

Samurai shootout! Japan's best 250cc MXer

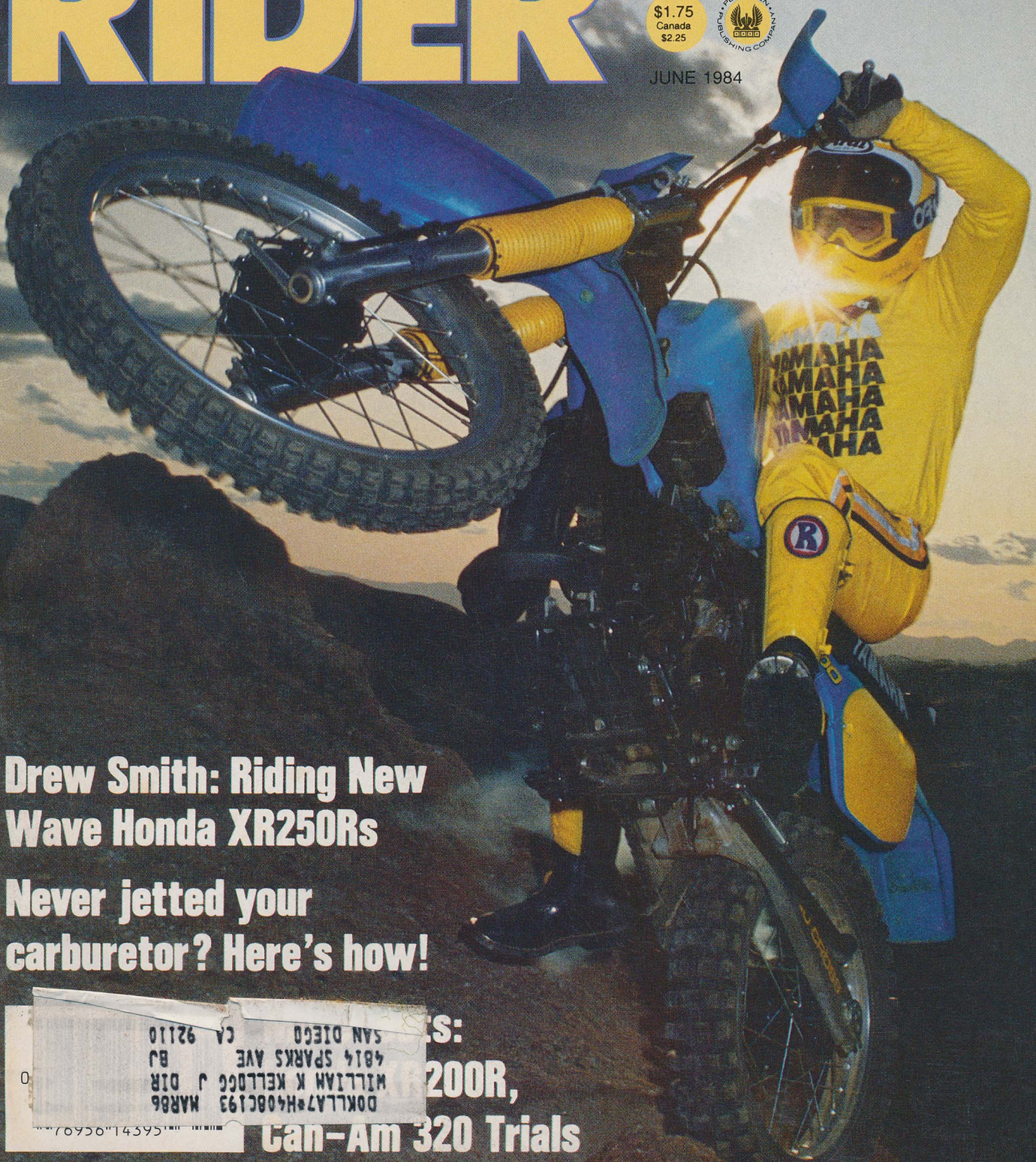
# DIRT RIDER

## Yamaha IT200L NEW BLUE CONTENDER

\$1.75  
Canada  
\$2.25



JUNE 1984



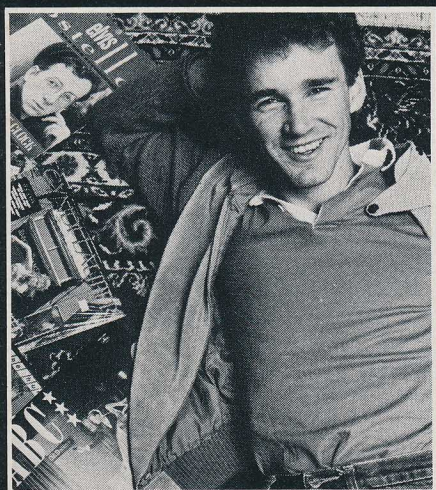
**Drew Smith: Riding New  
Wave Honda XR250Rs**

**Never jetted your  
carburetor? Here's how!**

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Can-Am 320 Trials

# DIRT RIDER

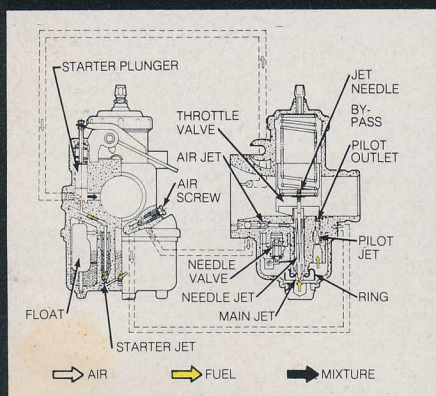
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**ON THE COVER**  
There's a new challenger to Kawasaki's KDX200. Yamaha's hot new IT200L could put Team Blue "on time." Photo by Rich Cox.

