

# TRANSWORLD MOTOCROSS



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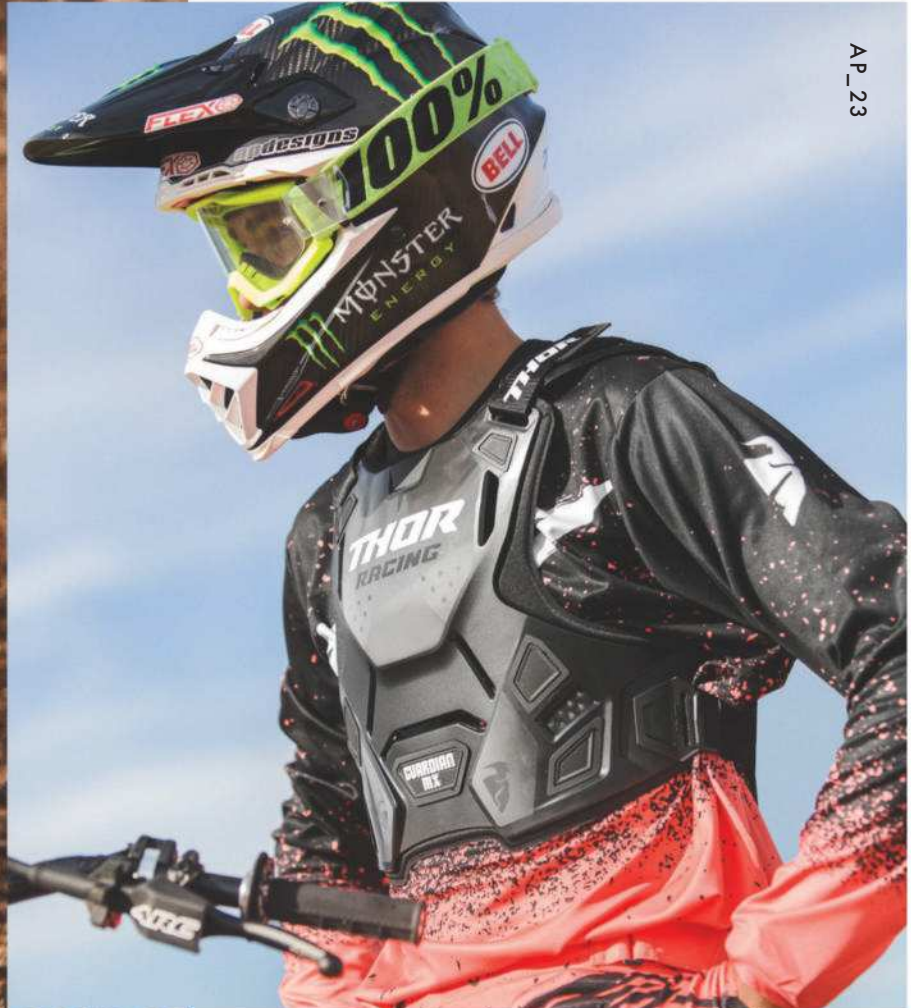
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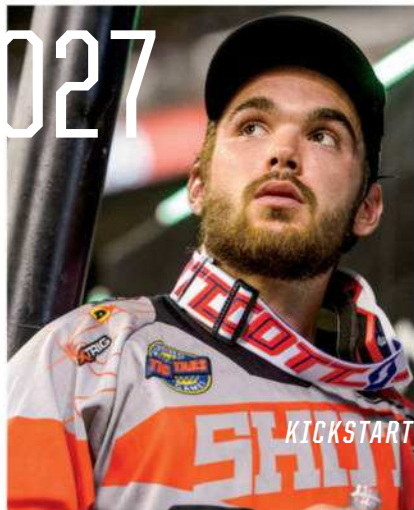
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027

KICKSTART



040

PRODUCT REPORT



046

'18 YAMAHA YZ65



050

SKILLS



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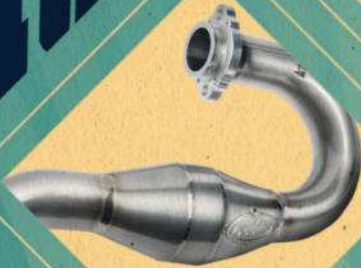


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**"QUALITY IS REMEMBERED LONG AFTER PRICE IS FORGOTTEN." —ALDO GUCCI**

It seems as if I write something like this every so often (usually after being inspired by a big crash), but safety is an important subject that needs to be addressed constantly. Don't skimp when it comes to your protective gear! Let's not kid ourselves—riding and racing dirt bikes is dangerous. Convincing yourself that "good enough" is sufficient when choosing protective gear could be the worst mistake of your life.

Granted, a high price tag does not guarantee the best protection available, but let's be real: technology and premium materials don't come cheap. Spending near \$10,000 on a brand-new dirt bike and then saving a few bucks on the helmet you buy to protect your brain is not only foolish, it can be outright dangerous.

A decade ago, a new helmet manufacturer entered the marketplace and signed up for a complete advertising schedule with *TransWorld Motocross*. It followed up with gift boxes for ev-

eryone on my staff that included a couple helmets and company-branded helmet bags, backpacks, jackets, and hats. I think there may have even been coffee cups, too! The helmets, however, were cheesy plastic things that carried a \$100 price tag. Complete with elaborate, eye-catching graphics, I could see why they would appeal to the uninformed consumer. Further investigation revealed DOT and ECE stickers on the back of them. Somehow, they carried the same safety certifications as the best helmets available.

One of the habits I have when checking out a new helmet for the first time is turning it upside down with the chin bar facing away from my body, and squeezing it with my arms to see how much it flexes. It's certainly not a scientific test, nor a factor that's evaluated by DOT or ECE, but the strength of the chin bar is something that has always been important to me. In 2004, a faulty ignition on a test bike caused me to endo violently.

After landing face-first in the mid-level helmet I was wearing at the time, the bike tracked me down and landed on the back of my head. The chin bar collapsed inward, and I suffered a severe concussion, multiple facial lacerations, and a broken eye socket that caused blurred vision for several weeks. As I gave the new helmet a bear hug, I was horrified when its chin bar buckled inward and eventually broke off. The helmet now looked exactly like the one Ronnie Mac has made famous as part of his comedic charm. I repeated the failure with two more of the helmets in the office, one with equal ease and one that took a little more effort. To be honest, the integrity of the rest of the helmet could have been perfectly up to snuff, but the manner in which I was able to break the chin bar apart horrified me. Perhaps it was a bit reckless, but we ran a photo of the broken helmet and gave it a scathing review in the next issue. Of course, doing so cost us over \$30,000 in advertising revenue, but I couldn't endorse a product like that to our readers with a clear conscience. The helmet manufacturer rep cornered me at a trade show a few months later, asking for a retraction. "That's not a realistic test, because squeezing the helmet against your body subjects the helmet to multi-directional forces that you'd never incur in a motorcycle crash," he said argumentatively. He didn't really have an answer when I told him about the crash I'd had where the bike had smashed my head between itself and the ground, though.

Helmet technology has taken huge strides forward in recent years. Led by 6D and its ATR-1 helmet, every premium helmet manufacturer has addressed the issue of rotational impacts and they have all adopted or developed some form of new technology to protect against rotational brain injuries. The arguments for and against ECE or Snell certifications are more intense than ever, and I can see the merits and shortcomings of both sides. The bottom line? Do your own research, make an informed decision, and choose a helmet that you believe in. Invest in protecting yourself. Remember, that great-looking economy helmet that's made in the same factory as the more expensive ones doesn't necessarily do the same job of protecting your brain. After all, hot dogs and filet mignon can come from the same cow.

This month, a missed shift sent me into a violent endo that—in my mind—replicated my 2004 crash. The Shoei VFX-Evo I was wearing carries a retail price of \$739, in part thanks to its fancy Josh Grant replica graphics. I gouged the forehead of the shell and compressed the EPS liner, sheared the center visor screw off, displaced the M.E.D.S. rotational impact protection system, and cracked the chin bar in multiple places. I escaped with a sore neck and a bloody lip. Could an economy helmet have protected me just as well? Sure, there's a chance, but I'm glad I didn't risk it and find out. 🩹

*SWAP*





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## "Who's a retired racer you miss interacting with, as an editor?"



