

1986 RM250G SUZUKI

Last year Suzuki had one of the best 250 motocrossers ever made. The '85 RM combined a strong motor and a superior suspension package into a powerful fist that could beat the inner tubes out of anything in its class. For 1986 the engineers at Suzuki have redesigned the RM250 with the intention of making the Blue Hornet slimmer, lower, and substantially quicker. While they did succeed in accomplishing these goals (the yellow beast is slimmer, lower, and much, much quicker), there are still some suspension warts that require attention. When these blemishes are cleared up, the blue-engined RM *could* once again be the king of the middleweights.

NEW: BEING OTHER THAN THE FORMER OR OLD

Everybody is slimming down lately, and the '86 RM250 is no different. The slide rule guys at Suzuki wanted the machine slimmer this year, and the RM does indeed feel and look as though it's had a tuck here and there. One of the means by which this svelteness was accomplished is a new, stronger frame design that employs oblong, rather than round, frame tubes near the rider's legs and in the tail section. The engine itself has been slimmed seven percent by running fewer teeth on the tranny gears, and the pipe and side panels are also more efficiently tucked in to aid the overall narrowness of the bike.

On top of the all-new frame and engine geometry sits smaller radiators, a redesigned tank and a new works-style seat. The center

of gravity has been lowered via the Floater rear end through the use of a free-rolling eccentric cam set at the point where the swingarm connects with the rear cushion lever. The shock's remote reservoir sports increased capacity, which helps keep the shock cooler and eliminates fade. Up front the KYB silverware now incorporates a progressive-rate spring instead of the industry standard straight-rate spring, and a compression side valve for the more brutal hits.

MR. BLUE ENGINE

The motor's latest feature is its automatic exhaust control. This is a subchamber located downstream of the exhaust port, in front of the crankcase. In the lower and middle rpm ranges, a mechanically operated rotary valve opens to allow part of the expelled gases to enter the subchamber. The

ALL THE RIGHT MOVES?

Saturn, beware!

By the Staff of DIRT BIKE

idea is to create an exhaust pulse to better match the low and mid-range and, therefore, create more efficient combustion. The valve closes at higher rpm for max top-end performance.

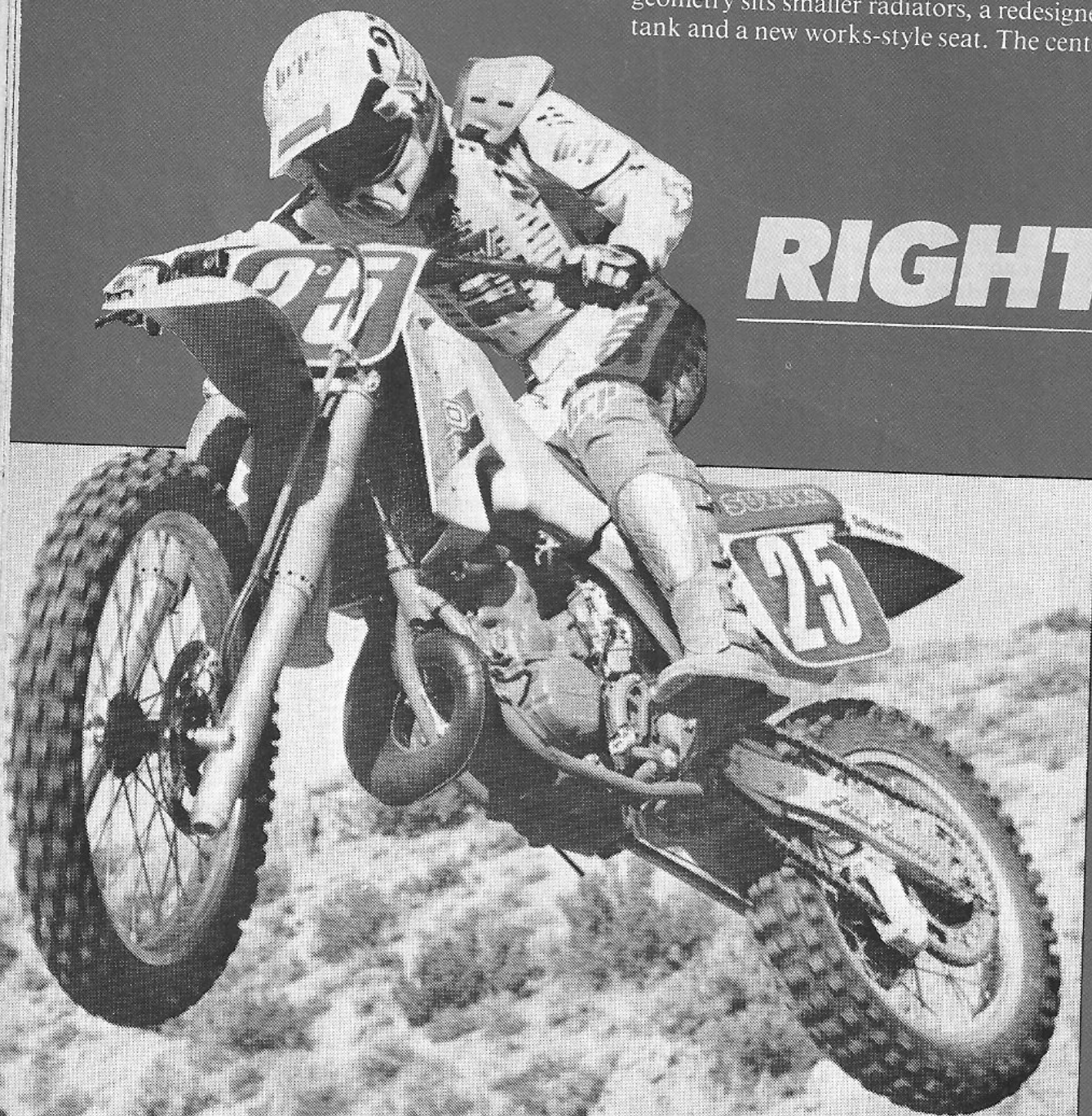
Besides the addition of the EVAC system, Suzuki completely changed the bore and stroke on the RM and turned it into a long-stroke motor. On paper this means a grunter, low-end tractor pulse. Strangely, Suzuki opted for a smallish 36mm flat-slide Mikuni, rather than the more normal 38mm. We were told that the 38mm indeed let the machine howl like a banshee, but completely vanquished any low-end strength.

