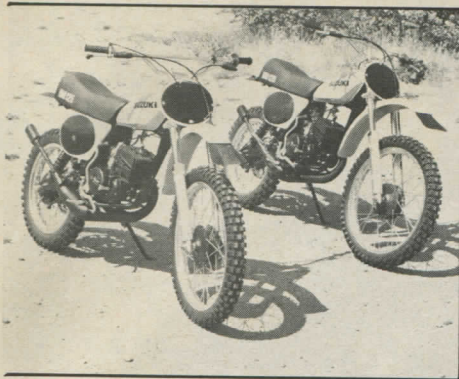


DUAL TEST
(What? Another one?)

RM 125 SUZUKIS

Stocker and Stomper

By the Editors of MODERN CYCLE



Apparently, no one is going to let the 125 Elsinore lie down and die quietly. First, Yamaha blitzed Honda (see August 75 *MC* for an in-depth test) with the 21 horsepower YZ 125. Seeing that a stock Honda only puts out around 17 ponies, the YZ can easily destroy a stock Elsie and edge even most highly modified ones. With the added benefit of the monocross rear end, it was already ahead in the suspension department. Ohhh, woe, things looked bad.

Then, just to pile another heavy stone on the grave, Suzuki has come out with not one, but two versions of a slaughterhouse 125 racer. The stock (!) version puts out enough to do in most Hondas—18 horsepower at 9700, while the kitted RM 125 blasts out 21 muscular long-eared ones at a dizzying 10,250 rpm! Is there no justice in the world? Will no one come to the rescue of the giant Honda concern? Apparently not.

We got both RMs at the same time for testing, but the thing that im-

pressed us more than the output of the little RM 125 was the chassis. Suzuki, a company that has never been famed for el-spiffo frame geometry, has actually made the handling the strong point of the RM 125s.

The RM 125 steers, handles and feels like a big bike. Most 125s, the Elsinore included, have a tiny feel to them, that makes normal sized (by normal, we mean 200 pounds or so) riders feel like they're perched on the end of a very unstable toy. The wheelbase feels much longer than 53½ inches, probably because of the high and wide layout of the bike.

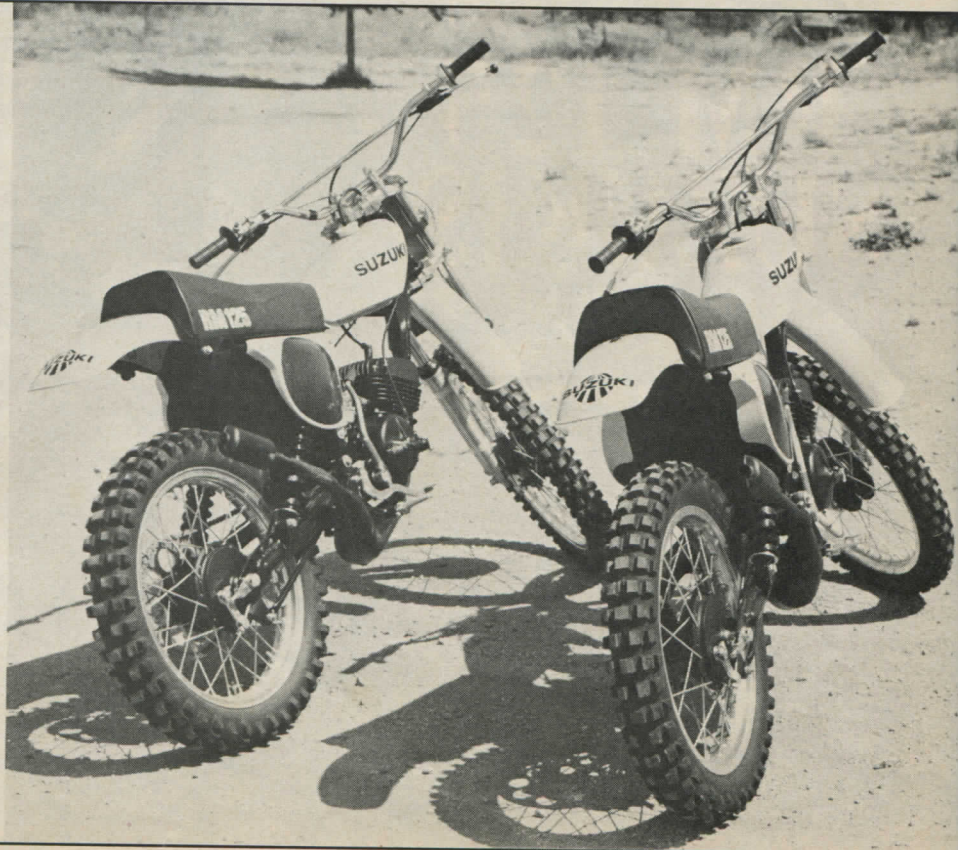
Sitting in the saddle with your hands on the bars gives the illusion that you're astride a larger piece of iron. It's only when you lean the RM 125 way over to feel its weight, that you realize the machine weighs only 190 pounds. Looking almost massively out of place, the forks on the Suzuki add to the strange combination of large feel and appearance, combined with almost spin-