**EDITOR-IN-CHIEF**  
Donn Maeda

*Travis Preston was always funny when you interviewed him. These days, Mr. T just tells me I am wrong if I don't like the Yamaha.*



**ART DIRECTOR**  
Shane Kinman

*I sure miss Cole Trickle. Days of Thunder was stuck in my DVD player for years while I was sans cable, see we interacted daily.*



**PHOTO EDITOR**  
Mike Emery

*Ryan Dungey, simply because he was always down to share a bowl of his Wheaties with me.*



**ONLINE EDITOR/  
DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL MEDIA**  
Michael Antonovich

*Kevin Windham was always good for an honest, open interview followed by some jokes and drinks. And of course, the transfers*



**MANAGING EDITOR**  
Austin Rohr

*I'm too new to have interacted with many guys who have retired, but I appreciated the banter between A-Ray and Millsaps*



**VIDEO EDITOR**  
Casey Davis

*Trey Canard was always down for an interview whenever and wherever. I really appreciated that!*



**CONTRIBUTING EDITOR**  
Chase Curtis

*I haven't been an editor long enough to have interacted with a now retired racer, but I do miss seeing Nick Wey on the gate.*

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***GEOMAX MX33***



*Troy Lee Designs*



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WHITE



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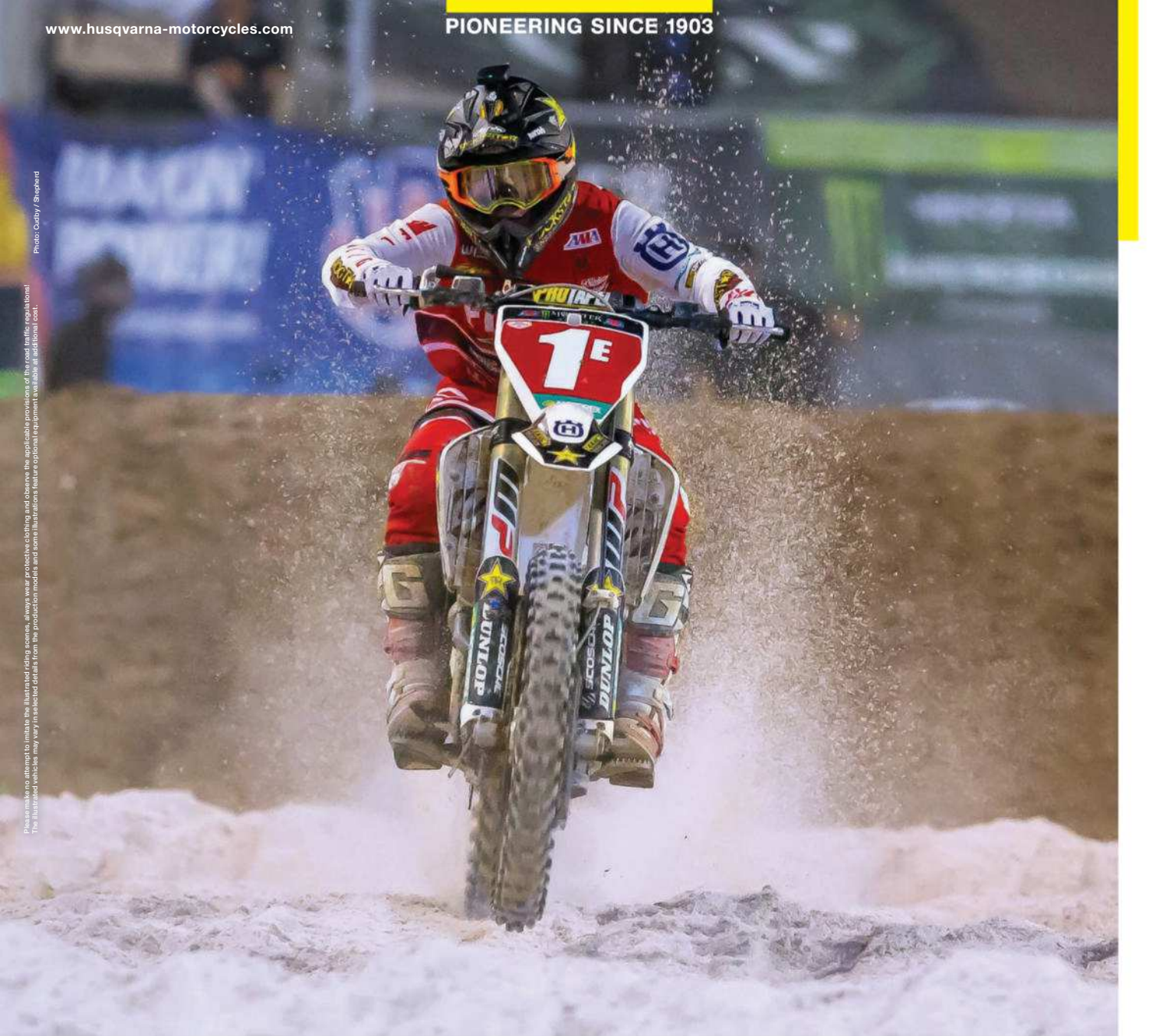
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# PROGRESSION HAS NO END

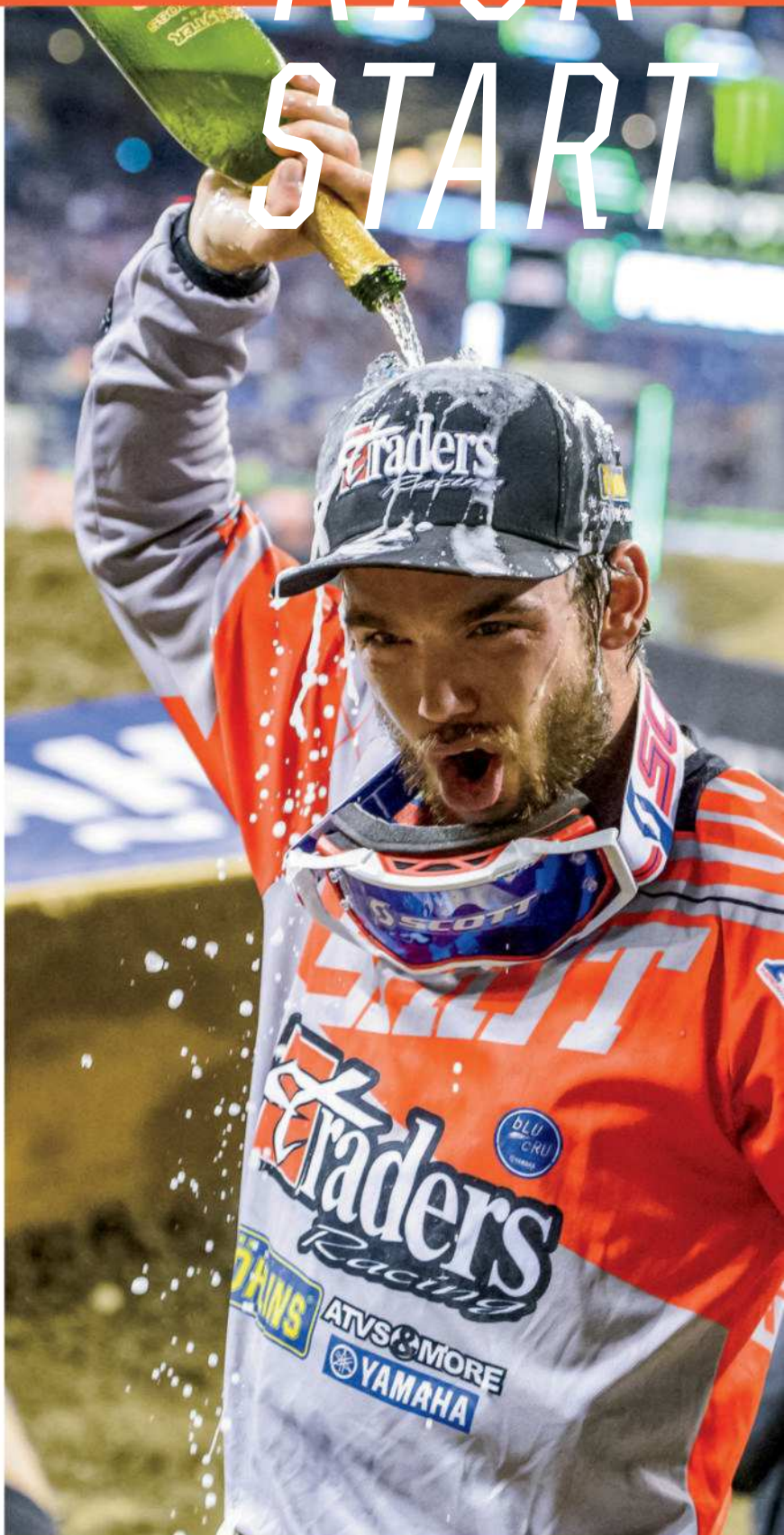
In any racer's journey to success, one must progress both mind and machine to stay at the forefront of the competition. Congratulations to Zach Osborne and the Rockstar Energy Husqvarna Factory Racing team for their continued efforts in progression on and off the bike; resulting in a triumphant achievement and their second-consecutive 250 SX Supercross Championship aboard the class-leading FC 250.



## LUKE RENZLAND

■ Every now and then, a small race team and a very talented rider will come out ahead of the top factory-supported efforts and their superstar talent. Those instances will make the rider and their supporters feel that all of their efforts over the years, even through the most challenging times and uncertain circumstances, were all worthwhile. That was the case for Luke Renzland and the Traders Racing team at the 2018 Indianapolis Supercross, where Renzland outran the combined grids of the 250 East and West Coast regions for a third-place finish, the best-ever result for both himself and his independent team. During their champagne-soaked moment on the podium, the group of Northeasterners seemed more thrilled than anyone else in the Lucas Oil Stadium that evening, and with that one result, the true potential of everyone involved with the team was put on display to the rest of the sport.