Suzuki upped the capacity of the air cleaner and added a direct-drive water pump. They also redid the clutch, using a rack-and-pinion system instead of the more conventional push rod.

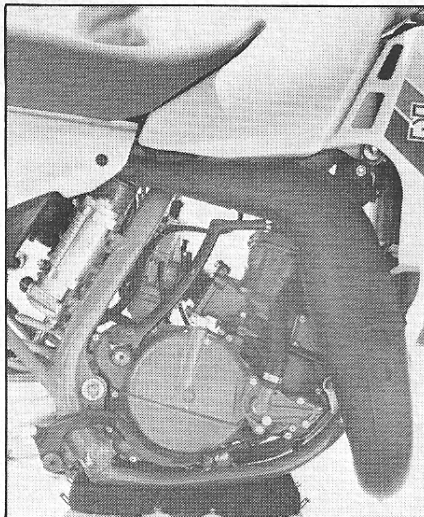
SO RIDE IT ALREADY

The first thing we noticed when we sat on the bike was that we could plant both feet firmly on the ground. This machine sits low and comfortable, and even the more dwarfish of our testers had no trouble with the 36.6-inch seat height. Kickstarting the blue engine requires little more than simply thinking about it. A sneeze on the kick lever

◀ *Beware of low-flying planes! Getting mega-air on the Suzuki is absolutely no problem.*







The new long-stroke motor sports a 36mm flat-slide Mikuni and an automatic exhaust control. Bottom-end power is shallow, but mid-range and top end are fantastic! Once the RM is wound up, it'll rev into the next solar system, which is a big plus on longer tracks.



Straight-line stability is excellent, and we never experienced any odd quirks at high speeds. The harsh low-speed suspension actually gets better at faster speeds.

There's a spring preload adjustment for the engine's exhaust valve. The adjustment allows the rider to regulate how quickly the valve opens and closes, which effectively lengthens or shortens the header pipe. The best setting seems to be at 360 degrees, where the most low end can be pulled from the motor. ▶

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brings the mill snarling to life, so it was obviously time to hit the track and see if all the zoot new stuff worked.

IT WORKS—ALMOST

We loved to fly on the RM. It jumps like a kangaroo rat on a hot plate, and flies like an air circus stunt plane. Vicious, ugly, hard landings are absolutely no problem for the Full Floater tail, and the forks absorbed yahoo nose landings without a whimper. It was in the little, everyday, local MX track garbage that we first noticed a pimple on the RM's otherwise clear complexion. The whole bike feels stiff and unusually harsh in small stutter bumps and in the braking whoops as you enter corners.