dly light weight.

Strangely, the first time we rode the bike, the forks were the only weak feeling component on the machine. They bottomed, even under 150-pound riders. And when the forks on the RM 125 Suzuki bottom, something strange happens . . . the wheel makes contact with the fender and stops momentarily. This induces a state of fear that one is not likely to easily forget. Luckily, this is one set of forks that *did* respond to change in oil viscosity. With a mixture of 20-weight Bel-Ray and ATF, the forks never bottomed out again and actually worked fairly well. Better than the forks on the Yamaha YZ 125, for sure. And none of the flex of the Yamaha was found in the strong triple crown of the Suzook.

Kayaba gas/oil shocks (see this issue for shock comparison test) are standard on the RM 125. This makes the Yamaha and the Suzuki worlds ahead of the Honda in rear suspension. We'd have to rank the monocross superior to the

- 1 Stocker is on the left; hop-up Suzook on the right. Externally, the only way you tell the difference is longer stinger on the pipe and bigger carb. Little secret: bigger carb has pink overflow lines.
- 2 Jimmy O'Neal jumps the stock 125.
- 3 Kit bike has taller head with bumped compression. It runs cooler than the stocker, which tends to get slower as it gets hotter.
- 4 Light motor sits very low in frame for a Suzuki. Much of the weight is forward, a departure from normal Suzuki engineering approach.





Suzuki in performing on heavy bumps, while the gas/oil rear end of the RM gave a softer ride on the smaller bumps. But, a true racing suspension should be set up for the heavy stuff, not the small ripples.

All things considered, the Suzuki handles better in the corners than the Yamaha. The front end seems to stick harder and has much less tendency to push out on hard packed turns. When the rear end does start to slide out, it does so slowly, for a 53½-inch wheel-base bike. Referring back to the Yamaha, when it lets go, there's a big rush. If anything, the RM 125 can be called very predictable in the corners. No surprises, with chassis reactions to bumps being almost on the slow side. Again, that big bike feel we mentioned earlier. Most 125s feel twitchy when sideways. On the rear of the RM, Suzuki has placed Kayaba gas shocks. These units are among the best gas shocks available on the market today. They are also going to be selling these

units as replacement parts for only \$35.00 per shock. They work fine for riders about 130-170. If you weigh any more, the shock bottoms out much too often. Pre-load can be turned way up for a heavyweight.

Rear chain is TM Suzuki chain and seems to last fairly well. Our chain never came off throughout the testing. Suzuki has placed the same chain guide as the larger bikes, on the RM. It holds up very well and doesn't weigh too much.

Our bike came with funky old Nippon tires that aren't too good. If these were replaced with those neat 3.75x18 Metzeler rear tires and a 3.00x21 motocross Metzeler, you'd be able to do no wrong. As it is the bike turns well and tracks good, but with good tires you'd be *much* more stable.

