

PICHON'S SPLITFIRE KX125

Pichon could have bought one. So could anyone

By the rev-limited DIRT BIKE staff



Troy Lee came up with a way to chrome plastic, so the Splitfire KXs shined even brighter on the track than in the standings. Cost is so prohibitive that the chrome bits are just as unobtainable as the mag engine covers.



EXCLUSIVE MOTOCROSS/SUPERCROSS TEST

RENTHAL
RENTHAL

101

Troy Lee Designs
MAXIMA

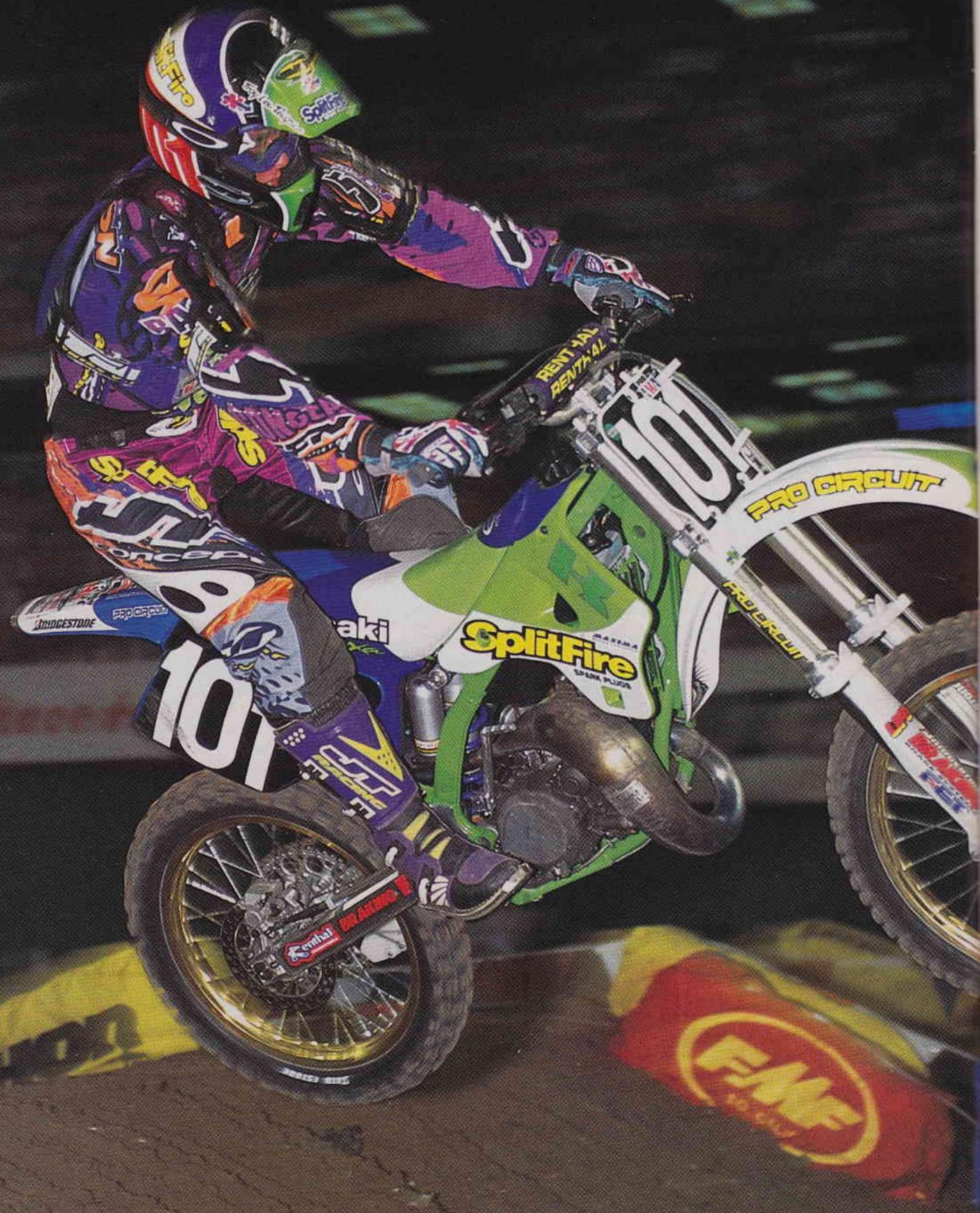
Fire
SPARK PLUGS

PRO CIRCUIT

SPINN

LIQUID
GESTURE

LIQUID
BRAKING



SPLITFIRE KX125

It's that time of year again, when we magazine types get to ride the new works bikes and tell you how radi-bonzaiical they are. But don't hate us. We don't get to take them home or anything, whereas you could own your very own Mickael Pichon Replica KX125, Mike Craig Replica CR250R or Larry Ward Replica YZ250. Some of you out there may be thinking, "Who the heck is Mickael Pichon, and why would I want his bike?"

Trust us, if you own a '95 KX125, you want it to be just like the one that Pichon (pronounced PEE-Shawn) races. The young, French sensation is currently leading the 125cc East-coast Supercross standings and sits in third in 125cc Nationals. Mickael is the only non-Suzuki rider to win a 125cc Supercross main this season (Atlanta and Indianapolis), and the Supercross specialist embarrassed many full-factory riders at Gainesville, aboard his semi-works bike. He would've also won Daytona, if not for getting a track banner stuck in his rear wheel while leading. The kid is hot.