The forks pack up and feel as though there's molasses in them instead of oil. There's a blow-off valve in the forks, and the small hits don't supply enough pressure to get the blow-off valve to open. In simple terms, the forks work just fine off jumps, but are painful in the small stuff. In a long moto the rider takes a real beating through

the stutter bumps, and unless you've got forearms like Popeye, it becomes difficult to hang on.

While the Floater will take the crusher hit flawlessly, it too is stiff to the point of painful. We backed way off on the compression adjustment, and this helped somewhat, but the bottom line is that the shock needs to be revalved. Even under the guidance of top-level pros, the Floater chatters and hops and will tire out the rider prematurely.

Suzuki suggests running the rear sag at 3-1/8 inches to 3-5/8 inches. This basically enhanced the harsh mid-stroke feel of the shock, so we dropped it to a full four inches of sag. The machine still corners almost instinctively, but it felt a little more compliant on the smaller stutter bumps.

CORNERING FOOL

Through the corners is where the RM most impressed us. This 250 can change direction quicker than a pinball veering off a bumper! The low saddle enables the rider to feel very, very secure when laying the bike

The new RM has a lower seat height and center of gravity for 1986. Combine these attributes with a one-half-inch-shorter wheelbase, and you have one of the best-cornering 250s we've ever tested.

way, way over. It gets through a berm like a slot car during a power surge, and takes flat or off-camber corners better than Magnum's Ferrari. There are no suspension surprises from the mighty Suzuki through the turns, and the stock tires stick more securely than burnt beans on an iron skillet. This RM is a cornering fool!

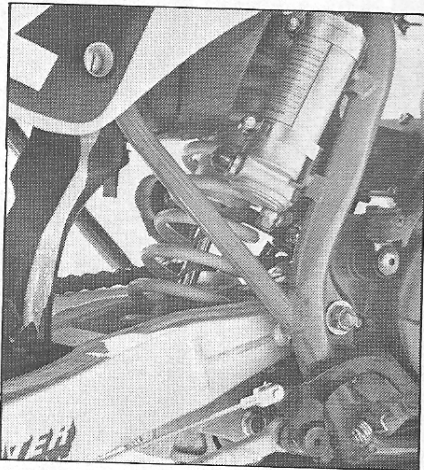
GIVE IT TO ME STRAIGHT

Once again, we want to emphasize that this machine is an excellent flier and king of the quick turn, but we were most visibly awed by the RM's straight-line stability. It seemed that a machine that is so harsh over the low-speed, little pounders would wander and skip around the track like a hyperactive child. It didn't! In fact, the RM holds a straight line, and tracks like a Tokyo bullet train! The harder you push the Suzuki, the

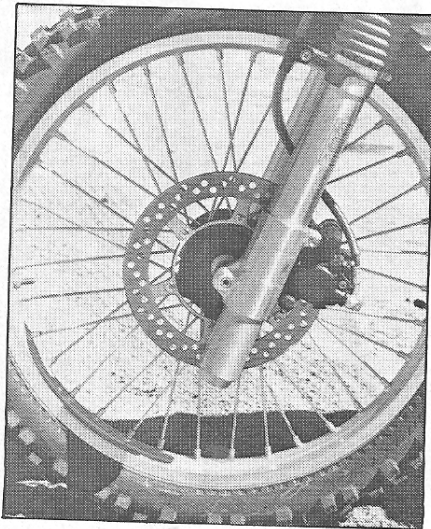
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The KYB forks, like the Full Floater tail cushion, work exceptionally well in killer G-outs but give the rider a beating in the stutter bumps. There's a blow-off valve in the forks that won't open for the smaller hits, and this makes the forks feel as though they are packing up.



Full Floater action is superior for the hard hits but painfully harsh in the small stuff. Revalving the shock is highly recommended for serious competition.



The front brake is as good as any on the market. The feel is progressive and strong, and two fingers is all you need to completely lock it up.