Neat DID shoulderless rims are standard on all Suzuki motocross machines. They last well and are very strong. Rim locks in the wheels let the rear tire slip only a little bit. Sheet

metal screws would be much better.

The stock plug cap isn't too good, but the kit bike came with a neat rubber one. It looks a lot like a sparky, but it's red.

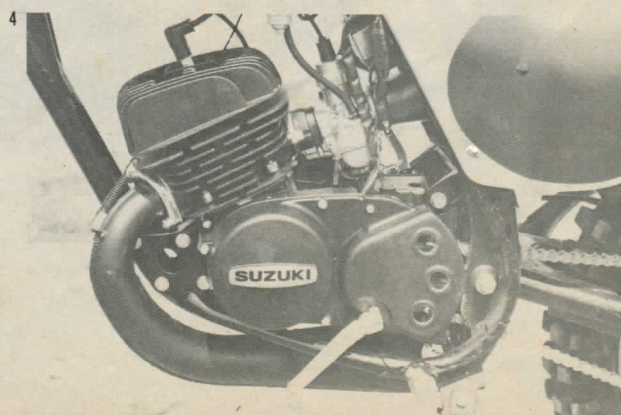
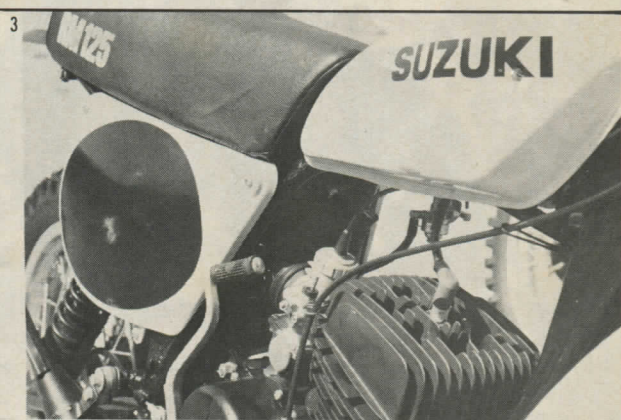
Our triple clamps look the same as the 250 models of last year. We had a slight problem with the pinch bolts on the top. We stretched them a bit by overtightening. By replacing the bolts, we had no more problems. Bottom pinch bolts are big enough to be bridge fasteners, and should never break.

Fork tubes are 35mm in diameter and should never bend. On the small bikes, they have almost no flex.

Swingarm is heavily gusseted for a 125. It should never bend. The way Suzuki did the frame job is a work of art. This frame could house an open class motor with no problems. All pieces were beefed up to prevent any frame failures.

DETAILS

The countershaft nut on both bikes





came loose at least three times during our testing. After taking the nut off and applying a good dab of Loctite, it never came loose again. In order to tighten the countershaft nut you have to take the shift lever off, the cover must be removed and then, tighten the nut. After the second time, we left the countershaft case off entirely. After re-

moving the case, no one ever had the trouble of touching their foot on the countershaft or the nut.

We've heard rumors that the front chain rollers break. We never broke ours, but it's a good idea to keep an eye on it.

After the first session on the bike, we noticed the forks had been bottoming.

We placed twenty-weight oil in the forks and preloaded the springs with a bunch of flat washers. It helped the forks in a big way. These are the same forks as on the 250 motocrosser of last year. As a 250 fork, they are about average, but on the 125, they can handle anything.

There was a great difference between the stocker and the kit bike. The



stocker had more bottom end and mid-range than the kit bike, but the kit model had about 15 mph on the stocker in top gear. The kit bike also ran out a full 500-700 rpm higher.