Pichon rides for Splitfire/Pro Circuit Kawasaki and is the second-biggest star on that team (see sidebar), next to Ryan Hughes. The only difference between Hughes' and Pichon's ride is that Rhyno gets works Kayaba suspension in National motocross and Mickael (pronounced McHALE) doesn't. Indoors, the bikes are the same, thanks to the new AMA 125 SX suspension rule. Anyway, we wanted to ride Pichon's Splitfire KX125 first, because the stock KX is the slowest 125 of the year, and we know readers would want to know how a slug could be made to break Suzuki's stranglehold on 125 SX. Let's get to it!

STRAIGHT OUT OF CORONA

Pichon's ride was built in the plush, well-lit Pro Circuit race shop in Corona, California. Pro Circuit started virtually from scratch with the '95 KXs, because the production bikes got new cases, porting, gear ratios, a shorter intake, new head, pipe and a smaller carb this year. "We were scratching our heads when we got the new bikes last year," said Chad Watts, Hughes' long-time mechanic. "It only took two or three cylinders to get a good outdoor setting, but indoor settings were tougher. We had good bottom and mid but didn't have much on top. It took a few dyno nights and days of testing to get the top back. Now, the riders like the '95 power better than the '94. Last year, second wouldn't pull as long, so the guys would

◀ **Mickael Pichon leads the 125cc East Coast series after seven of ten rounds. The Frenchman won Atlanta and Indy, and he's been in the top three everywhere except Houston, where he went from last to fourth.**

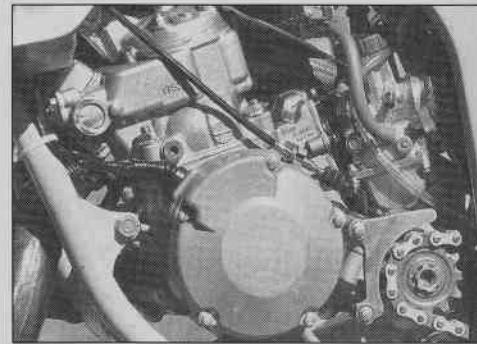


Outdoor settings trade some of the awesome bottom-end for more top, and there's lighter springs rates and HSCD at each end. At Gainesville, the only bikes ahead of Pichon's were Reynard's and Huffman's full-works rides.

have to shift to third right at the base of jumps. This year, they can pull second longer, so it's better on short approaches."