1986 SUZUKI RM250G

Engine type	Single-cylinder, liquid-cooled, 2-stroke	Silencer/spark arrester	Yes/no
Bore and stroke	67mm x 70mm	Wheelbase	1460mm (57.5 in.)
Displacement	246cc	Ground clearance	355mm (14.0 in.)
Carburetion	Flat-slide Mikuni VM36SS	Seat height	930mm (36.6 in.)
Factory recommended jetting:		Rake/trail	28.5°/113mm
Main jet	300	Wet weight, no fuel	213 lbs.
Needle jet	R-0	Tire size and type:	
Jet needle	6DJ33, clip in #3 position	Front	90/100-21-4PR Bridgestone
Pilot jet	50	Rear	110/110-18-4PR Bridgestone
Slide number	3.0	Suspension, type and travel:	
Fuel tank capacity	8.0 L (2.1 gals.)	Front	43mm KYB telescopics, air/oil, adj. comp., 300mm (11.8 in.)
Lubrication	Pre-mix at 20:1	Rear	Full Floater, single KYB shock, adj. comp./reb., 315mm (12.4 in.)
Gearbox ratios:		Intended use	Motocross
1	2.071:1	Country of origin	Japan
2	1.688:1	Retail price, approx.	N/A
3	1.389:1	Distributor/Manufacturer:	
4	1.167:1	U.S. Suzuki Motor Corp.	
5	1.000:1	3251 E. Imperial Hwy.	
Gearing, front/rear	14/50	Brea, CA 92621	
Ignition	PEI		
Recommended spark plug	NGK B8EGV		

straighter it rides, and the teeth-jarring suspension grows even more forgiving at higher speeds.

TELL US ABOUT THE ENGINE

In one word, *fantastic*; however, with a very small "but." The "but" is the low end; it's a little weak. Once past the marginal low end, the mid-range comes on with an audible and welcome surge, and the top-end performance overshadows the vacant bottom-end snap. There is no need to short-shift the RM; the engine bolts aggressively through the meat of the powerband and will rev beyond Saturn, this solar system, and all the way to Andromeda. When other 250s have peaked and gone flat, the Suzuki will continue to accelerate. Oddly enough, there are no glitches in the powerband, no hard hits that separate one's arm from their sockets. Instead, the power comes on strong and predictable, which makes the RM very easy to ride for beginner and novice racers, and a real pleasure for experts.

GRIPES

Cut off the grips and throw them away. They're too hard and sticky and cause your gloves to wad up at the palms. The fork boots are bogus, just like everybody else's fork boots; the material is too flimsy, and they twist and warp after only a few hours' use.

Some of our riders, the 200-plus-pound ones, didn't like the seat. They claimed that the padding was too soft and their posterior regions basically sat on the seat base. Normal-weight humans loved the seat!

We have to applaud the rack-and-pinion clutch; the action was smooth and never varied with heat and hard use, as did previous push rod systems.

Suzuki cut unsprung weight by running aluminum-spoke nipples and reducing the number of chain links. Good attention to small details, but be careful not to overtighten the spokes. It's very easy to strip aluminum nipples or to untrue the wheel by uneven tightening.

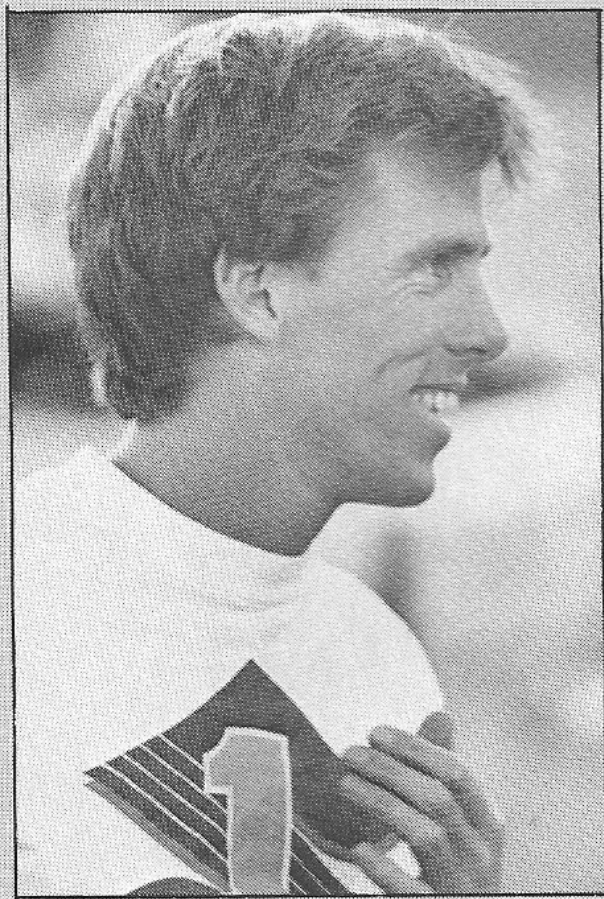
The new long-stroke engine is a vibrator. While it doesn't shake like an Open bike, the throbbing is substantially higher than most of the 250s on the market.

