



LIGHTWEIGHT ENDURO MACHINES

If you've ever wondered why there's a 200 class. . .

By the DIRT BIKE Staff



Outside observers often wonder just why a 200cc class exists for enduros. After all, that's only 50cc less than a 250. The reasoning behind the success of 200 class machines for enduro and Eastern hare scrambles is not hard to understand if you've ever competed in a genuinely nasty woods run.

A 125 is just too hard to ride in tight woods. . . there are too many times when you need to roll the throttle on gently to navigate wet rocks or slippery roots.

Many 250s are tall, heavy, or both. . . and some of them have MX-type powerbands, which can be a liability in less than highly skilled hands.

Which brings us to the 200s. They weigh in about the same as a decent 125, and the saddle height is comfortably low. But the best part of a good 200 is the power. It'll have just enough to get the job done. A properly set-up 200 will snake through the

Transmission ratios are perfectly matched to the KDX's powerband. It'll crawl its way out of a stream and be ready to blast down fast trails on a moment's notice. (Left)

Although the Yamaha is light and easy to control in the air, most riders will prefer the optional heavier spring for the rear suspension. Landings are rough with the stocker. (Right)

tightest woods in second gear, saving low gear for desperation shots up bottleneck hills. And a 200 will not tire a rider anywhere near as much as the more brutal 250s.

LIMITED CHOICES, BUT GOOD ONES

In our comparison we have two of the best lightweights available: the KDX200 and the IT200. Both are proven performers with great little powerplants. The 200 class Can-Am is not included because of availability, or lack thereof.

Our test bikes are both air-cooled, single-shockers and come delivered with speedos, large tanks and tool bags. Effectively, you

could take out either bike, add a roll chart, and enter an enduro. Naturally, the two bikes also come with spark arresters for woods runs, even though many Western riders replace the spark arresters with regular mufflers for a slight performance gain.

BABY BLUE

Beefy shorter-travel 43mm forks deliver about 10.6 inches of travel up front on the Yamaha. The same travel can be found at the rear via a somewhat dated Monocross rear suspension.

A tiny-looking air-cooled barrel seems odd in this day of radiators and hoses, but nevertheless, keeps the engine cool enough to get the job done.

Six speeds ride inside the very familiar-looking cases, which share pieces with DT and IT models a half-decade old. The tank is slightly bulbous, the saddle a bit low, and the bars slightly high for real comfort.



Flying the 200s is easy to do. Both are lightweight, and long rides won't fatigue the rider.



The stock Dunlop K-890 tires work best on dry terrain. In sticky situations they tend to pack up with mud.

WOODS GREEN

Also air-cooled and six-speeded, the KDX200 is about six pounds heavier than the IT. Some of that weight must come from the gigantic muffler/spark arrester, no doubt. Sitting a bit taller than the IT, the KDX will fit more riders in a more professional manner. Bar, peg and control layout is excellent.

A great little clock/speedo is standard on the KDX, and this represents money saved to you. Forks are plush on the Kawasaki, perhaps too plush, and a very basic Uni-Trak setup handles 11 inches of excellent travel.

POWER PLAYS

Both engines deliver amazing power over a wide range for such tiny chunks of metal. If you line up both bikes and run them through the gears, the KDX will usually out-pull the IT by a length or more. But an enduro is not a drag race. You'll find more real grunt at low revs on the IT than with the KDX.

More punch is available in the mid-range on the KDX, but when it comes to crawling up a slippery slope at partial throttle openings, the IT is a clear winner. Trying to over-



The IT Monocross rear handles suspension chores well at low and medium speeds, but falls short of perfect when the bike is pushed hard.



It's quiet and it's heavy: The Kawasaki's massive silencer/spark arrester weighs in at five pounds, nine ounces. Replacing this unit with an aluminum accessory will eliminate about three pounds.



There's enough torque on tap to handle almost any situation. It's one of the most sensible enduro engines ever built.

rev the IT is frustrating, as it flattens out too early, compared with the KDX. For tighter woods runs, the IT power is the way to go. For faster hare scrambles work, the KDX is more competitive.

SUSPENSION

Up front the IT has it all over the KDX. While the Kawasaki will bottom out and clank, the IT will merely suck up the jolt. At low to medium speeds, however, the KDX is more plush than the IT. Give the nod to the IT forks overall.