Like every racer, Renzland's life led up to that night in Indianapolis. His talent on two-wheels was noticed at a young age at tracks around his native New Jersey, and his father decided that his potential could be achieved if he spent the winter months in a warmer climate. "My brother Kody and I have been alone since I was 12 years old and he was 16. The first training facility we ever went to was GPF because the winter in New Jersey was way too cold," Renzland said. The full-time focus on riding helped him become a top competitor at the biggest amateur events, evident in his Schoolboy 1 (12-16) B/C title and 250 B Stock third-place overall finish at Loretta Lynn's in 2010. Despite the success at age 15, Renzland faced setbacks that slowed his momentum for the next few years. "I started to get some attention then and was on the verge of getting a factory ride that fall, but I had a weird string of injuries that kept me out for three to six months and I would miss Loretta's and all of the summer amateur Nationals. I lost my relevance a little bit," Renzland said. "I was always a guy that had earned a ride at most times in my career, but I just had some timing with injuries that kept me from getting it. It kept me hungry and made me work harder to achieve my goals. I don't think that it was a bad thing, but it made things tough at times." →



# LUKE RENZLAND

→ Around this time, Renzland's parents spotted a prime piece of property online that their son could ride at year-round and that they could one day retire to. Aptly named "Dreamland," the spread in northern Florida is lined by trees, has an on-site pond for watering, and pro-caliber motocross and Supercross tracks. "It was a quad riding facility at one point and it popped up," Renzland said. "It was my parents' dream to own a facility like this, so while my parents stay in New Jersey and run a company, it's the retirement package for them that my brother and I are taking care of." The property has garnered attention throughout the sport, as it's been featured in multiple videos and used for commercial shoots by industry brands, but only a select few are able to ride there on a regular basis. Instead of packing every available inch with the motor homes of young amateurs or trainers, Renzland and his brother balance the maintenance of the property and their training program. "Monday through Thursday is a grind down here, but it's a family operation. I'm always prepping the tracks and my brother does all of the property management, so when it's ready we get out there and do the work. When it's over, we'll chill out and hang out with the team in the garage, and that's it every day."

The aura of the track is actually how Renzland and the Traders Racing team got together. Despite both being from the Northeast, neither party knew each other personally until late 2014. "I met them just before the 2015 Supercross season at my place in Florida," Renzland said. "They came down here for the winter to prepare for Supercross and that's when I met that crew. That was their first year of really going after the full schedule, so I was introduced to them in their beginning stages. We grew the friendship from there."

The 2018 race season is Renzland's second year with Traders Racing/Tic Tabs/Ohlns/Yamaha/ATVs and More, an independent team that is financed in part by the Traders Seafood Steak & Ale restaurant in Maryland. Run by multi-time championship-winning wrench Skip Norfolk and Kenny Day, and with partners like Bundy Built and Ohlns USA, the team has built their YZ250F to be competitive against full-factory machines. "For the size of the team, Traders Racing is the most organized and closest thing to a factory team that you can get," Renzland said. "It's a great group of guys. With Skip Norfolk's knowledge, Kenny Day keeping things organized as the manager, and the equipment that we're getting from ATVs and More and the suspension from Ohlns, we have the closest package to a factory team that I think you can get. That and the family atmosphere are the biggest things that I've been drawn to. We're pretty much a family here and it makes going racing easy."



After months of preparation in Florida, Renzland came into the 2018 season confident that he would find the front of the field in the 250 East Coast region. "I would say that in the last few years I wasn't ready to have a performance like that, but we had a good off-season going into 2018, and I feel I was ready to have a performance like that through the first six rounds," Renzland said. "Ever since I turned pro I've had a problem getting a good start, maybe it was mental or something that I was doing wrong, but I haven't come out in the front." Knowing that starts were a weakness in his skill set, Renzland spent hours each day leading up to the Indianapolis round practicing gate drops. The extra effort paid off, as he rounded the first turn near the top of the running order and soon worked his way into second place. "The whole race I knew where I was at because for once I saw the front of the field coming out of the first turn. I passed a couple of guys in the second turn and then made the pass for second on the third lap. I knew I was in second place the whole time, so from there I settled in. I didn't think I was ready to try to win a race, so it was out of my mind to try and chase Jeremy Martin for the win," Renzland said, recalling the events of that night. "I settled in and it was a lot calmer than what I had expected. In the first few laps I was waiting for guys to come up on me, because it being an East-West Shoot-out, I knew that the gate was stacked. It took me a little bit in the race to realize that I actually belonged up there. Once I realized I had the speed to be there, I got comfortable and settled in to a pace that kept me there." A late race pass by Adam Cianciarulo pushed Renzland from second to third, but the finish and the fact that his 46.21-second lap was the fastest of the entire field proved this was by far the best of Renzland's career.

"It's validation of the work that I do. All year the team and I have believed we're podium guys, but you don't know if you should believe it until you earn it with that ride," Renzland said. "Having the fastest lap time of the race, I proved it wasn't a lucky ride, and earning it the way that I did made all of the work worth it. We're going in the right direction, and the future looks bright from here." 🍀





## TWMX RACE SERIES RACER OF THE MONTH

**Jon Mitcheff**

Age: 49

Hometown: Corona, CA

Sponsors: Pro Circuit, Fox Racing, Twin Air, Scott, Asterisk, Dunlop, Maxima, Seat Concepts, ARC, Works Connection, Rtech Plastics, JE Pistons

■ Jon Mitcheff is no stranger to the racetrack, but it wasn't until recently that we've begun to see him lining up behind the starting gate himself. With six AMA National and Supercross Championships to his credit with racers Ryan Villopoto and Ivan Tedesco, "Throttle" is one of the most successful mechanics in the sport, and he's been lining up with the TWMX Race Series on a pretty regular basis lately. "I didn't start racing until I was older, maybe 19," Mitcheff said. "My parents never let me ride motorcycles, so I was more about baseball and traditional sports. When I did start riding and racing I became friends with Dan

Rambert [now at factory Yamaha], and that's in a roundabout way how I came to work for Mitch Payton and Pro Circuit out here in California."

It wasn't all fun and games when Mitcheff first relocated to SoCal from Illinois, as Payton didn't like his employees to ride and race. "He used to tell us, 'I pay you to work on motorcycles, not to ride them,'" Mitcheff said. "But he's a lot more relaxed now. I was asked to come out and help the *Motocross Action* guys test some bikes a couple years ago, and you know how that is. Once motorcycles get in your blood, you just can't stop riding them.

"Riding and racing as a vet is a lot of fun for me, especially since my doctor told me that I would never be able to do it again. I had a hip replacement a few years ago, and every time I throw a leg over my bike I am beating the odds!"

Follow Mitcheff on Instagram @throttle20.

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### THE MODEL

If you've ever gotten a flat tire at Milestone MX Park, our local track in Riverside, California, chances are you've noticed the good-looking girl in the white tank top who can change a tire in a few minutes flat. Alyssa Moreno has been working at MX Pro Parts since she was a senior in high school. "Changing a tire is a lot more technique than strength. I always say that if you're fighting it, you're doing something wrong," Moreno said. "You can't count out strength, though, because that's what helps you get the best leverage."

Moreno is also a full-time college student pursuing a nursing degree. "Math has always been my favorite subject, but blood and guts fascinate me," Moreno said. "Working at a dirt bike track, I get to see a lot of it!" Alyssa rode when she was young and loved it, but has no desire to nowadays. "I'm around it so much, and my brother rides and races seriously, so that's my dirt bike fix," Moreno said of her younger brother, Manuel, who happens to be our staple mini bike test rider.

As for modeling, it's something she's been interested in for a while, but didn't know where to start. Upon the suggestion of several of her "tire change customers," we decided to reach out. What you see here and on this month's poster is Alyssa's first venture into modeling. What do you think? We think we see more of it in her future.

Follow here on Instagram  
@uhlissaa.



### THE BIKE

Our 2018 Yamaha YZ250 test bike has seen plenty of use since we took delivery of it. First was Monster Energy/Yamalube/Star/Yamaha Assistant Team Manager Wil Hahn, who ripped it around Perris Raceway with Josh Hansen for the part they shared in

our 2017 DVD movie release, *Premix 2*. A few weeks later we swapped the number plates on it, and Wil's rider Colt Nichols held the bike wide open for our *Premix 2* camera crew at Pala Raceway alongside Davi Millsaps, Alex Martin, and Jordon Smith.

Recently, the MTA Distributing Two-Stroke World Championships

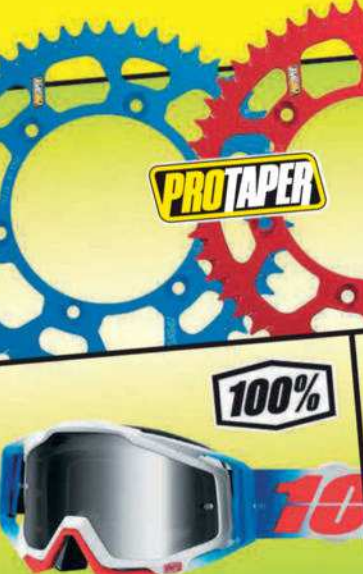
visited Glen Helen Raceway, and the YZ250 was again called to action. All we really did to get it ready to race after being ridden for our movie was install a new set of Dunlop tires, add a pair of ODI Flight bars, and install a Bill's Pipes pipe and silencer. Our pal Chuck Kober at Factory Effex whipped out a sweet set of custom

graphics, and we finished the bike off with a SDG USA gripper seat cover. Our editor in chief, Donn Maeda, and test rider Pat Foster shared the bike at the race. Pat won his class easily, and swap coming home with 3-8 tally after a lap-one crash in moto two. All in all, it was a great time on a great bike! ❤️



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## REMEMBER... THE JT RACING V2000?

■ In the early days of motocross, chest protectors were little more than thin foam padding with a few raised plastic panels to protect against impact. Most were worn beneath your jersey, and some even had shoulder cups like football or hockey pads. One thing they all had in common, though, was that they gave you a hulking appearance. In 1983, JT Racing introduced the V2000, an all-plastic chest protector that was radically different than anything the sport had seen. Utilizing a clamshell design that slipped over the rider's head, the V2000's most distinguishing factors were its rigid back panel that protected the rider's spine and its winged shoulder protection that was designed to displace the impact from a crash through the front and rear panels of the protector.