When we weren't riding the bike, we took one part at a time off the kit bike and placed it on the stocker. After testing all of the pieces one at a time, we found the biggest difference came from the pipe and the carb. The pipe seems the same in the volume, but the stinger is about six inches longer. Carb jumped from a 28mm to a 34mm Mikuni. This Mikuni *really* helped the running of the engine. Along with the pipe, the stocker turned to a completely new bike. If you're looking for a cheap way to hop up your 125, try a longer stinger and the carb. It'll make a world of difference. Grips are very well shaped, but are too short for the average hand. If you trim the large end down a bit they feel much better. Levers fit well for both clutch and brake usage. Throttle is too heavy, but functions O.K. A plastic Magura, or Amal throttle would be better.

New style fenders are long and wide

enough for the average motocross, but for mud you'll probably get a little dirty. Side panels are made from the same plastic as the fenders and fit surprisingly well on the sides. The placement of the shocks requires that the side panels be a bit wider than you'd like. If you're a small rider, then you might have a problem with the panels pushing your legs outward. It's something you'll have to live with if you want the travel.

Seat/tank junction is narrow and allows for ample room to ramble. Never did any of our riders complain about the seat or the tank. Tank is a bit heavy for a small bore racer. It should be made from an alloy, like the Yamaha YZ 125 tank. It would cut the weight and also lower the CG.

For stock bars, these aren't bad. Look a lot like the ever popular CZ bend. Another little item you don't have to change.

Most Japanese bikes have touchy brakes, but this RM doesn't. The brakes do a fine job of slowing the bike down, but they'll lock the wheel only if you apply heavy pressure to the pedal.

About the pedal. It sticks a bit too far out for most riders, but it's easy to find. We bent ours in so it wouldn't hit the ground, but it then became harder to find. If you think about it, you can ride with the brake tucked in this way, you just have to remember where it's at. It's better than tearing it off in a low turn.

Our stocker lost the kickstart pivot bolt, probably because we forgot to check it; so don't forget to check yours.

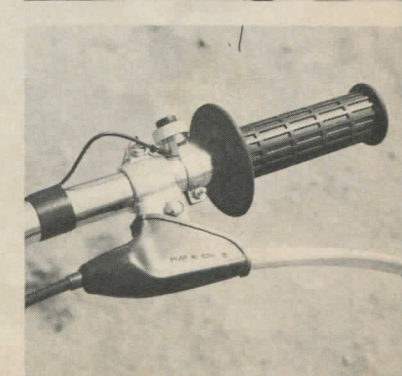
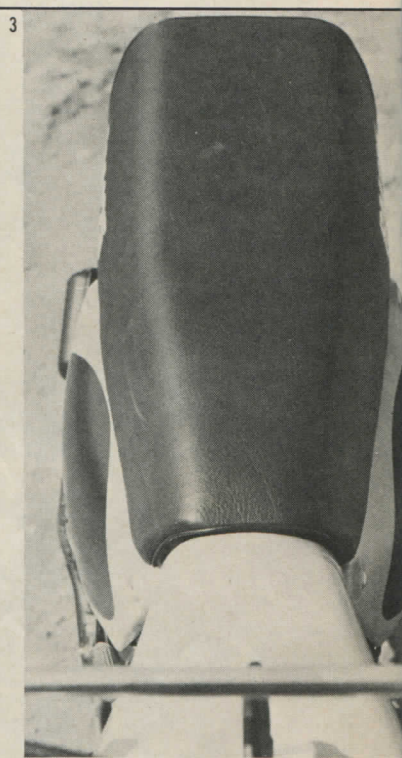
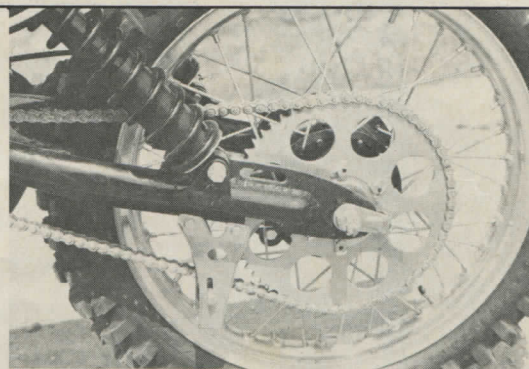
When riding the bike, it's easy to feel the shifts and the lever is easy to find. We had to raise it a little higher than normal, but it still felt fine.