It's a different story at the rear end, as the IT will hop and bang around when it's being pushed hard over bumps. Here, the KDX is a marvel of smooth action and all-around excellent performance.

One gets the feeling that the IT rear end knives through the mid-part of the stroke too easily, yet is too harsh on square-edged bumps.

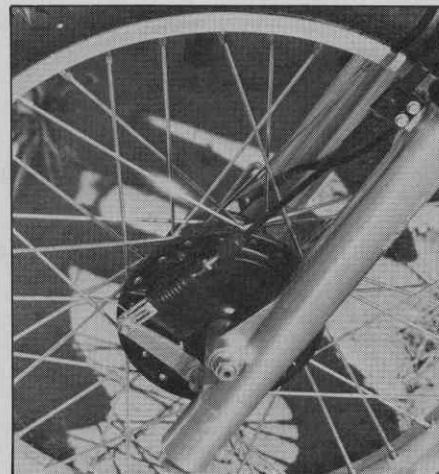
Once the front end of the KDX is stiffened up (higher oil level, heavier oil and heavier springs), the KDX is by far the better-suspended bike of the two. It sure would be nice to have the IT forks on the KDX, though.



Both machines are excellent in the tight stuff. The Yamaha has the better front end of the two, but the Kawasaki's Uni-Trak handles rear suspension chores better than the IT's Monocross.



Raising the fork tubes 10mm in the triple clamps helps the front end get a better grip. Fork action is excellent.



If the KDX needs attention anywhere, it's here: The front brake goes from bad to almost useless in a very short time. Maybe a disc next year?

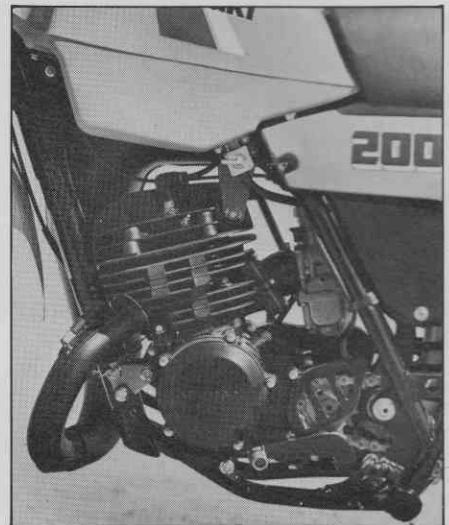
KAWASAKI KDX200



A narrow, sensible layout makes it easy to move around on the KDX. The suspension has a soft feel overall, but it never seems to be a handicap at high speeds.



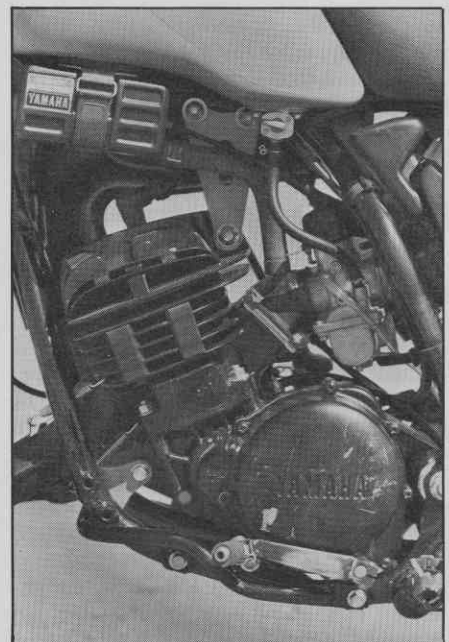
One ride on the IT leaves a good impression: It's light, the powerband is wide, the forks are almost perfect and the rear suspension is good.



It's amazing just how good the KDX's engine is. Usable power is available from anywhere above idle, though it's strongest in the mid-range.



Here's a neat item: The KDX's electronic clock/odometer displays mileage and time, both starting from zero. Mileage can be added or subtracted with the plus and minus buttons on top.



Super reliable and strong, the IT's engine gets the job done with no complaints. Maintenance is simple and straightforward.

& YAMAHA IT200

HANDLING

If ever the word "perfect" could be applied to handling, the KDX comes close to earning that label. It steers accurately at low speeds, tracks well at high speeds and ignores rocks like a Husky.