SUMMED UP

It's easy to see that we liked the RM250. With nearly perfect on-course manners, flick-and-point cornering habits and extremely stable traits, combined with a brutally potent mid-to-upper-rev engine, the RM could have been great. The suspension needs work, and the bottom end could use a tad more snap. Fix these flaws, and the '86 RM250 would be the ultimate weapon in its class! □

BOB HANNAH

After a decade, the Hurricane's back on Suzuki



Bob Hannah inked a two-year deal to ride a selected number of events aboard a production RM250 Suzuki. If things go his way, he'll add another National title to his collection before he retires for good.

Ten years ago Bob Hannah was a relatively unknown test rider for the Suzuki factory who was determined to make a name for himself by riding and winning the AMA Outdoor Motocross Nationals. Now, at age 28, apparently at the end of his illustrious professional racing career, the always surprising and unpredictable Hannah signed a two-year deal with Team Suzuki to race the revised 250 Outdoor National Motocross schedule, along with a selected number of Supercrosses and GPs. Bob took a few moments to explain the reasoning behind his decision.

DB: Rumor had it that you were going to retire after this past season. What made you change your mind?

Bob: The new AMA motocross schedule was the most important thing. If I'd have had to ride another whole season this year, I wouldn't have done it. I like being on my own schedule, I like having a few weeks to do what I want to do. I love racing. I like training for it. I love the people. But I don't like it 50 weeks a year. If I ride too much, then I hate it.

DB: What made you decide to switch from Honda to Suzuki?

Bob: Honda wouldn't give me the program I wanted, and Suzuki would. Suzuki was gung-ho about the whole thing; they really wanted it. What I'll be doing is riding eight Supercrosses in six locations: Daytona Orlando, Atlanta, Anaheim, Pontiac and Seattle. I didn't want to ride Anaheim, but Suzuki is sponsoring the race, so I agreed to do it. Pontiac and Seattle are each two nights, so that makes a total of eight Supercrosses. I'm also going to ride four Florida Winter series races, and the six 250 Nationals, and that's it. I may go to Europe for a couple of races, maybe to Canada for two or three races, but that's all.

DB: What's your deal with Suzuki?

Bob: Promotion, testing, advice, and to ride those races. I'll be giving them as much advice as I can on anything related to the machines or racing. They wanted to get someone to help with development of the bike, and they wanted a name rider—someone they knew would be able to get them ink. Suzuki used to be the big name in motocross, but they've gone downhill a little in the past few years. They really want to get back on top, and I think they can if they work on it.

DB: How will they do that?

Bob: Well, first of all, anything that's wrong with the bike gets fixed; they say they'll fix it for sure.

DB: Today's your first day on the new bike. What do you think about it?

Bob: I like it a lot. I haven't been riding for two months, but it feels good. (Hannah was, from our observations, an absolute bullet on the RM250!) I see a few problems, but only setup-type problems—the bars are strange, the throttle's hard to turn, the grips are hard—but those are things you'd expect. I don't see any other problems right now. I don't like any bike, even a works bike, right out of the box.

DB: Will you really be able to get Suzuki to change things?

Bob: Yeah, they're ready to work with me on anything, that's what's good. If they had the attitude, "Here's the bike, now ride it," well, that would be terrible. But they're not like that. They say, "What's wrong with it? We'll fix it right now."

DB: What's the Suzuki team for next year?

Bob: George Holland, Erik Kehoe, A.J.



No other rider has dominated American motocross the way Bob Hannah has. Although the Hurricane doesn't leave as much devastation nowadays as he did between the years '76 and '80, he still can mount a ferocious charge when the urge hits. His popularity with the fans is yet unmatched.

Whiting, and myself. Jeff Clarke will be my mechanic.

DB: What are your goals for the next two years?

Bob: I want to get the bike perfect, get it to where I can say it's really great. Then I want to win a few races. I want to be on my own schedule and ride as fast as I can ride. I'm not out there to prove that I'm the fastest rider every weekend—I used to try that, and I used to do it, but I couldn't do it now even if I tried. Even if I quit flying (his airplane), quit going where I want to go, worked 100 percent of the time riding and racing, I still wouldn't be the fastest every weekend.

DB: When your contract's up at the end of the two years, how do you want people to remember you?

Bob: I care a lot about what the fans think of me, and that's something I've worked on. I don't have this job right now based on my riding abilities; I got it because of my personality. If the job was based on riding ability, I'd be back in Ketchum, Idaho, skiing! Most of all, I just want to do the best I can for my fans and have them remember me that way. □