"The V2000 was unlike anything else available," JT Racing's founder John Gregory said. "At the time, the other protectors were just padding, but the V2000 was designed to disperse energy. It was designed in-house by a couple of great designers, and the main guy was Jerry Parks. He was incredible. He didn't even ride motorcycles, but he designed many of our best products."

Along with the full-coverage V2000 came the V500, a front-only version that utilized the same front panel, but only two small shoulder pieces that covered the rider's collarbone area. Though the V2000 was very popular amongst many racers, it was the lightweight V500 that most of JT Racing's elite factory riders loved. When asked why the V2000 wasn't even more popular, Gregory said, "For the same reason that full-coverage chest protectors aren't worn today: riders think that they are restrictive. It was a very popular product for us, but it's not like we sold hundreds of thousands of them. But, alongside the ALS helmet, it was one of our most popular and distinctive items. In fact, I was at a vintage race here in Boise, Idaho, a few weeks ago, and there was a guy racing in one that was in great shape!"

"For me personally, I didn't really like to have anything on my chest," said former 125 National and 250 Supercross Champion Johnny O'Mara, who rode for JT Racing in the early '80s. "But when the roost was gnarly, I had to protect myself. I had a small, slim, front protector that I used to wear under my jersey and you couldn't even notice it, but most of the time I wore nothing and really focused on getting the holeshot! The only time I ever raced in the V2000 was at the 1982 Motocross of Nations before it was released. We were racing 500s and the roost was so bad that it was like a pure war survival situation, so I agreed to wear it to protect myself. It was a little spacey looking, but it kept me safe!" 🍷

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## TRAIL TESTED

**Giant Trance Advanced 1**

**Price: \$5,100**

**Frame: Carbon fiber**

**Wheelsize: 27.5 inches**

**Fork: Fox Float Performance Elite, 150mm travel**

**Shock: Fox Float DPX2 Performance, 140mm travel**

**Drivetrain: SRAM GX Eagle 1 x 12**

**Brakes: SRAM Guide hydraulic disc 180mm**

[giant-bicycles.com](http://giant-bicycles.com)

■ The Giant Trance is a familiar bike for us, as we've tested a couple in the past and one of our staffers even owns one. Placed smack-dab in the middle of Giant's MTB lineup as an aggressive trail bike, it boasts 150mm and 140mm of suspension travel front and rear. Not as stiff and efficient at climbing as a cross-country bike, but not as heavy and aggressive as a long-travel enduro bike, the Trance is just what Goldilocks would have pedaled if she were an avid mountain bike enthusiast. The Trance is available in several different builds, from an affordable \$2,350 aluminum version, all the way up to an \$8,160 carbon fiber high-end model. We chose to test the \$5,100 Advanced 1, which has a carbon fiber frame and a very good set of components.

The big changes on the latest version of the Trance are an increase in the front travel of 10mm, lengthening of the top tube, short-

ening of the chainstays, and revisions to the rear suspension with a stiffer carbon fiber rocker arm. How does it translate to the trail? A Trance that climbs better with less suspension bob and handles rowdy sections with greater composure, thanks to its revised geometry and longer fork travel. Though the bike climbs most efficiently with the shock in its climb setting, this was only used on fire roads because we appreciate the shock's ability to soak up bumps, rocks, and other trail obstacles in the middle setting while climbing imperfect singletrack trails. In this setting, the rear tire stays planted on the ground and clawing for forward traction best. We credit the new suspension rocker arm with the firmer feel while climbing, as riding the Trance Advanced 1 test bike side by side with our three-year-old model yielded a noticeable difference in feel and speed. →



## TRAIL TESTED

Giant Trance Advanced 1

→ When in descent, the Trance Advanced 1 really begins to shine. With 150mm of travel, the dropper seat post really gets the saddle out of the way so you can get back over the rear wheel. The SRAM Guide hydraulic brakes employ huge 180mm discs, and they do an exceptional job of slowing the bike and keeping it clawing for braking traction without locking up the tires and skidding un-

controllably. With the adjusters on the fork and shock in the open position, the bike begs to be challenged, as its mid-level travel actually provides the feeling of something top-tier. Suspension action is well-balanced, and with the air pressure in both ends properly set for the rider's weight, bottoming and loss of control was never encountered. Of course, the 27.5-inch wheels and excellent Maxxis High Roller II

tires enjoy ample traction and deliver a lively ride in the tight stuff. Our tester's favorite thing about the new bike? The short chainstays make for long, controlled wheelies!

Though we love a lightweight cross-country bike for suffering in the saddle on training rides, it is hard to beat a versatile, all-around bike like the Giant Trance Advanced 1. We love it! 🍷



#### FLY RACING MTB GEAR

**\$109.95 (FREESTONE HELMET); \$54.95 (ACTION ELITE JERSEY); \$69.95 (MAVERICK SHORTS)**

It's always nice to be able to fly the same colors when you're training on your mountain bike as you wear when you're ripping your dirt bike, and that's possible, thanks to brands like Fly Racing. The folks at Fly provide crossover styling across their entire line, from the dirt to the snow and even in the water. They have a wide selection of bicycle gear for all disciplines in the dirt, from cross-country to downhill. We're especially impressed with the Freestone helmet, which utilizes ConeHead technology in its EPS to act as a crumple zone in the event of a crash. Be sure to check out their entire line, we're sure you'll find something you like!

[flyracing.com](http://flyracing.com)



#### AZONIC SWITCHBACK SPD PEDAL \$119.99

If you like to clip in for maximum power transfer but prefer the added support of a platform pedal or simply want to have the option to ride a tricky section unclipped, the Azonic Switchback SPD Pedal is the ideal pedal. The Switchback has a massive aluminum cage that's lined with 24 traction-grabbing pins, with a SPD-compatible clip in the middle. The design is great for riding technical areas unclipped but with plenty of grip on the pedal. Incorporated into the pedals are cleats for your shoes, but the pedals are designed to work perfectly with Shimano SPD cleats, too.

[oneal.com/azonic](http://oneal.com/azonic)



#### BELL SIXER MIPS FASTHOUSE LIMITED EDITION \$150

The Bell Sixer MIPS is one of the best MTB helmets we've worn, hands down. Comfortable, cool, and plenty protective, we've actually destroyed two of them and emerged unscathed. Needless to say, we trust the Sixer MIPS with our lives! Making the lid even cooler is this rad collaboration with The Fasthouse—the brand that has swept through motocross and is making a strong entry into mountain biking, as well. The subtle graphics are consistent with the rest of the popular Fasthouse product line, which celebrates good times. If you want one of these babies, you'd better act fast, as availability is limited!

[bellhelmets.com](http://bellhelmets.com)

#### FXR RIDE PACK AND TACTIC SHOVEL

**\$99.99 (RIDE PACK); \$55 (TACTIC SHOVEL)**

The FXR Ride Pack and Tactic Shovel are made for snowmobile riders who need to dig their sleds out of the powder, but when we saw it we had other ideas. The pack itself has a ton of great pockets for storing trail necessities, including the shovel, which breaks down into two compact parts. After the last rain, we strapped the combo to our back and headed to our favorite downhill singletrack trails. See, the shovel is perfect for repairing rain ruts and pesky steps carved out by hikers! Made of lightweight aluminum, the shovel is a lot sturdier than you might expect, and ours is showing no signs of wear!

[fxrracing.com](http://fxrracing.com)





## SCOTT PROSPECT GOGGLE W/ LIGHT SENSITIVE LENS

Price: Prospect LS Goggle \$89.95; Replacement LS Lens \$33.95

### What It Is

The Scott Prospect was unveiled a couple years ago as the brand's solution to the greater roost velocity that today's modern motocross bikes can deliver. A 450cc motocross bike can shoot dirt and rocks toward a chasing rider's eyes at a deadly rate. The Prospect protects against penetration and lens displacement by incorporating a thicker and stronger 1mm-thick lens and an all-new oversized frame design that employs a new lens-lock system for a secure mount. However, this new Prospect utilizes a Light Sensitive lens. While this may sound like a simple lens option, it is far greater than that. We didn't even realize it was a new feature when Scott sent it to us until we lined up on the gate and noticed the lens had taken on a purple tint. In addition to offering light sensitivity that grows darker in bright conditions, the new lens is far superior to the flat, stamped 1mm Polycarbonate lens in the standard Prospect because of its extruded thermoformed Lexan construction. Though it remains 1mm thick like the standard lens, the Light Sensitive lens is harder, pre-curved, and more optically correct.

### Hits

- As mentioned above, it's hard to even tell that this is really a new goggle. Considering how much we enjoy the standard Prospect, it's nice to receive these new features in a familiar and welcomed package.
- In addition to the light-sensitive quality, which allows the lens to change from clear to tinted and back in less than a minute as the light conditions change, the lens enjoys far superior optics, thanks to the more optically correct curved shape. As we did with the unexpected tint, we noticed a marked improvement in the quality of our vision with the new goggle on.
- Re-installing the new curved lens is much easier than the flat version, and it takes well under a minute to get securely installed.
- As is the case with the existing Prospect, the field of vision yielded by the large frame is excellent. The fit is superb, with a great seal against your face. Of course, Scott's three-layer thermoformed face foam is both comfortable and effective at keeping sweat out of your eyes and off the inside of the lens.