The biggest beauty in the Splitfire motor is that customers can buy what the team runs. Pro Circuit reshapes the transfers and exhaust and decks the cylinder (mills the bottom to advance overall port timing). The head is recut to fight detonation while providing slightly higher compression (12-15 psi). The stock 35mm PWK Keihin is bored to 36mm, which is what came on '94s. The carb is also shortened to give the '95 an even shorter intake tract. Material is removed from the engine side of the carb, which calls for plugging the choke circuit, and a sleeve is added to the intake bell so that the stock airbox boot could be retained. Watts said, "I don't know how many people came up to us last year and told us that our carb was falling off. We had fun with it at Southwick, telling people we did it to get more air into the motor, so we could be done *very quickly*. By the end of the year, we would just say thanks and go on with our business. We tried a 38mm for motocross, but the 36 works better."

Standard KXs got a higher grade of engine bearings this year (Class 4), so Pro Circuit no longer has to upgrade. Each engine is split, and the cases are surfaced.



Massive changes to the production KX motor meant that Pro Circuit had to start from scratch, but the race carb is much like the team's '94. Foam under the carb keeps engine vibes from frothing the premix in rough stuff. Outdoor settings include 10mm reed stiffeners (cut from the stock reed).

Pro Circuit also laps the gears to the shafts, as first-gear seizures have occurred on some production bikes. Besides a P.C. works pipe and factory sound silencer, that's it for the motor. The mechanics go through team motors every race, with a lower-end lasting 4-5 races indoors and 2-3 races outdoors (depending on how hot they get). That's with race gas (VP C-12 and Maxima 927). Even though detonation is less than with the '94s, fast guys should run race

SPLITFIRE KX125

WHO IS MICKAEL PICHON?

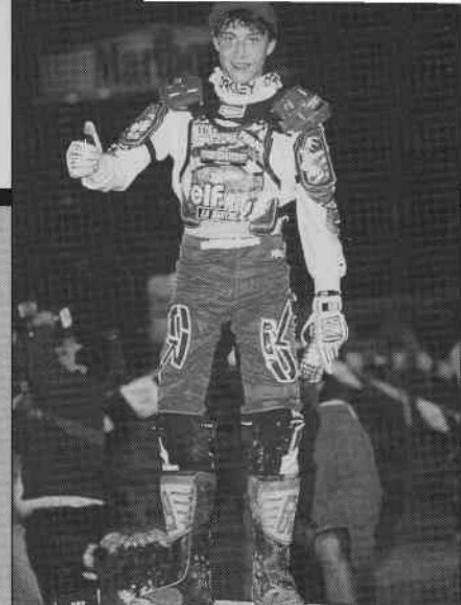
FRENCH SUPERCROSS CHAMP COMES TO U.S.

• Mickael Pichon is touted as the next Jean-Michel Bayle, but don't let that keep you from liking him. Pichon isn't comfortable with the comparison, and road racing isn't in his long-term plans. The three-time French SX champ (two 125 and one 250 title), came to America in '93 to ride Anaheim, Seattle and San Diego before the 125 GP season. Pichon rode smart and smooth and left the USA with the San Diego main-event win. His style, speed and friendly demeanor drew the attention of Team Kawasaki manager Roy Turner, and winning aboard a Pro Circuit Honda definitely pumped Team Splitfire manager Mitch Payton.

Pichon went home to Le Mans, France, and campaigned the 125 GPs for two years, winning a GP but finishing sixth overall last year. He continued his dominance of French MX, though, winning the 125cc title. Still, the lack of an outdoor world championship bothered the 19-year-old. When Kawasaki approached him with a support ride through Team Splitfire, Mickael pounced on the deal.

His immediate goal is to win a U.S. 125cc title, something that Bayle wasn't able to do.

He wasn't too stoked about riding the East-coast series, as Mickael had already ridden three of the west-coast tracks, but



Mickael Pichon came to the USA briefly in '93 and went home with the San Diego win. He leads the 125 East SX at the halfway point and is tied with Hughes for third, outdoors.

Hughes was chosen to battle Huffman for the west-coast title. Pichon was chosen back up Reynard in the East for '95, but he has exceeded Kawasaki's expectations and overshadowed the brittle Reynard. He wants to switch to the West in '96, when Huffman and Hughes are bumped to the 250s. After that, Pichon is setting his sights on the '96 or '97 250 SX title. Mickael may then return to Europe to chase the 250 GP championship, as he hasn't made the kinds of marks on Europe like JMB and Greg Albertyn have, at least in the GPs. Mickael has won French championships in the Pee-Wees, 60s, 80s, 125 Juniors, 125 Nationals, 125 SX and 250 SX.

