



LEAN GREEN STREAKER

*More of everything
for the green team's
best KX*

By the DIRT BIKE Staff

Last year, we applauded Kawasaki's decision to finally get it together and produce a competitive 125. Prior to 1982, KXs all seemed to suffer from a number of brilliant points overshadowed by glaring problems—if the engine worked well, the suspension wasn't even in the ballpark, and vice versa. As apprehensive as we may have been, the 1982 KX125 turned out to be a fine machine.

Even so, 1983 being a new year, Kawasaki's task was to improve upon last year's design, and improve it they have. There are no startling changes on the B2, just a combination of sensible improvements that have made a good 125 easier to ride and more competitive, to boot.

WHAT'S NEW?

In no particular order, here is what has been done to the KX125B2 to put it out in front of its predecessor:

- Cylinder porting is completely different. The exhaust port has been redesigned to open and close at 96 degrees rather than 94 degrees, and the shape of the port has been changed from two inverted Ls to a pair of triangles. The transfer ports have been reshaped slightly, and the intake port has evolved from two holes to three.

- A thinner head gasket is used to increase the compression ratio, and the piston ring is a more snug fit on the piston this year.

- The pipe and silencer have also been changed to work with the new porting layout. The aluminum silencer is rebuildable and is a nice little unit.

- A new airbox and larger air filter are used to improve breathing, and the intake duct is said to seal better than the old one. Naturally, the carb jetting is also different.

- Different ignition timing (1.145mm BTDC), and a new spark plug are specified (NGK B10EV).

- The big end bearing on the connecting rod is larger by an unspecified



Very stable jumping is aided by the KX's excellent suspension manners.

amount, and the thrust washers are silver plated to reduce friction.

- There are now seven plates in the clutch rather than six, and the entire clutch housing has been beefed up and strengthened to accommodate the new plates. The clutch release lever is 10mm shorter this year, and the clutch cover is now made of aluminum rather than magnesium, to improve the strength of the cover.

- Most of the gears in the transmission are larger, and heat-treating techniques have been improved for strength. The primary reduction ratio has been changed from 18/63 to 19/62, and the countershaft

sprocket has dropped one tooth, from 13 to 12.

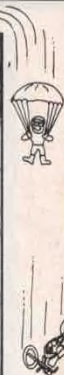
- Believe it or not, a folding shift lever has even made its debut.

- The Uni-Trak rear end is completely new, as are the forks.

- A new box-section aluminum swing-arm holds up the rear end.

- An eight-pound weight loss is claimed for the new bike, and this is where those pounds were shaved: shock—3.3 pounds, swingarm—1.1 pounds, rims—1.1 pounds, rear hub—1.1 pounds, miscellaneous parts—1.3 pounds.

Very impressive list for one year's update, isn't it? They all work on paper, but



Kenny Zahrt catches a berm on the DB KX. For Expert racers, KZ suggests the use of the stiffer springs.

the real proof of the improvements weren't obvious until we finally rode the bike.

WHAT'LL SHE DO?

Power is up this year. The new KX pulls stronger from the bottom than last year's effort, with more punch in the mid-range and a slight increase at the 11,000-rpm peak. This is obviously a result of the new porting layout, and the main benefit of the fatter power curve is a bike that is much easier to ride. You can short-shift the KX without having the engine falling on its face in between gears.

So far, the only other 125 we've been able to compare the new KX with is the RM125, and the KX easily pulls away from the RM out of the gate. The torque curve of the RM also seems to flatten out earlier, giving the KX what feels like a 1000-rpm advantage on the top end. We'll

see what Yamaha and Honda have to offer later on in the year; right now the KX is on top of the heap.

The high horsepower is not without its drawbacks, however. Our test bike had an unusual habit of slowing slightly as the engine heated up, feeling exactly the same as the heat loss common on air-cooled bikes. The only explanation can be the radiator—in an effort to keep the weight as low as possible, Kawasaki may have opted for a unit that is just marginally sufficient for the amount of heat it has to dissipate. It isn't a huge power loss, but it is still noticeable, a point Kawasaki should work on for 1984.