For heavy riding, the spokes ought to be changed. They would be fine for motocross, but for desert you'd better be prepared. A set of eight gauge on the rear and nine gauge on the front would make it bullet-proof.

Hubs are light and the area around spokes is beefy and should keep them from ripping out. Rim locks seem to come loose after a long ride; keep an eye on them.

When we received our test bikes, the mag cover was loose on both. If you had points, there might have been a prob-

- 1 Solid mounted rear sprocket; good chain guide; cantilevered Kayaba gas/oil shocks—it all adds up to a decent rear end.
- 2 Forks are stolen from the 250 MXer and work better than average, but still aren't perfect. Forks are very sensitive to changes in oil viscosity.
- 3 Tank/seat juncture was narrow, but wide side panels forced legs awkwardly apart when standing for jumps.
- 4 Some riders hung up foot while trying to reach brake pedal.
- 5 We expected long narrow stinger to break easily, however, neither bike experienced breakage despite numerous falls.



lem, but the PEI system seems to not be affected by dirt or water. When you get yours better check it for proper sealing.

On the stocker, the pipe was made from stamped cones, but the kit bike has a handmade pipe. All the cones are rolled and the pipe is welded by hand. It fits a bit better, but not much. Same silencer is used on both bikes.

Our stocker was fairly fast for a production 125 racer. Most of the fast novice racers and competitive intermediate riders should find its power to be enough. Only when the bike is to be used for expert competition, should you try to hop it up. For this, Suzuki has made a kit for the RM. It consists of the following: New cylinder, high compression head with larger fin area, another black box, different pipe, 34mm Mikuni (improperly jetted, but what do you want?), spare jetting, a plug and some assorted foof and some literature.

Footpegs on the new RM are well-shaped, but have a few drawbacks. They aren't spring loaded; reaching for a peg and not finding it can get exciting. The way they mount isn't the best, but

we didn't have a problem with ours. Might be a good idea to check this area often for cracks. For heavy mud riding, you ought to weld a few small beads on the top of the pegs. Keep a close eye on the peg pivot bolts. Maybe even drill them out to 8mm and put a bolt and lock nut on them. Or go to the surplus store and buy some 3/8" pins and put a cotter pin through the end. Whatever you do, it'll be better than the stock setup.

Mounting of the brake pedal is the same as the other MX'ers from Suzuki. The pedal has a stud welded to the back side. There is a piece of tube on the frame that the stud rides in. It's got a cotter pin in the end of it, to keep it on the bike. The stud hole tends to fill with dirt and crud. After a while, it'll stop moving. Before this happens, take the pedal off and clean and lube the shaft. Take care in this area. If the shaft gets all rusty, go after it with a piece of sandpaper and some oil. Keep the shaft moving free in the frame at all times.