### Misses

- This is not a complaint about the goggle, but about how hard it is to find on the Scott-Sports.com website. Instead of being predominantly featured as an exciting new product, the Light Sensitive version is clumped in with the standard frame and lens options. Dig for them, though, as they are worth the search.

### The Verdict

The fact that the product was markedly improved and impressive when we didn't know beforehand that we were riding with something new speak volumes about the performance of the new Light Sensitive lens. We love it!

[scott-sports.com](http://scott-sports.com)



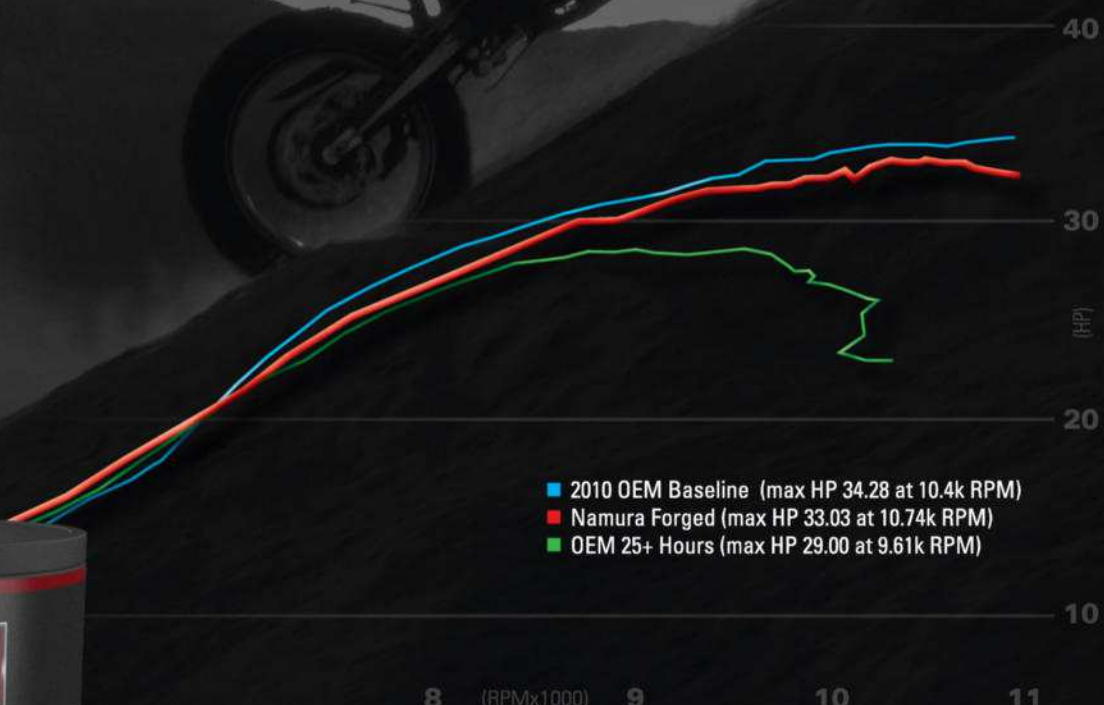
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for complete offering, visit: [namura.com/forged](http://namura.com/forged)



## SDG USA 6-RIB GRIPPER SEAT COVER

Price: \$68.99

### What It Is

SDG Innovations is one of the original players in the gripper seat cover market, and through the years they have developed several different options, including the 6-Rib Gripper, which has become its most popular cover. The three-piece design features six 20mm-wide ribs for extra traction, and the cover is available in 19 color options for every major motorcycle brand made.

### Hits

- We've relied on SDG USA covers for years on our test bikes and can attest to the quality and durability of them. They stay grippy and last longer than the rest.
- Installation is as easy as can be, as the material is pliable and stretchy enough to conform around all of the bends and angles of a seat base.
- The six traction ribs really do make a difference that you can feel while riding. They are greatly appreciated when powering out of corners or up hills, especially on powerful 450s.
- SDG offers optional seat bumps or steps that can be added to your foam before the cover for additional control.
- Even the white covers clean up well when washed with high-quality soap like Maxima's Bio Wash.

### Misses

- Any time vinyl is sewn, the holes from the threads create entry points for water. Because of the multiple seams of the six-rib cover, you should always remove your seat when washing your bike.

### The Verdict

If you're a loyal *TransWorld Motocross* reader, you've probably noticed how often we turn to SDG USA for our project builds. When it comes to great looks, exceptional quality, and long-lasting durability, SDG USA can't be beat.

[sdgusa.com](http://sdgusa.com)

## TAG METALS REBOUND GRIPS

Price: \$12.95

### What It Is

Tag Metals has made a comeback of sorts, as the brand recently relaunched after several years away from the scene. Rebound Grips come in two variations—Standard and Low Profile—and a technical surface pattern that is designed to reduce the impact and vibrations transferred to the rider's hands. The combination of large and small diamonds in the pattern provide cushion and grip, with an overall feel that remains small for less arm pump. Dual-compound construction places a firmer, tougher layer against the bars for durability and a softer compound on the outside for comfort.

### Hits

- Rebound Grips have a unique, spiky look, and they really "grab" at the palms of your gloves. The traction is excellent and allows you to relax your grip on the bars a bit.
- We prefer the smaller overall size of the Rebound Low Profile grip, but the Standard size will definitely appeal to riders with larger hands.
- With a softer compound in the thumb area, riders who usually suffer the dreaded "Yamathumb" will likely ride pain-free with the Rebound Grip.
- The ends of the grip are made of the thicker, tougher-density rubber, and they hold up well in a tip-over crash.

### Misses

- The soft compound of the grip is not as durable as other brands' "soft" compound, but this is because they are extremely soft and comfortable.

### The Verdict

Tag Metals Rebound Grips are a staff favorite, and when the brand vanished a few years ago, we mourned the loss of the Rebound Low Profile grip, especially. If you're constantly in search of a better grip, we recommend you give these a try.

[tagmetalsracing.com](http://tagmetalsracing.com)



# MAXXIS® TIRES

*Adam Campbell*



RIDER: MCGRATH // PHOTO: ADAM CAMPBELL/ACP

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**COMING THIS SUMMER**



## ASV INVENTIONS F4 SERIES PRO MODEL CLUTCH AND BRAKE LEVER PRO PACK

Price: \$189

### What It Is

ASV Inventions is one of several companies that produces high-end aftermarket clutch perches with on-the-fly adjustability, but its products stand out for four reasons. What are those four reasons? First, the parts are forged aluminum rather than billet. The levers themselves feature a folding “un-breakable design” and have an on-the-fly reach adjuster that yields up to four inches of adjustment. Finally, they come with an unconditional four-year warranty. The Pro Pack features a quick-adjust clutch perch and a matching front brake lever with the same reach adjuster.

### Hits

- The new design of the F4 Series levers is much sleeker than the original ASV folding levers, and we like the feel of the lever blades in our fingers.
- The adjustable reach is a godsend for riders with small hands or short fingers, as it really allows you to fine-tune the lever settings.
- The quick-adjust wheel on the perch is easy to operate while riding, whether it's in the air or on the ground.
- The matching front brake lever installs nicely inside the stock rubber dust cover, and we especially appreciate the adjustable reach on the binder side.
- The folding feature of the lever has always proven to be effective at resisting damage in the event of a crash.

### Misses

- The clutch perch comes equipped with Allen-head bolts. We prefer familiar 8mm head bolts.

### The Verdict

Thanks to the unconditional four-year warranty, these could very well be the last set of levers you ever have to buy for your bike. And thanks to the sleek new design of the F4 levers and clutch perch, you'll be happy with the look, fit, and feel, too.

[asvinventions.com](http://asvinventions.com)

## MAXXIS MAXXCROSS SI

Price: Front (80/100-21) \$117; Rear (120/100-18) \$135

### What It Is

The Maxxis Maxxcross SI tire is a soft- to intermediate-terrain tire that was developed for off-road racing. However, in the right track conditions, the SI has found great popularity in motocross applications, too. The tread features an open-lug design with an aggressive pattern. The side lugs feature anti-flex bridges for improved straight-line acceleration and great cornering grip. Jeremy McGrath has been running Maxxis tires on his motocross bikes, thanks to the partnership he has with the brand on his truck racing program, and he's also helped it develop some new tires that are coming soon.

### Hits

- Though the SI is designated as a soft- to medium-terrain tire, we've found that it enjoys consistent, predictable traction in most motocross track applications.
- The rear SI has a nice, controllable feeling when sliding through corners under acceleration, as the knobs maintain good grip without giving way.
- Tire life has proven to be above average, even when racing at tracks with concrete starting pads. We've gotten as many as three races and multiple practice days out of a set on a 450cc test bike. This says a lot for a softer tire.
- The sidewalls of a Maxxis tire are traditionally a bit stiffer than some of their Japanese competitors. That said, you can run a standard 12 psi with confidence that the rear tire will not roll under hard side acceleration or pinch flat in square-edged impacts.

### Misses

- As much as we enjoy the rear SI tire, the front SI only works equally well in the soft- to intermediate-terrain conditions it is designed for. The tire has a harder feel that loses grip on drier, harder conditions.
- Thanks to the firmer sidewalls, these tires are a bit tougher to install and remove. We recommend doing so after leaving them in the sun to soften up.