For all its beefiness, the new clutch is still easy to engage, and the transmission ratios seem well suited to the cut-and-thrust environment of motocross. One of our testers complained about the new shift

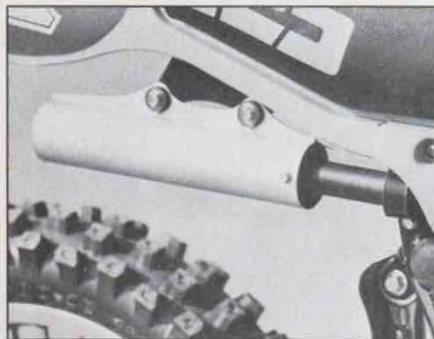
lever, finding it hard to reach, but the rest of the bigfoots had no problem at all. We'll have to take Kawasaki's word on the stronger gears—we never broke one during the test.

CHECKING OUT THE BOINGERS

Not only did the Kawasaki engineers lose some weight by going to the single-strut KX500-based Uni-Trak, they also gained a marvelous suspension. To date, the one suspension system we have unanimously embraced as state of the art has been the Suzuki Floater system. With the new KX125, we have to add the Uni-Trak to the list. Both systems are based on the Kayaba shock, and we think that is where the quality comes from. Both of the "other" Japanese systems work well, but not without a few glitches. The Pro-Link does a good job of smoothing out bumps, but the shocks have a tendency to heat up



Hydraulic master cylinder is reasonably compact and resists abuse well. We managed to bend the lever, but never scratched the reservoir.



New ultra-light silencer is rebuildable and mounted sturdily. Unit comes apart from the front rather than the rear end.



The 1983 Uni-Trak features the same working parts as the KX500. A vast improvement in rear wheel action and a loss of three pounds is the net gain.



Front brake caliper is bigger, brake action is stronger. Locking up the front wheel is no problem at all.



High-speed, whoopied straights are no problem on the new KX.

and change damping characteristics, while the Yamaha Monocross is harsh overall and not very inspiring. The new Uni-Trak, as well as the Floater, will soak up any flavor of bump without doing anything in the least bit strange, and will continue doing it for the length of a good, long moto without forgetting its manners.

There is one possible fault, worthy of note for heavyweight riders: Once we finished breaking in and dialing in the rear shock on the KX, we settled on position number four on the rebound adjustment, which would seem to indicate that rebound damping is on the light side overall. The shock is rebuildable, however, and a rider who needs more damping can find it by switching to a heavier shock oil.

To continue raving, the forks are also great. The new 43mm fork tubes are as strong as forks have a right to be, and the action is very close to perfect. It is interesting to note that although the forks have a compression damping adjustment through the bottom of the legs, there is not a word written about it in the service manual. It took us a long bit of searching, but we found out the scoop on the new forks.

The compression damping adjustment is not an overall adjustment. The small screw accessible from the underside of the fork legs is the pressure setting device for a relief valve inside the forks. The relief valve's job is to "blow off" and absorb spike bumps, keeping the jolt from reaching the rider's hands. To increase the pressure necessary to get the blow-off valve to pop, turn the screw in; to decrease the pressure, turn it out.

Obviously, it is to your best advantage to set both relief valves at the same position. We settled on three turns from the top for best action.

Overall, the suspension is set up slightly on the soft side, just about fine for an Intermediate-ability 130-140 pound rider. Faster and/or heavier riders will need stiffer springs to feel the most comfortable. A range of heavier and lighter springs will be available from dealers this year.

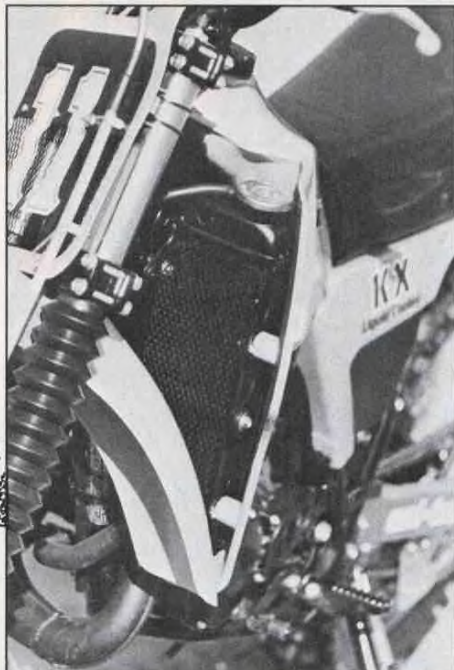
The choice of spring rate obviously affects the handling of the KX. The relatively heavyweight testers here at *Dirt Bike* found that in its soft (stock) condition, the KX was very sensitive to body position in the turns. Lean forward, and the bike would stick well on a flat turn; lean back and the front end would wash out slightly. The go-fast position is the lean-forward position, and you can relieve some of this sensitivity by switching to heavier springs.

