, the big YZ pulls very hard and fast, almost violently, then flattens out on top quickly as peak revs are reached and the engine starts breaking up. There's a rev limiter built into the ignition to prevent overrevving, and that's what causes this "shooting crows" sound at higher revs.

So the best way to make the YZ go forward in a hurry is to short-shift and get to the highest gear you can find in a hurry. Then the engine will feel like it's not pulling, but you'll be eating up the landscape in a big hurry. Try to rev the bike out in each gear and everything else on the track will pass you up.

While this short-shifting method is a proven, acceptable way to ride a big bike, the shifting action on the biggest YZ makes things difficult. It's a notchy shifter and the lever cannot be slapped around to get the next upshift. You have to roll off the throttle, use the clutch and make a very deliberate movement with your foot. Adding to the shifting woes is the fact that the lever must be pulled up and back rather than just up. Sort of like the shifter on a 1980 Honda 250 Elsinore.

We tried an International Motorsports folding lever with a longer arm and a straighter exit from the shift shaft—shifting improved.

Our best improvements came from a brand new product that you may not have heard of. It's called Engine-Gard from Kal Gard. The stuff comes in a little bottle and is horribly expensive at \$7.95 retail. We added about two ounces of the solution to one quart of oil and poured 650c's of the mixture into the gearbox after draining out the old stuff. Within five minutes we noticed a definite improvement in shifting. Engine-Gard is so slippery, it's not recommended for KTM, Husky and Maico gearboxes because it'll make the clutches in these bikes slip.

Once the bike was going through the gears easier, we found the YZ much more pleasant to ride. Still, one has to face up to the fact that the YZ465H will have to be shifted as often as a 250 on most tracks.

More teeth for a bigger bite

To get around all that shifting, we slipped a larger countershaft sprocket on the front and dropped two teeth on the rear sprocket. This made it much (about 50%) more fun to ride. Even if you plan to race the new 465 on a tight, twisty track, we'd recommend this gearing change. This makes each gear longer and more useful, and they demand much less shifting. Even with this tall gearing, second gear starts are a snap.

If you plan to enter a cross-country event where the speeds will be high,

then you still have the option of taller gearing. The YZ will pull anything you can bolt in place. Some of the desert and Baja riders are running 17 up front and 42 on the rear wheel. That puts the top speed out in Yoyo Land. But, like we said . . . the YZ has enough steam to pull it.

Changing lanes

Improved cornering manners are part of the YZ's bag of tricks this year. The steering head is more vertical by about 3/4 degree. This means that the inside line is now up for consideration, whereas last year's bike was primarily a berm hunter. Trail is also reduced. This sharpening in steering didn't seem to bother the new YZ at higher speeds over rough ground. We could pick up a hint of head shaking when coming down from the speed of sound on a bumpy fire road, but even that could have been dialed out by stretching the forks out a bit in the triple clamps.

All things considered, the handling, steering and turning abilities on the 1981 465 are a very intelligent, well-thought-out compromise.

Bits and Pieces

If you had a 465 last year, chances are you had a hard time removing the rear wheel. That's because you bent the axle. The new bike has a huge new rear axle that should not tweak under any circumstances.

A folding shift lever is now a standard item. The flat bladed aluminum item is gone.

A new straight pull throttle—standard on all YZs—comes on the YZ465. Excellent levers, grips and cables are appreciated touches.

Chain rollers have been beefed up and should last a lot longer.

Bars are a fraction too high and way too long for most riders. We cured the width with a hacksaw and learned to live with the height.

Kick starting is much easier on the 1981 bike. Gone is the "kick-kick-kapow" starting procedure. Just give the bike a respectable boot with the lever all the way at the top of the stroke, and the bike should start within three kicks and surprisingly often on one kick.