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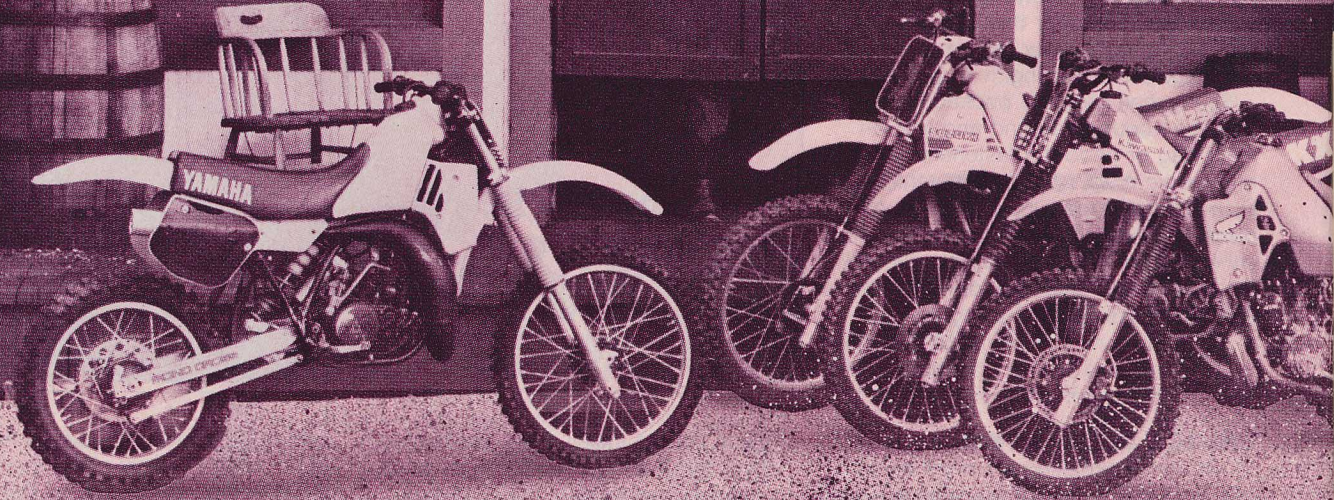
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# SAMURAI SHOOT

# サムライシュートアウト

## East meets East out West

Everybody has read shootouts before. A magazine takes a bunch of new bikes that are in the same category, puts them through their own "Best Test" and, hopefully, a winner emerges. Usually the winner is a winner because it is the fastest or handles the best.

But this shootout is a little different. These 250s have already been tested over the course of a one-month intensive evaluation, the results of which were printed in the pages of *Dirt Rider* (Yamaha YZ250L, February 1984; Honda CR250R, December 1983; Suzuki RM250E, January 1984; Kawasaki KX250C2, March 1984). Now we are simply pitting our previous evaluations against a long-term test.

Each bike tested was ridden for over four months by a number of riders through various riding conditions. Over this extended testing period, some interesting observations became apparent. Some testers actually changed or modified their opinion about a particular bike. Keep in mind that the most important criteria in this test wasn't necessarily how fast a bike was or how well it turned. Equal consideration was given to qualities such as reliability and rideability (that is, the bike's ability to save your life in a potentially lethal situation rather than force you to bail and sail).

As a result, we liked the Yamaha even more the second time around. And, in the same vein, we were less impressed with the Honda. But the Kawasaki and the Suzuki generated the same feelings they did in our original tests.

So, the Yamaha YZ250L scored the highest in our long-term, "would-you-buy-this-bike" test. Although we complained about its lack of top-end horsepower our February '84 issue, most riders have adapted themselves to its healthy midrange punch rather nicely. Many actually found themselves going faster on the YZ than on any other bike.

The YZ doesn't just "feel" faster, either. We traveled first to a sand track and then to a hard-packed track with all four bikes and a stopwatch. Every rider rode every bike, while our "gimp of the month," Bob Carpenter, took lap after lap of excruciatingly accurate lap times. Riders who at first thought they would turn in their best times on the Honda were somewhat surprised to discover that the Yamaha actually got them around the track faster. Our pro testers (Willy Simons and John Drury) traveled up to two seconds

a lap faster on the Yamaha on the hard-packed courses. Intermediate testers (staffers Kariya and Kramer) were equally fast on either the Yamaha or the Honda on the clay-based track, while Pro woman tester, Mercedes Gonzalez, went faster on the Yamaha.