Once dialed in, the KX's suspension is a joy to work with. Braking bumps are handled predictably, and straight-line stability in deep whoops is perfect. The KX doesn't hop from side to side or get out of shape in the least, and that's what we call an excellent suspension.

BITS AND PIECES

A firmer saddle and slightly different bars this year have done much to improve the KX's seating position. It is much easier to get forward on the new bike, making it even easier to ride than the '82.

The front brake caliper is larger, making the already strong front brake almost too strong. It doesn't take a whole lot of effort to lock up the front wheel. The rear brake is slightly smaller, but it gets the job



Small radiator is tucked in on the left side of the frame, and is hardly noticeable when you're riding. Cap is close to plastic shroud and hard to grip.

done with no complaints.

It's a good idea to lay the KX down on its side occasionally to remove the impeller cover on the water pump. Once off, check the condition of the impeller and replace it if any of the vanes are cracked or broken. This goes for *all* water-cooled bikes, not just Kawasakis.

Adjusting the preload on the KX shock is perhaps even more difficult than it has been in years past. Removing the shock is the only clean answer, and doing so is a giant hassle. There should be a better way.

You won't have to change to different tires on the KX. Stockers are excellent Dunlop K490 rubber, and they'll work as well or better than anything else you can afford.

Wheel hubs are smaller than they've ever been on the KX. Keep an eye on the spokes—if they get too loose you may wind up breaking a hub.

Most of our testers didn't care for the stock handlebars, although the grips got rave reviews. Lower bars with a flatter bend would be perfect.

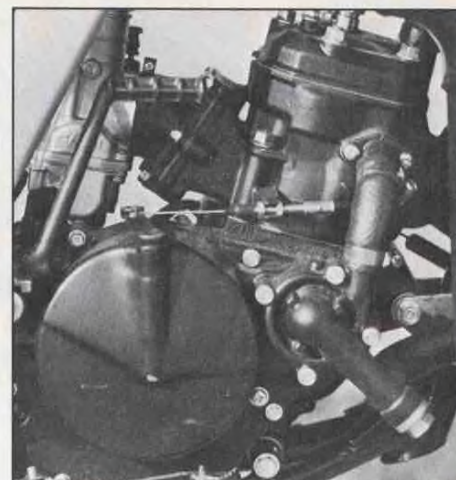
Our digital micrometer is in the shop this month, or we would have our usual spoke diameter measurement, along with thickness readings on all of the plastic parts. Sorry about that!

