

EXCLUSIVE 2005 450 SHOOTOUT

DIRT BIKE

WPS 34355

DIRT BIKE

NOVEMBER 2004



MX & OFF-ROAD RATED

- ALUMINUM YZ250
- SUPER LIGHT CRF450
- STUNNING KX250F
- BRUTAL YZ450
- FAST KTM 125
- INTENSE KX125

BIG TEETH FOR THE HONDA CRF250X

SECRET TRAILS EXPOSED! DAVIS, ROESLER, KIEDROWSKI, ABBOTT CAUGHT IN THE ACT



ISSN 0364-1546 Attn. retailer: Please display until Nov. 18

\$4.99 CANADA \$5.99





Honda has upped the ante for the third year in a row with excellent updates to the CRF450. More power, better tractability, improved suspension and lighter weight all highlight the package.





FACE OFF

The first skirmish in the world war 450

► We've been racing these machines for over a month now, and this has been salted with seven or eight track days, and the number-one question that spews out of the yawning mouths at Glen Helen, I-5MX, Elsinore and Cahuilla Creek's bevy is "Which one is best?" Well honestly, we're not ready to give you a shootout between these two simply because it's not fair to KTM and Suzuki. Both have 450 motocrossers looming on the waters and they will definitely play a role in the final tally. But the interest shown clearly defines the role that these two boys play in the motocross world. Yamaha owned it, Honda stole it, Yamaha blew it and Honda has polished it.

What we are willing to part with is a quick-hit look at the big-boy bash. You draw your own conclusions, and know this: nothing has been etched into the concrete until the dawn spawns yellow and orange. Then we can complete World War III. For right now, here's our testers' news and views on the machines.

While we're awaiting the Suzook and KTM 450s, we couldn't help throwing the two main heavyweights into the arena. Both the CRF and YZF 450s are revitalized, seriously fast and notoriously worthy racers.

FACE OFF

MAINTENANCE

Honda has wrapped the aluminum chassis around a state-of-the-art engine in such a way that access to routine jetting borders on nightmarish. Oil changes are slow and the airbox is tight. While everything works great, getting to anything is a brain-freeze.

Yamaha engineers have shoehorned their DOHC, water-cooled mill into a well thought-out chassis and airbox. Normal maintenance is tight, but doable.

Edge: Yamaha

SUSPENSION

Honda has continued the evolution of the Showa twin-cartridge fork by installing more factory-only type internal parts. The action has gotten smoother, resists bottoming better and works for a broad base of pilots. In the backyard, life shadows the front with tractable appetite for a varying range of moto obstacles.

Yamaha has completely updated the KYM fork by going big (48mm) and using similar technology from Showa. The new TCV system separates the air and oil resulting in a superior ride over '04. The shock also has new valving circuitry and has an enlarged appetite for nasty terrain.

Edge: Too close to call

FUN FACTOR

Honda has smooth lines, great ergos, balanced suspension and a hunger for leaping, charging and blowing up motocross circuits. The controls are magic, the brakes progressive, the power broad yet fluid. The only hitch in the giddy-up is the vagueness exhibited in certain corners.

Yamaha has efficient ergos, superb brakes linked to a superior connection to earth. It's a leaper, it's a carver and it's an arm yanker. In spite of a smoother flow of adrenaline, she still throbs and rocks, but she's more business than play.

Edge: Honda

THE BOTTOM LINE

The Yamaha and Honda are the most proven bikes in the motocross world. That hasn't changed for now.

Edge: You make the call for now. We'll wait for a full hand to show our cards. □



The CRF450F feels the lightest and is coupled with a seriously honed fun factor. Everything works, pulls, absorbs and motivates with the sole goal of getting around a circuit at speed.

MOTOR

Honda has improved the roll-on, retained the hit, stuck with the five-speed and has a perfectly jetted, easy-to-start full-blown smiler of a machine.

Ups: Great bottom, mid and top.

Downs: We're still looking

Yamaha has smoothed the blow, re-carbed, re-routed and re-thought the power curve in an attempt to make the four-speed machine more fun.

Ups: Great bottom, strong and useable mid

Downs: Lacks a hit, and you spend time searching for the 'right' gear in a four-cog world.

Edge: Honda

CHASSIS

Honda has fine-tuned the aluminum frame into a work of art. Engineered flex points join to reinforced girders making for a super light and wonderfully balanced chassis.

Yamaha has retained its steel frame in lieu of aluminum. It's been beefed up and lightened at strategic points. Feedback via flex is minimal, cornering traits are stunning.

Edge: None

CONTROLS

Honda has a rubber-mounted Renthal handlebar, superb half waffle grips, an AOF clutch lever all mixed into a vat of smooth. 'Effortless' highlights the controls.

Yamaha has a Renthal bar, excellent half-waffle grips, an AOF clutch perch all mixed into a vat of "smoother than last year."

Edge: Honda

The YZ450F has been soothed, smoothed and still is all about business. Cornering is its strength and effective lap times its forte.