### The Verdict

Maxxis dirt bike tires deliver great performance at reasonable prices. We are really impressed with the feel and durability of the Maxxcross SI.

[maxxistire.com](http://maxxistire.com)



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**ALTA**  
MOTORS

## 2018 YAMAHA YZ65

■ By and large, Japanese mini bike technology hasn't changed for decades. In fact, not since the introduction of the revamped Kawasaki KX85 in 2014 has there been any significant attention paid to the scaled-down machines. KTM and Husqvarna, meanwhile, have continued to develop their small-bore bikes and, as a result, have gained a massive market share in all levels of off-road motorcycling. Austrian dominance in the 65 division is widespread especially, as the outdated Kawasaki KX65 was for years the only option aside from the American-made Cobra CX65. It's been over three decades since Yamaha has produced its YZ60, and to say that the all-new 2018 Yamaha YZ65 was long overdue and highly anticipated would be an understatement. Designed from the ground up as a completely new machine, the YZ65 bridges the gap between the beloved PW50 that so many riders have started on and the popular YZ85. This new machine allows consumers the potential to stay on Yamahas throughout their motorcycling life span.

**"IT TURNS VERY WELL,  
AND IT WAS EASY  
TO CHOOSE WHERE  
I WANTED TO GO  
BECAUSE THE BIKE  
DOES EXACTLY WHAT  
YOU WANT IT TO."**

### ALL NEW

At the heart of the little blue bike is a 65cc two-stroke powerplant that's equipped with a six-speed transmission, a digital ignition, and reed-valve induction. Fuel is fed to the cylinder via a Keihin PWK28 carburetor. To ensure the broadest, most usable powerband possible, the YPVS power valve system ensures maximum torque at all rpms. While the YZ65 isn't the only machine in the 65 class that's equipped with a power valve, its system is sensitive to centrifugal force inside the engine, and opens and closes the variable exhaust port according to

engine rpm speed. The KTM 65 SX system, for comparison's sake, is opened pneumatically by exhaust gases as they exit the cylinder. Though lighter in overall weight, that type of system is far more sensitive to exhaust system changes and cylinder modifications, and must be fine-tuned after all engine modifications to maintain its performance.

The steel frame is completely new and has no likeness of the old '83 YZ60. Rather, the geometry is aggressive and modern, and the subframe is a removable aluminum unit, just like those found on the full-sized YZ and YZF lineups. Most impressive about the chassis, however, is the premium Kayaba suspension that graces both ends of the YZ65. The 36mm KYB spring fork and rear shock feature full compression and rebound adjustability—features that are sometimes limited to save costs on minis. Other nice touches are the big-bike style chain adjusters found at the back of the bike's aluminum swingarm. No snail or bolt-style adjusters here!

Finishing details on the YZ65 include an oversized tapered aluminum handlebar, large hydraulic disc brakes on both the front and rear, and Maxxis Maxxcross SI soft-to-intermediate terrain tires. Visually, the Yamaha YZ65 is stunning, with big-bike looks proportionately scaled down to size.





#### ON THE TRACK

A modest stab at the kickstarter is all it takes to fire up the YZ65, and even the smallest rider should be able to bring the bike to life with ease. Our adult observations of the machine after ripping it around the pits were that it is definitely designed to pack a punch and is geared toward the racing segment of the 65 class. This is in contrast to the other Japanese entry in the 65 class, which is far from competitive and suited best for entry-level riders. Simply put, the Yamaha is built to win. Power is as broad as you could ever expect it to be from a small-bore two-stroke engine. The YZ65 revs high and hard in each gear before reaching the point where more noise than power is being generated.

Our test rider is relatively new to the 65 class and has less than a year on a manual-shift mini under his belt, but he took to the YZ65 with ease and looked quite at home on it after a few shake-

down laps. Watching him zip around the track, it was clear that he was comfortable with the powerband from the get-go, and after his first moto he commented that the engine felt powerful, but easy to control. Our test bike was jetted ideally as delivered, as the bike never loaded up and consistently blew thin, light-blue smoke out of its silencer.

The suspension was impressive for our little guy in the “bumpy areas” of the track, as he said that he felt right at home everywhere on the track, but especially when landing from jumps. Watching him negotiate the minimal braking and acceleration chop that formed at the track during the press launch of the new machine, the YZ65 appeared to be well-balanced and appropriately sprung for a rider of his weight, which is definitely on the lighter side of the target weight range. Watching older, larger, and faster riders in action, the bike exhibited the same level,

controlled ride. Having a full spectrum of compression and rebound adjustments on the fork and shock is a valuable asset to the little YZ, as it allows the machine to be fine-tuned for a broad range of riders.

The fit and finish of the Yamaha YZ65 is impressive, and it's obvious that it is cut from the same cloth as the rest of the YZ and YZF lineup. Durability is oftentimes a weak point with scaled-down machines, but the 65 appears to be every bit as sturdy as you'd hope a \$4,600 machine would be.

Because it is labeled a 2018 machine, the new Yamaha YZ65 is eligible for this summer's AMA Amateur Nationals at Loretta Lynn's and more, and they are already on Yamaha dealership floors across the country. We're excited to see how this new player in the game fares, and we're predicting that there will be quite a few bLU cRU riders holding number-one plates in the coming months.



## RIDER IMPRESSION



**Skyley Casella**

**Age: 9**

**Height/Weight: 4'1"/50 lbs.**

**Ability: Novice**

■ I made the switch to a 65 from a 50 last year, and my normal bike is a KTM 65 SX. I was very excited to test the all-new Yamaha YZ65 and see how it compares to my personal bike, and it was really cool to see how a different bike felt. I'm on the smaller side, so my dad had to cut the seat down on my bike so that I could touch the ground. When I first got on the YZ65 it was a little scary because I couldn't touch the ground, but it was awesome once I got going. The YZ65 power was very strong, and it was easy to ride the bike without it getting out of control. The power is great, but it is also easy to use because it always feels like it has good hit. Sometimes my bike bogs in tight corners, but the Yamaha was easy to keep going. Overall it is very fast! It is also easy to start.

I like the way the YZ65 goes around the track. It turns very well, and it was easy to choose where I wanted to go because the bike does exactly what you want it to. The suspension felt a little bumpy for me at first, but I think that was because I was used to my own bike with the lower seat. After some laps to get used to the bike, it felt great and I really liked the way it landed from jumps.

The thing I like most about the bike is the way it looks. The YZ65 looks like the big YZs that Ryan Villopoto and Cooper Webb ride. Now that's cool!

## 2018 YAMAHA YZ65

**Price: \$4,599**

**Engine Type: 65cc liquid-cooled two-stroke; reed-valve inducted**

**Bore x Stroke: 43.5 mm x 43.6 mm**

**Compression Ratio: 8.1 - 9.1:1**

**Fuel Delivery: Keihin PWK28 carburetor**

**Transmission: Six-speed; multiplate wet clutch**

**Final Drive: 420 chain**

**Suspension/front: 36mm Kayaba coil spring, adjustable compression & rebound damping; 8.5-inch travel**

**Suspension/rear: Single shock, adjustable compression and rebound damping; 10.6-inch travel**

**Front brake: 198mm hydraulic disc**

**Rear brake 190mm hydraulic disc**

**Front tire: 60/100-14 Maxxis Maxxcross SI**

**Rear tire: 80/100-12 Maxxis Maxxcross SI**

**Seat height: 29.5 inches**

**Wheelbase: 45 inches**

**Ground clearance: 10.5 inches**

**Fuel Capacity: .9 gallons**

**Dry Weight: 128 pounds**







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Performance Products

# FEELING THE HEAT HANDLING PRESSURE W/ KYLE PETERS

■ As racing enthusiasts, we're constantly hearing the pros talk about hitting their marks or lines perfectly throughout a race. This is even during their midweek motos as evidenced by the single, perfect line carved into private test tracks. There's obviously some importance behind hitting your marks consistently. In order to do so, a rider's undivided attention is needed to complete this task. As we all know, however, it can be a little challenging at times to remain completely focused, especially if you're starting to feel pressure from the riders behind you.

"It's a cat-and-mouse game, for sure, and you have to be fully aware of who and what is around you while trying to keep your full attention on hitting your marks, which is obviously not a simple thing to do," AutoTrader/Yoshimura/Suzuki Factory Racing Team's Kyle Peters said. "These days, it seems like there's literally no room for error, because as soon as you mess up someone is right behind you ready to capitalize on your mistake." So just what do you do when you find yourself making mistakes because your concentration is lacking? We sat down with Peters and asked him to give us a few pointers on how to stay composed when you're feeling the pressure from the riders behind you.