The plastic fork guards are neat, but the tape won't hold. Replace the tape

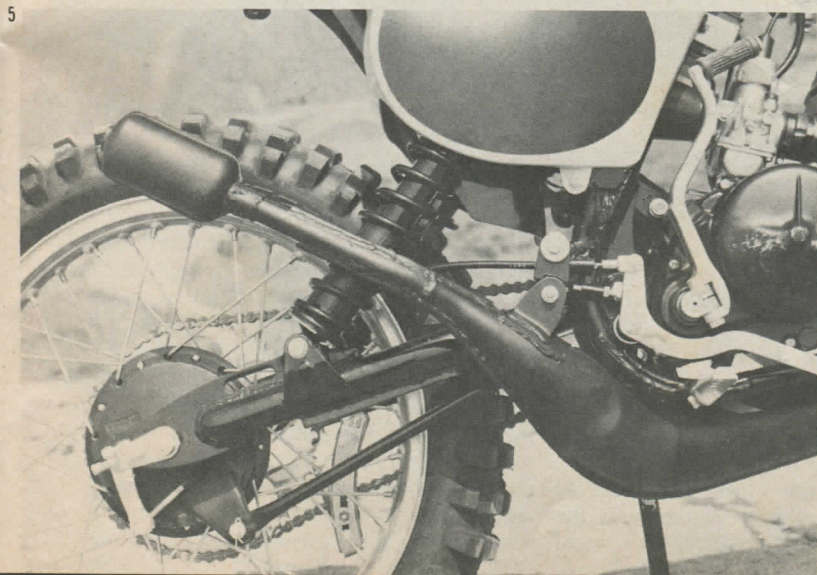
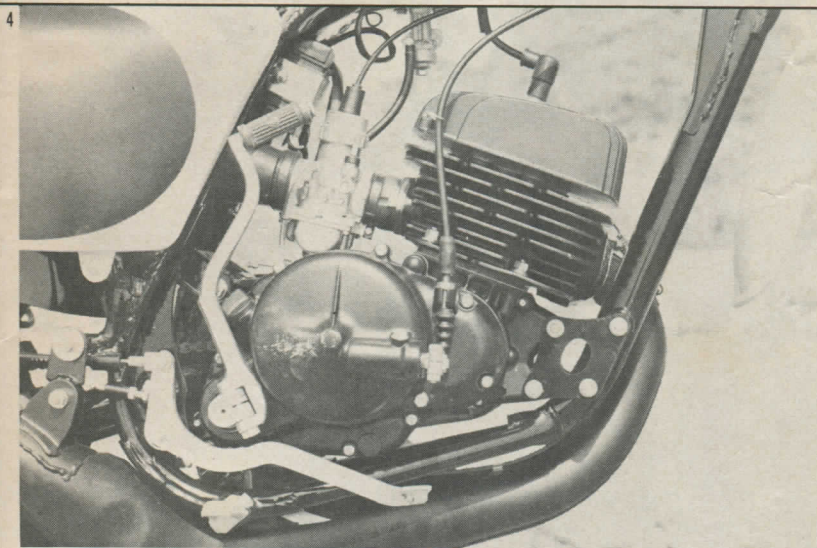
with a few Zip-Ties and forever live in peace.

Keep a close eye on the screws that hold the side panels in place. We lost a few of ours the first time we rode the bike. Maybe a few extras in the tool box.

That rubber band that holds the clutch cable from dangling in the breeze is a joke. It's gonna break just when you don't expect it. Better apply a loosely-fitted Zip-Tie to this area, also.

In our stocker, we had one of the exhaust flange studs back out when unbolting the pipe. You have to remove the flange, in order to get the pipe off. Take both the studs out and Loctite them in place. On the bottom of the pipe there are a few springs. Unless you like to buy them, you'd better bend the ends over slightly. This way they'll stay in place when the bike is being pounded.

If you see an overabundance of slop coming out of the overflow tube on the gas cap, you'd better check your steering head bearings. If they have a constant barrage of gas on them, it won't be long before there's no grease left. If no leakage occurs, then normal