And he's just coming on the pipe. •

gas exclusively. Average Joes can get away with 92-octane pump premium.

LIFE ON THE PERIMETER

Chassis modifications begin with stripping the frame and re-enforcing it around the footpeg, top shock and linkage mounts. Tabs are welded on for a glide plate, and several welds are gone over for more strength. Watts said, "Mickael is pretty easy on frames, because he's so light. He can go six races on a frame, but Rhyno goes through a frame every two races."

All bolts and axles are replaced with titanium fasteners. The stock pegs and linkage pull-rods are replaced with billet Pro Circuit pieces. The P.C. dogbones are 1mm shorter, which jacks up the rear end 5mm. The team runs 92mm of sag on the revalved KYB shock, which is fitted with a 5.3Kg spring. Bones Bacon revalves the shock and fork, and Pichon runs a 0.42kg/mm fork spring for SX. Motocross settings require less high-speed compression damping and lighter springs (0.40kg/mm fork and 5.1kg/mm shock).

Stock hubs are used with high-grade spokes and EXCEL rims. On really hard and slick surfaces, the team uses a 2.15-

inch rear rim for a bigger footprint. Braking supplies the oversized rotors (260mm front and 230mm rear, up 10mm at each end), billet caliper carriers and pads. The chain is an RK works-grade unit. Tires are prototype Bridgestones. Pichon ran the new 862 rear and 855 front at Atlanta, with light-weight tubes. For Nationals, both wheels get heavy-duty tubes.

All of the UFO plastic and Throttle Jockey graphics are available through Pro Circuit. Kawasaki cut the sidepanel grab-holes this year, but the Splitfire KXs are cut even more. The seat cover is by MXA, and the one-piece handlebar clamp is by Pro Circuit. Pichon runs KX250 top tripleclamps for the rubber-mount bar clamps. He also runs the highest, straightest bars that Renthal makes, #971 (only McGrath, Hughes and Pichon run these bars). Team bikes also get Honda CR front brake cylinders, gas caps, clutch levers and perches, and chain rollers.

All of these mods can be bought, but you can't get the magnesium case covers. Splitfire's KXs tip the incredibly inaccurate AMA scales at 208 pounds.

SPLITFIRE KX125



Leaper Shane Trittler was pumped with Mickael Pichon's SplitFire/Pro Circuit KX125. The added midrange bark and suspension stiffness gave the Supercross-oriented KX even more launchability.

SO, WHAT'S IT LIKE?

Shane "Rideshare" Trittler has raced KXs in the past but now rides heavily-modified RM125s. He really liked the Pro Circuit/Splitfire Supercross KX125. "It's way better than a stock KX. Bottom and mid are really good, and it pulls hard all the way through. It flattens out sooner than I thought it would on top (in SX trim), but it pulls well through the gears. The Braking brakes work perfectly. I've got Braking rotors on my RM, and I thought they worked well, but these work better. It turns very well, like a stock KX, but the suspension is too stiff for me on braking bumps. Overall, it's way faster than my Suzuki!"

Vibration is lower than stock KX levels, too. Everything works at optimum levels. Only the full-works bikes of Robbie Reynard, Damon Huffman and Tim Ferry are trickier, but you can't own those. You can, however, buy what Pichon rides, either by the piece or as a complete bike. It's the best kind of factory bike there is—one that you can own.

SPLITFIRE REPLICA PRICE LIST

P.C. cylinder/head mods	\$260.00
P.C. works pipe	179.95
P.C. factory silencer	73.00
P.C. carb boring	50.00
P.C. fork revalve	135.00
P.C. shock relalve	135.00
Fork springs	80.00
Shock spring	85.00
Renthal #971 bars	75.95
Renthal 12/51 sprockets	23.50/59.95
P.C. bar clamp	59.95
P.C. billet pegs	99.95
Braking rotor kits	249.95 each
Throttle Jockey graphics	52.95
UFO plastic kit	180.00
MXA seat cover	55.95