## Focus on yourself

*If someone is really close behind me during a race, my plan is simple: I just try to pretend that they aren't there. Obviously, you don't want to go blind to the fact that they're right on you, but you can't focus all of your attention on them. I try to hit my marks as efficiently as I can because that's essentially the most effective way for me to go my fastest to hopefully outrun the other riders behind me. If possible, putting a gap between you and the riders behind you is one of the most beneficial things you can do for yourself, as you can then focus solely on yourself. Building that gap between you and them will allow you to focus more on hitting your lines consistently without having to worry about the other riders sneaking up the inside of you. This way, you can ride your own race!*

## Be aware

*Being aware of who and what's around you is key. This primarily comes into play when lapped riders come into the equation, because now you have to*

*pass other riders while at the same time trying not to get passed. Getting through the lapped traffic as quickly as possible without any hang-ups is major! Getting hung up on lappers is only allowing the faster guys behind you to close in. There will always be instances, though, when you reach lapped traffic amidst a heated battle with another rider, so in this case knowing who is around you will help you find a way through the chaos. Race forward, but be aware of your competitors behind you. If another rider is close behind without you knowing it, there's a chance you can get taken out, but if you know the rider behind you is about to pull up next to you, lock up the brakes and cut back underneath them to keep the position. That pass back into position can be discouraging for them if they've been working for a while to get past you.*

## Feel the pressure

*When a rider is really close behind me and they've even managed to show me a wheel here and there, it's time to regroup. Try to figure out where they're*



making up time on you by listening to how close they are at different points on the track. Anticipating your competitor's next move is key because then you can adjust your lines accordingly to shut down the other rider's potential pass. If you're really feeling the heat, though, then it's time to start riding a little more defensively. Guard the insides and ride a wide bike, but still focus forward! If you happen to get passed, though, don't panic and take a deep breath. Latch on to the rider if possible so you don't lose too much ground, and pay attention to their lines.

#### **Anticipate the next move**

Knowing your next move, as well as your competitor's is a major contributor in the outcome the battle. For example, if there's a big, open bowl corner and the rider behind you has been hot on your heels for a few laps, they're likely sizing up the pass on you at that point on the track. A wise decision would be to block the inside completely, ultimately eliminating the potential pass

on you. Keep in mind, though, that you still need to maintain your speed, so again, being aware of your surroundings and thinking ahead will help you figure out your next move through the next upcoming sections.

#### **Counter the pass**

If a rider has been hounding you for a few laps, chances are they've been exerting a lot more energy looking for a way to get around you, so you have that to your advantage. However, if they're still able to pull alongside or even in front of you, it's obviously time to hang it out a little more to regain the position as quickly as possible. Establishing to the other riders that it's going to take a lot of effort to get around you is a huge advantage! Sometimes even riding a lap or two behind your competitor to check out their lines can be extremely helpful in looking for faster lines or even a way to get back around them, so don't panic or give up once you've been passed. Take a deep breath, watch your competitor's lines, and focus forward! ❤️

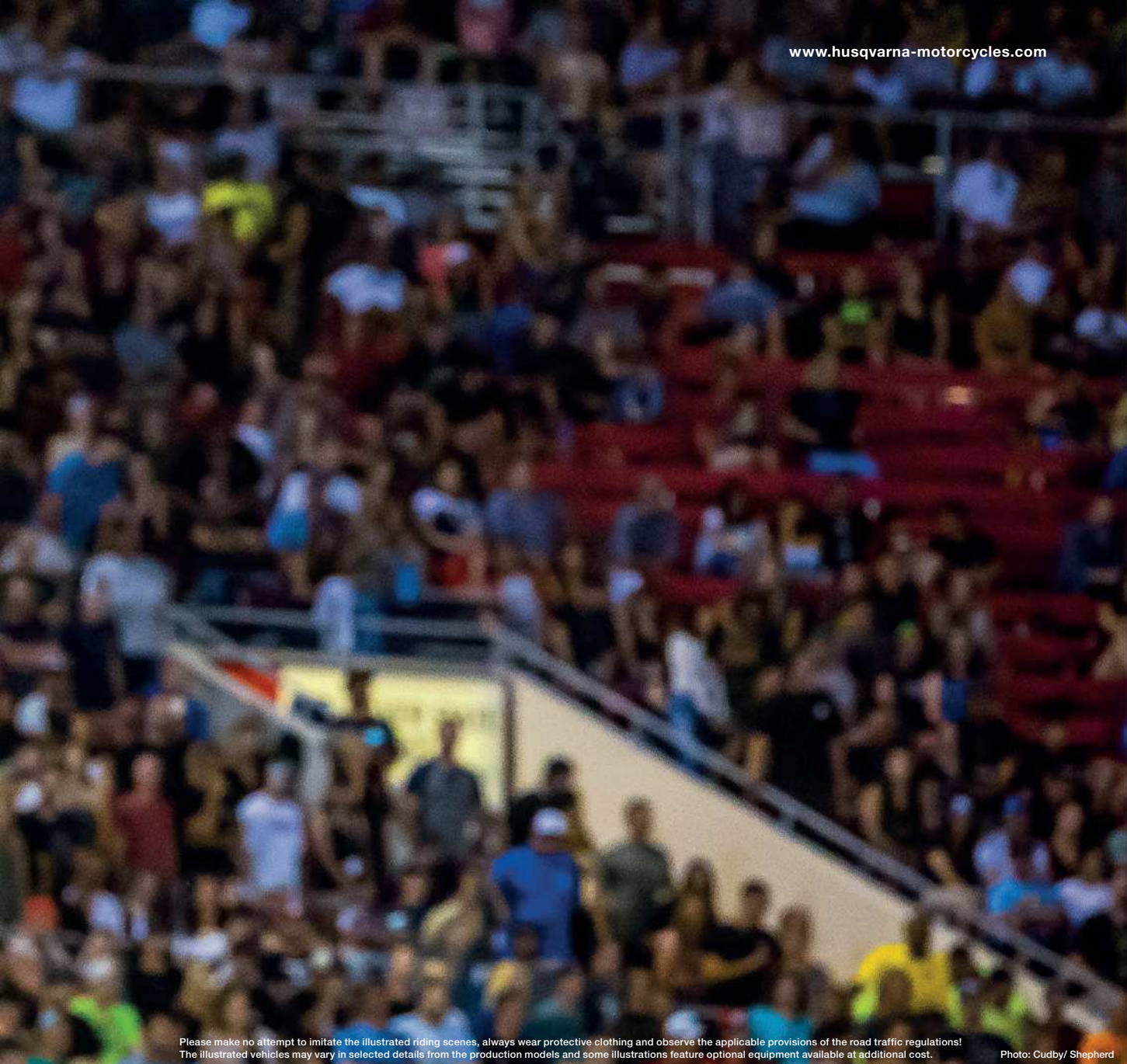
PIONEERING SINCE 1903



# REACHING NEW HEIGHTS

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Please make no attempt to imitate the illustrated riding scenes, always wear protective clothing and observe the applicable provisions of the road traffic regulations! The illustrated vehicles may vary in selected details from the production models and some illustrations feature optional equipment available at additional cost.

Photo: Cudby/ Shepherd



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# KAWASAKI STRIKES BACK

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■ Around the world, KTM and Husqvarna have been climbing the charts when it comes to motocross market share. With their aggressive development schedule, clever homologation and marketing scheme with their Factory Edition machines, and class-leading innovations like electric starters and hydraulic clutch systems, the European manufacturers have gone from being the oddballs of the dirt bike world to two of the most popular choices out there.

In contrast, Japanese manufacturers have more or less stuck to the three-year model cycle, debuting all-new machines in year one and mildly refining them in years two and three—though some, like Suzuki, have made the same basic model last

up to a decade! This conservative approach has always worked for the Japanese in the past, and it's not likely the cycle will change anytime soon, as motocross machines are among the minority for all four when it comes to motorcycle and ATV unit sales. In contrast, KTM and Husqvarna only dip a toe in other segments beyond dirt bikes.

This year's annual trip to Japan for our Japan Spy Photo feature yielded only one big fish, but rumors of two other all-new machines on the horizon promise to make 2019 an exciting model year for three of the Big Four. The exciting new Kawasaki KX450F was first of these machines to be spotted at a local Japanese race a few weeks before the All Japan National MX Championship



‘19 SPY  
PHOTOS

series opener at Kyushu Motorsports Park. The team understandably wanted to give the all-new machine a shakedown before the first major race of the year. Photos of the bikes on social media piqued our interest, and we couldn't wait to see it in Kumamoto. Ironically, the Kawasaki team kept the bike hidden as best it could with opaque canopy walls and off-limit pit areas. Keeping the bike top secret, of course, was impossible in the staging areas and on the track during the race, and details about the bike were easy to come by as well, thanks to some inside sources.

Due to the economics associated with racing and low-participation levels in Japan, full-factory efforts in both classes are fielded only by Honda,

with defending IA1 Champion Kei Yamamoto and 11-time IA1 Champion Akira Narita aboard CRF450Rs, and former IA2 Champion Chihiro Notsuka aboard a CRF250R. Kawasaki's factory effort is limited to the IA1 class with Makoto Ogata and Hiroaki Arai racing pre-production 2019 KX450Fs, while neither Suzuki or Yamaha have official factory teams in either class for 2018. Factory machines are loaned out to satellite SBE Racing Suzuki and FDS Yamaha squads in the 450 class, but there is currently no factory machinery in the 250 division other than Notsuka's Honda. That said, there was no opportunity at Kyushu to see the 2019 Suzuki RM-Z250 or Yamaha YZ250F, both of which are said to receive

major overhauls that mirror those of their current 450-class counterparts.

The vibe at a Japanese National is distinctively different than a US MX National. The two-day program hosts five different championships. In addition to the IA1 and IA2 premier classes, an IB Open (Open Intermediate), LMX (Ladies), and CX (PeeWee) races are also run. While the pros qualify on Saturday and race two motos on Sunday, the support classes race one of their motos on each day.