It takes a very, very long time to get the YZ cleaned out and running right. Don't think that you can just fire it up, ride it to the line and pull a holeshot. No way. You have to warm the engine up for a few minutes, then make a few passes through the gears. Then and only then will the YZ465H pull off the

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1981 YAMAHA YZ465 H

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The bar clamps have been slightly redesigned to prevent the rocking movement that caused the bar slippage in the 1980 model.

You won't find a bulge on the head pipe. It comes out evenly from the exhaust port. We found out that the bulge in the 1980 pipe was there from a slight gain in midrange power. Yamaha stated that their engineers found

out how to increase midrange and eliminate the bulge at the same time. We feel that the pipe hung down too low. It'll receive more than its share of lumps and bumps.

Pegs are back up slightly on the new bike. While this makes it easier to stand up on the bike, it also makes the YZ465 way too light on the front end. You must pay attention to keep from standing that huge yellow animal on end.

Different decals adorn the tank. Gold anodized wheels add to the looks. Fork boots are black instead of yellow. Pegs are sturdier with a reinforcing lip on the trailing bottom edge.

[continued on page 71]



YAMAHA YZ465H

NAME AND MODEL Yamaha YZ465H
ENGINE TYPE Air-cooled, two-stroke
reed valve, single
85mm x 82mm
(3.35 x 3.23 in.)
BORE AND STROKE
DISPLACEMENT 465cc (28.37 cu. in.)
HORSEPOWER 42.4
CARBURETION 38mm Mikuni
FACTORY RECOMMENDED JETTING:
MAIN JET 390
NEEDLE JET Q2
JET NEEDLE 6F16-3
PILOT JET 45
SLIDE NUMBER 3.0
RECOMMENDED GASOLINE Premium
FUEL TANK CAPACITY 9.0 liters (2.4 gal.)
FUEL TANK MATERIAL Plastic
LUBRICATION Oil in gas, pre-mix
RECOMMENDED OIL Yamalube R
OIL CAPACITY N/A
AIR FILTRATION Oiled foam, two-stage
CLUTCH TYPE Wet, multi-plate
TRANSMISSION Five-speed, constant mesh
GEAR BOX RATIOS:
1 30/14 (2.142)
2 28/16 (1.750)
3 25/19 (1.315)
4 23/22 (1.045)
5 20/24 (0.833)
GEARING, FRONT/REAR 14/46
IGNITION Mitsubishi C.D.I.
PRIMARY KICK SYSTEM? Yes
RECOMMENDED SPARK PLUG Cham. N-3
**SILENCER/SPARK ARRESTOR/
QUALITY** Silencer only, fairly quiet
EXHAUST SYSTEM High-pipe, left side
FRAME TYPE Single down tube, split cradle

WHEELBASE 1,480mm (58.3 in.)
GROUND CLEARANCE 320mm (12.6 in.)
SEAT HEIGHT 950mm (37.4 in.)
STEERING HEAD ANGLE 28.5 degrees
TRAIL 120mm (4.72 in.)
WEIGHT WITH ONE GALLON GAS 244 lbs.
RIM MATERIAL Aluminum alloy
TIRE SIZE AND TYPE:
FRONT 3.00x21 knobby
REAR 5.10x18 knobby
SUSPENSION, TYPE AND TRAVEL:
FRONT Telescopic, air/oil, 300mm (11.8 in.)
REAR Monocross, gas reservoir
310mm (12.2 in.)
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EFFECTIVENESS, STONE STOCK 92

YAMAHA YZ465H

[continued from page 54]



So, then . . .

No question about it . . . the 1981 YZ is a big improvement over the 1980 YZ465. However, it is no longer King of the Horsepower Hill. So far, the blood red 490 Maico claims that title.

Where the Yamaha does shine is in versatility and adjustability. It's the "everything bike" that'll do well under just about any racing condition. The handling can be altered to suit the rider's needs; stability and turning are excellent and reliability in several critical areas has been improved.

But, there's only one Heavyweight Champ. To regain the title in 1982, the YZ will have to get broader, smoother power. Meanwhile, it's still the best dollar-per-dollar buy in the Open Class. □



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