With the IT you have to get forward to make it turn sharply at lower speeds. When the front wheel of the IT nails a rock, there is no telling which direction the bike will dart off to.

You certainly could not call the IT bad, but much more work is required to make the IT go where it's pointed. Here, the KDX is a big winner.

BRAKES

Normally we wouldn't dwell overly long on brakes, but the KDX deserves a few darts hurled its way for the worst set of front binders this side of greased cheese slices. When new—and we mean the first ten minutes—the brakes feel fine, but they glaze quickly and soon become next to useless.

A disc, or at least a reasonable set of double-leading shoes is desperately in order on the KDX.

The IT, on the other hand, has a good, strong stopper that will recover quickly after being soaked in water, but the rear shoes do tend to chatter too much on steep hills.

BITS AND PIECES

Irritants can be found on both machines. The kickstand on the IT is a real leg snagger, even if it's heated and bent inward. Some taller riders complained about the distance between the pegs and the saddle being too short, cramping their thighs on long rides.

A poorly designed kickstarter on the KDX makes lighting it off harder than it should be, even though both bikes invariably fire on the first or second kick.

You can plan on the chain and sprockets wearing out real soon, and almost instantly if the bike is ridden in mud or water. O-ring chain and Sidewinder sprockets will add greatly to enduro reliability.

Substantial vibration can be felt from the KDX, too much for such a small bike, and most of it can be traced to undersized or loose engine bolts.

Neither bike has tires worth much more than for break-in, and both will benefit from good rubber.

One odd note: The KDX seems to steer as well with a flat front tire as with a fully inflated one.

CHECKS AND BALANCES

When the last check at an enduro is cleared, both the IT and the KDX have the capability of being class winners, and it would be folly for us to claim that you'll win or lose because you chose one of these bikes over the other.

However, we can tell you this: At that last check, the rider on the KDX will be fresher than the IT rider. Both bikes are good honest workhorses, but the handling of the KDX makes us declare it the winner—by a very small margin. □



	KAWASAKI KDX200A3	YAMAHA IT200N
Engine type	Single-cylinder, air-cooled 2-stroke	Single-cylinder, air-cooled 2-stroke
Bore and stroke	66mm x 58mm	66mm x 57mm
Displacement	198cc	195cc
Carburetion	34mm Mikuni	34mm Mikuni
Factory recommended jetting:		
Main jet	260	330
Needle jet	R-6	P-6
Jet needle	5FJ57-3	6F21-4
Pilot jet	40	55
Slide number	3.0	2.0
Fuel tank capacity	12.0 L (3.2 gals.)	11.0 L (2.9 gals.)
Lubrication	Pre-mix at 32:1	Pre-mix at 32:1
Gearbox ratios:		
1	2.769:1	2.750:1
2	2.000:1	1.857:1
3	1.533:1	1.500:1
4	1.235:1	1.250:1
5	1.041:1	1.080:1
6	0.869:1	0.875:1
Gearing, front/rear	13/48	12/44
Ignition	CDI	CDI
Recommended spark plug	NGK B9ES	NGK B8EG
Silencer/spark arrester	Yes/yes	Yes/yes
Wheelbase	1430mm (56.3 in.)	1440mm (56.7 in.)
Ground clearance	340mm (13.4 in.)	345mm (13.6 in.)
Seat height	927mm (36.5 in.)	925mm (36.4 in.)
Rake/trail	28°/121mm	28°/115mm
Wet weight, no fuel	217 lbs.	211 lbs.
Tire size and type:		
Front	3.00 x 21 Dunlop K-890	90/90-21 IRC
Rear	4.00 x 18 Dunlop K-890	120/90-18 IRC
Suspension, type and travel:		
Front	38mm Kayaba forks, 260mm (10.24 in.)	43mm Kayaba forks, adj. comp., 270mm (10.62 in.)
Rear	Uni-Trak, single KYB shock, adj. reb., 280mm (11.02 in.)	Monocross, single shock, adj. reb., 270mm (10.62 in.)
Intended use	Off-road, enduro	Off-road, enduro
Country of origin	Japan	Japan
Retail price, approx.	\$1799	\$1799
Distributor/Manufacturer	Kawasaki Motors Corp. 2009 E. Edinger Ave. Santa Ana, CA 92705	Yamaha Motor Corp. 6555 Katella Ave. Cypress, CA 90630