THE BOTTOM LINE

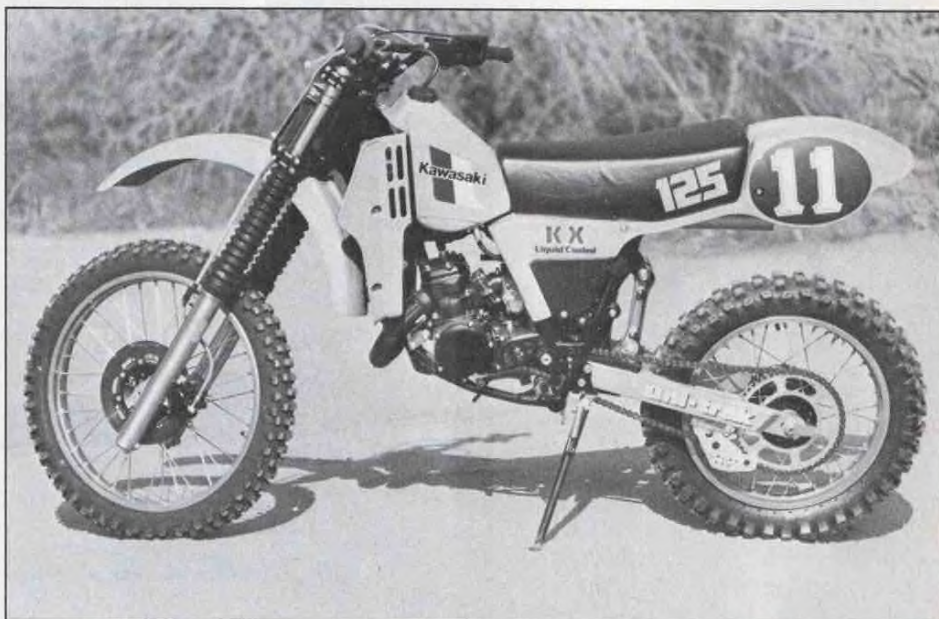
The 1982 KX125 was a vastly improved bike—we liked it, and we said so. For 1983, Kawasaki has pulled out a few more stops and has made the KX even better. It's light, it's fast, it has an excellent suspension and good handling traits, which is just about all a good 125 needs to lead the way into the first turn. Nice bike. □



Larger ports are the main feature on the new KX engine, although external appearance hasn't changed since '82. More ponies makes the KX easier to ride.



Water pump assembly lives under cover forward of the clutch. Inspect the impeller blades often and keep the cover leak-free.



KAWASAKI KX125 B2

ENGINE TYPE	2-Stroke, Liquid-Cooled reed-valve single
BORE AND STROKE	56.0mm x 50.6mm
DISPLACEMENT	124 cc
HORSEPOWER (CLAIMED)	N/A
CARBURETION	34mm Mikuni
FACTORY RECOMMENDED JETTINGS:	
MAIN JET	152.5
NEEDLE JET	R-2
JET NEEDLE	5 DH 92-3
PILOT JET	35
SLIDE NUMBER	3.0
RECOMMENDED GASOLINE	Premium
FUEL TANK CAPACITY	7.6 L (2.0 gal.)
FUEL TANK MATERIAL	Plastic
LUBRICATION	Pre-Mix
RECOMMENDED OIL	Quality 2-Stroke Oil
OIL CAPACITY, TRANSMISSION	550 cc (.58 qt.)
AIR FILTRATION	Oiled Foam
CLUTCH TYPE	Wet, Multi-Plate
TRANSMISSION	6-speed
GEAR BOX RATIOS:	
1	2.30:1
2	1.75:1
3	1.40:1
4	1.18:1
5	1.04:1
6	0.95:1
GEARING, FRONT/REAR	12/50
IGNITION	CDI
PRIMARY KICK SYSTEM?	Yes
RECOMMENDED SPARK PLUG	NGK B10EV

SILENCER/SPARK ARRESTER/QUALITY	Yes/no/ good mounting system
WEIGHT (WET, NO GAS)	195.1 lbs.
FRAME, TYPE	Single downtube
WHEELBASE	1440mm (56.6 in.)
GROUND CLEARANCE	360mm (14.4 in.)
SEAT HEIGHT	944.8mm (37.2 in.)
STEERING HEAD ANGLE (RAKE)	28°
TRAIL	121mm (4.7 in.)
RIM MATERIAL	Aluminum Alloy
TIRE SIZE AND TYPE:	
FRONT	3.00 x 21 Dunlop K490
REAR	4.00 x 18 Dunlop K490
SUSPENSION, TYPE AND TRAVEL:	
FRONT	Oil/Spring Forks, variable compression damping, 300mm (11.8 in.)
REAR	Uni-Trak, 4-way rebound damping
INTENDED USE	Motocross
COUNTRY OF ORIGIN	Japan
RETAIL PRICE, APPROX.	\$1739
DISTRIBUTOR:	
Kawasaki Motor Corp. 2009 East Edinger Avenue Santa Ana, CA 92705	
PARTS PRICES, HIGH WEAR ITEMS:	
PISTON ASSEMBLY, COMPLETE	\$ 41.42
RINGS ONLY	11.36
CYLINDER	180.13
SHIFT LEVER	13.00
BRAKE PEDAL	23.68
FRONT SPROCKET	11.78