NAME AND MODEL Suzuki RM 125
 PRICE, SUGGESTED RETAIL (APPROX.) \$995.00
 MOTOR Single cylinder, piston port,
 air-cooled, two-stroke
 BORE/STROKE 56/50mm
 DISPLACEMENT (CC) 123cc
 COMPRESSION RATIO 7.4:1
 BRAKE HORSEPOWER
 (SAE) (ACTUAL) 18 hp at 9700 rpm stock
 21 hp at 10,200 rpm kit bike
 CARBURETION 28mm stock, 34mm kit bike
 RECOMMENDED STANDARD JETTING
 FROM FACTORY:
 MAIN JET 180
 NEEDLE JET 5DP7 needle, 6NG
 PILOT (LOW SPEED JET) 50
 NEEDLE POSITION 3rd
 IDLE AIR SCREW
 (NUMBER OF TURNS) 1½ turns
 IGNITION PEI
 RECOMMENDED SPARK PLUG NGK B9EV
 PRIMARY DRIVE Straight-cut gear
 FINAL DRIVE 428 TM chain, 126 links
 GEAR RATIOS
 1—2.143:1
 2—1.588:1
 3—1.250:1
 4—1.045:1
 5—0.913:1
 AIR FILTRATION
 SYSTEM Foam filter, in still air box
 LUBRICATION Pre-mix
 RECOMMENDED OIL AND
 RATIO OF MIX Castrol R, 32:1
 FUEL TANK CAPACITY 5.28 liter
 1.5 gals.
 OIL TANK CAPACITY (IF ANY) None
 RECOMMENDED GASOLINE (FACTORY) Premium
 FRAME (TYPE) .. Semi-double cradle, mild steel
 WHEELBASE 53.5 inches
 STEERING HEAD ANGLE 29 degrees
 TRAIL 4.48 inches
 GROUND CLEARANCE 9.65 inches
 SEAT HEIGHT 35.5 inches
 FRONT SUSPENSION 35mm tube, 7.48 inch
 travel, 210cc per leg
 REAR SUSPENSION Swingarm, cantilevered
 gas Kayaba, 7.68 inch rear travel,
 mounted at 36 degrees
 WHEELS:
 FRONT DID shoulderless rim—21 inch
 REAR DID shoulderless rim—18 inch
 TIRES:
 FRONT 3.00x21—4 pr.
 REAR 3.50x18—4 pr.
 BRAKES/HUBS:
 FRONT 130mm dia. internal expanding
 REAR 130mm dia. internal expanding
 FUEL TANK MATERIAL Steel
 FENDER MATERIAL Plastic
 WEIGHT (ACTUAL) WITH FULL
 TANK OF GAS 204 lbs. wet—190 lbs. dry
 EXHAUST SYSTEM Downswept expansion
 chamber
 SILENCER/SPARK ARRESTER
 (IF ANY) Built-in silencer
 STARTER (KICK, ELECTRIC,
 LOCATION) Kick start, right side
 PRIMARY START Yes
 GUARANTEE, IF ANY...None—Tough luck, buddy
 INTENDED PURPOSE OF BIKE
 (FROM MFG.) Motocross
 COUNTRY OF MANUFACTURE Japan



maintenance on these bearings will do fine. Also, keep an eye on the steering head for becoming loose; ours did.

SUMMATION

Where does the RM 125 fit in the mad scramble for King of the Mountain in the 125 class? Here's the straight answers. For a novice rider, the stock RM 125 is a good enough bike to do the job. Few of the novices are using any of the machines to their full potential. In that regard, it's superior to the Honda by virtue of its superior rear suspension and slightly more power output. The YZ 125 is better than both, for a novice, because that class is usually won

on the straightaways.

For the intermediate rider, the stock RM 125 does not offer enough horsepower, but then, a modified Honda barely does now. Here, the kitted RM 125 will be right at home. Enough power and superior handling. In this class, the handling of the RM 125 should give the rider the edge over the Yamaha YZ 125.

In the Expert class, the Yamaha will have the edge in power, but the kitted RM 125 will be right on its tail and outhandle it in the turns. The forks of the Suzuki are easily superior to the Yamahas, while the Monocross rear end is slightly superior to the gas/oil rear

end of the Suzook. What it boils down to is this: The Yamaha has more beans (slightly) and a slightly better rear suspension. The Suzuki handles better and has a front end that doesn't flex and forks that take the bumps that jar the Yamaha rider. If the race is a sprint and both riders are equal, the Yamaha should win by a little bit. If the race is long, the RM 125 rider should pass the Yamaha rider as soon as his front end hammers him to fatigue.

Of course, we all have to face one fact: Nobody, but nobody races stock equipment in the Expert class. Just ask those guys right now who are losing on \$2000 Honda Elsinores. ●