On the sand track, the Yamaha wasn't dramatically quicker around the course, but its suspension was clearly better than the Honda's. The Kawasaki had trouble wallowing through the shifty turns, while the Honda was just plain confusing. Several riders complained they couldn't figure out just when the Honda was going to kick them and when it was going to be plush. "Unpredictable" would be a better term to use. Drury (a local pro who races a Honda CR250R) bailed hard during the testing when he got into a massive tanks-lapper from hitting the same whoop he had hit many times that day. What happened? Who knows. That's our main complaint about the CR suspension this year—faster pros are finding themselves on the ground without knowing why.

Intermediate riders, however, rarely suffered from these consequences. Actually, the slower you ride, the better the Honda feels. Its seat/tank junction and overall feel is so neutral, every rider who sat on the bike thought it felt "perfect." The Yamaha feels too low with a dip in the seat near the tank; you feel like you're following the front wheel around. The Suzuki RM250E feels somewhat similar, only the seat is wider and thinner at the rear. The Kawasaki has a tall feel due to its very straight handlebar, sometimes a source of complaint from shorter riders.

Not only are quick lap times and suspension quality important, the reliability of a motorcycle is crucial. The Yamaha YZ250L we tested suffered from no major mechanical problems, although there is one potential hazard to beware. It seems that bigger and/or aggressive riders tend to stuff their knees into the radiator shields at the front of the tank, which, in turn, pushes the radiators forward and pinches off the metal tubing that circulates the water. Voilà, instant overheating problems. The fix is to fabricate a brace that fits from the radiator to the tank mount to prevent the radiator from pushing forward.

The Honda, however, suffered from more than one serious mechanical mishap. After about four or five hours of riding, the main bearings gave up. We weren't the first to experience this problem,

*All four bikes gathered at high noon, but only the Yamaha YZ250L came out of the fight without any major scratches. Our thanks to the Universal Studios Tour for providing the western set.*

# OUT!



# ホンダ

Mercedes Gonzalez set some fast laps on the Honda CR250 but went faster on the Yamaha.



# スズキ

Willy Simons flies the RM250 over a fast, uphill jump at DeAnza Cycle Park.



# カワサキ

Pro tester John Drury clutches the KX250 through a hard-packed turn.



# ヤマハ

Technical Editor Karel Kramer knows he's on the clock as he sets a quick pace.

# サムライシュートアウト



Bob talks bikes with testers Mercedes Gonzalez, John Drury and Willy Simons (left to right).

as we've talked to countless local riders who've encountered the same glitch. (Although Honda explicitly states that the CR250R has no warranty whatsoever, they have been considering complaints about the main bearings on an individual basis, and, in many cases, paying for needed repairs.) One theory is that the main bearings have some plastic pieces integrated into them that melt if used in conjunction with leaner gas mixtures. We've also heard complaints about the factory bore in the cylinder. Apparently it is too loose and needs to be bored out to the next size in order to be within tolerances. The rear wheels have also given Honda their share of headaches. Ours broke about five spokes right where they fit into the nipple during our original test, and we've seen several stock Honda wheels destroyed at Supercross races. This is not to say that Yamaha hasn't had their problems with the Z-spoke wheel, but it isn't nearly as commonplace as on the Honda.

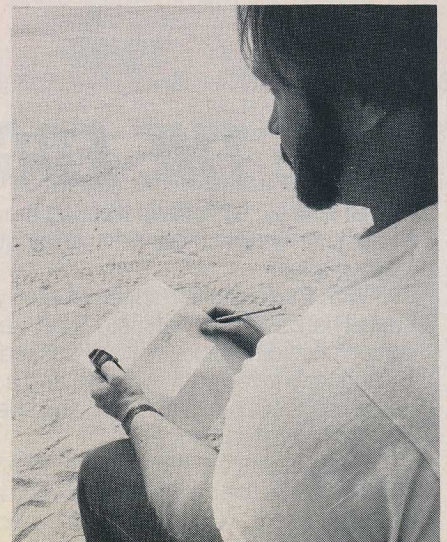
While the Suzuki and the Kawasaki have been very reliable, with the Kawasaki wearing about the best of all four bikes, ultimately the race for first in this shootout was between the Honda and the Yamaha. The Kawasaki and the Suzuki weren't far behind, but the fact remains that they were behind when you consider speed, handling, suspension and creature comforts. What sets the Yamaha apart from the Honda is its better suspension characteristics, less breakdowns and faster, or as fast, lap times.

Yamaha's stiffer fork springs (offered

through Yamaha) and 20-weight oil really helped the fork and is a cheap fix, while the Honda needs help in the fork and begs for an aftermarket shock (definitely a healthy cash investment). But don't fail to take note that slower riders (to thine own self be true) won't find any problems with the Honda suspension. But for serious racing, and for a bike that must last all season without draining the nickels-and-dimes budget, the Yamaha is the better deal.

Remember, having the most horsepower doesn't always make a bike a sure winner.

DR



Lap times were kept on all riders on all bikes to remove any doubt about quickness.