**BY DONN MAEDA**





(Left) Hiroaki Arai is a series veteran who has spent his entire professional career in the IA1 class aboard factory Kawasakis. Outfitted with factory Showa suspension, his bike is the best representation of what's to come in 2019. (Below) Eliminating the kickstarter mechanism in 2019 called for all-new engine cases. We are told that the majority of the powerplant changes, however, lie in the cylinder head and valve train. (Bottom) The Kawasaki KX450F will become the first Japanese motocross bike to come equipped with a hydraulic clutch. While the KTM and Husqvarna bikes use Brembo and Magura hydraulic parts, the Kawasaki relies on Nissin, the same Japanese manufacturer that supplies its brake parts.

## KAWASAKI

The pre-production 2019 Kawasaki KX450Fs piloted by Ogata and Arai were the most visually stimulating machines we've seen out of the Kawasaki Team Green effort in years. In the past, most of the manufacturers—including Kawasaki—have tried to race machines that looked as close to standard as possible. Though oftentimes the exhaust systems are factory-tuned units, they are made to look like the stock systems that are found on the dealership floor. Other parts like triple clamps, foot pegs, and other controls that are usually replaced with special parts in AMA and FIM racing are often left stock in Japan.

This year's Kawasakis were outfitted with Xtrig ROCS triple clamps, Pro Circuit exhaust systems, and graphics kits that differed radically from the standard-themed designs of the past, but the real eye candy were the all-new chassis, engine, and bodywork of the completely revised machines. We're told that the 2019 production machine will come equipped with Showa suspension packages—including a mechanical spring fork—but at the highest levels of racing in Japan, team riders are given their choice of what suspension packages they run. Ogata's bike was equipped with a works Kayaba AOS spring fork and matching shock, while Arai's machine had factory Showa components on both ends.



The new chassis features a new swingarm pivot location for a more compliant rear suspension feel. Furthermore, we're told that the change in location will solve the age-old Kawasaki problem of the chain sawing through the chain guide and swingarm buffer pad. Changes in rigidity throughout the frame are to be expected, all with the goal of greater comfort and control in mind. The biggest changes in the engine—other than the electric start and hydraulic clutch—are in the

cylinder head and valve train. New internal parts and settings are said to give the KX big, yet usable, new power.

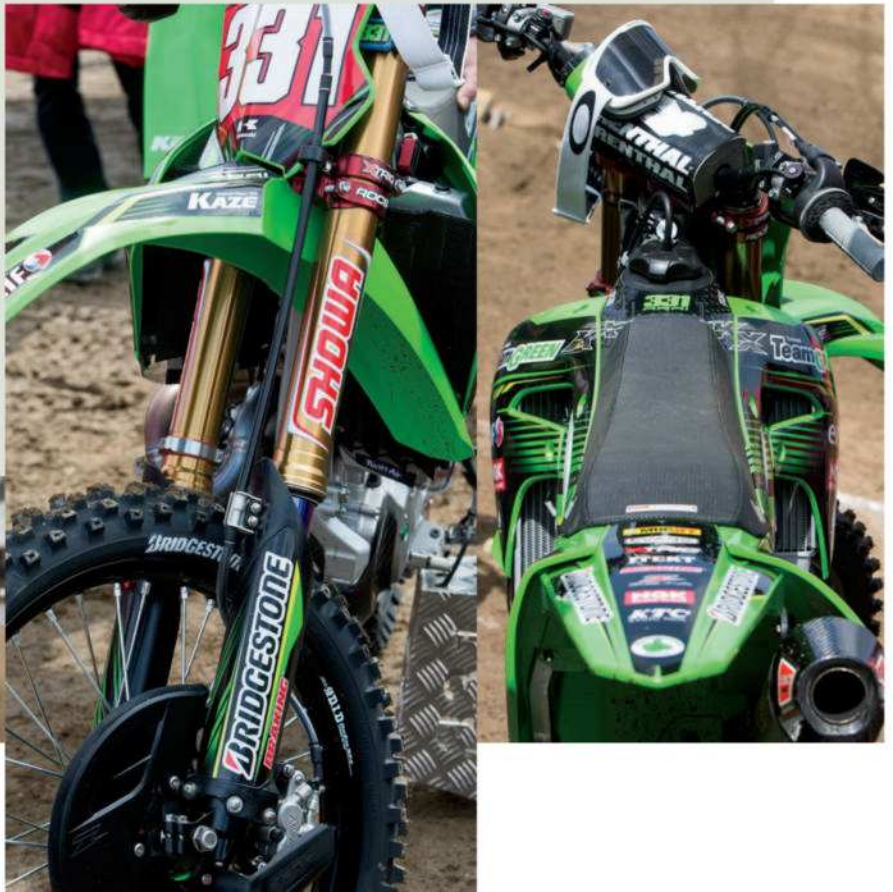
At Kyushu, both Kawasaki pilots ran at the front of the pack. Ogata challenged for the lead early in race one but crashed out of contention, then came back to finish second in the final race of the day after starting in the middle of the pack. Arai, meanwhile, landed on the second step of the podium with consistent 3-3 scores.





(Top Left and Right) With the inclusion of an electric starter system, the battery is mounted beneath the seat, at the top of the airbox. The left side panel is incorporated into the airbox itself and is removed for access to the air filter. It is interesting to note that only the left side panel features a vent for air to enter, as the right side of the bike is completely sealed. (Bottom, Left) We snapped this as the bike was being wheeled to the wash area. In this shot, you can see the mounting location of the battery beneath the seat at the top of the airbox.

(Below) New shock linkage ratios and a new Showa shock, developed in conjunction with the new frame and swing-arm. (Center) Arai's factory Showa fork is of the air/mechanical spring hybrid variety, much like the Monster Energy/Pro Circuit/Kawasaki team runs in the United States. The production machine, however, will come equipped with Showa's latest conventional spring fork, which features a new larger-diameter cartridge. (Right) The most recent generation KX450F was slimmed down considerably, and the new machine appears to maintain the svelte feel between the rider's legs.





## HONDA

While 11-time All Japan Champion Narita piloted what he told us was a standard chassis with a factory engine, defending number-one-plate holder Yamamoto raced a slightly different machine that boasted a pre-production 2019 chassis. We're told that the new frame and swingarm feature changes that are undetectable to the eye but have a distinctly different feel on the track, with a more compliant, comfortable ride being the end result. All of the engine mounts and hangers on the machine were either different thicknesses for rigidity or drilled for flex. The engine, meanwhile, was a full works powerplant, boasting magnesium cases and a factory valve train.

After earning the 2016 IAA Championship, Chihiro Notsuka was set to contest the FIM MX2 World Championship Series for Team HRC in '17, but he suffered serious injuries including broken vertebrae in his back and a dislocated hip at round two in Argentina and saw his season cut short. Notsuka returns to the factory Honda team in Japan this season and finished second overall at Kyushu on what we were told was a standard machine with some small factory upgrades, most notably works Showa suspension and HRC engine modifications.



## YAMAHA

For the second time in 20 years, Yamaha placed its factory race team on hiatus. The first was following a test-day tragedy that left Suzuki rider Cloud Toda paralyzed and a Team Yamaha crew member dead, and this most current closure after the team's star rider Yu Hirata was arrested late last year for alleged domestic violence. Hirata retired from racing immediately afterward, leaving the team with no realistic rider options.

At Kyushu, a single factory Yamaha YZ450F could be found under the Team FDS Yamaha tent, piloted by series veteran Takashi Okano. A factory engine with magnesium cases, works Kayaba suspension, an aluminum fuel tank and an Akrapovic exhaust are the obvious differences. We're told that no major changes are in store for the bike in '19, as it was just completely overhauled this year. We were interested to see the combination of a billet aluminum top triple clamp with what appeared to be a blue-anodized OEM lower clamp on Okano's machine.



## SUZUKI

In late 2017, Suzuki announced that it would suspend its MXGP and All Japan National MX racing efforts, and that left its two factory riders—Yohei Kojima and Kouichi Fukuya—without rides for this season. While Kojima formed his own privateer Honda effort with Bells Racing, Fukuya remained on a Suzuki RM-Z450 with the SBE Racing Suzuki team. Suzuki supplied Fukuya with what appears to be a very similar setup to the one he raced last season, with the exception of a standard cable-actuated clutch; last year, his factory bike was outfitted with a hydraulic unit. As they traditionally are in Japan, the RM-Z450 was decked out with lots of trick factory and aftermarket parts—lots of carbon fiber and titanium, works Kayaba suspension, Akrapovic exhaust, and a highly polished frame. One part that we noticed on almost every top race machine in Japan was ISA Sprockets. Made in Japan, they are held in very high regard for their strength, light weight, and durability. Sources tell us that electric start is not on the schedule for '19.





## THE RETURN OF THE SHOGUN

At 38 years old, 11-time All Japan IA1 Champion Akira Narita is the oldest top contender in the sport around the globe. The 2017 season was a forgettable one for the racer from Sendai, Japan, as he won only a single moto all year long and was stripped of his number-one plate by his Honda teammate Kei Yamamoto, who returned to Japan after a multi-year stint on the MXGP circuit. Bad luck and an obvious lack of fitness kept Narita off the podium, and many wondered if his stranglehold on Japanese motocross had finally come to an end.

Narita attacked the off-season, though, training on a mountain bike in SoCal and working out hard when he returned to Japan in the weeks leading up to the series kickoff at Kyushu, and the results were apparent. After battling with Yamamoto early in race one, Narita eventually pulled away and scored a very emotional win. In addition to returning to the top step of the podium and proving that he's not done yet, the moto win was the 150th of Narita's illustrious career. "I was so nervous last night," Narita admitted. "I want to win a 12th championship, but last year was very hard for me. I trained very hard to give this year my strongest effort."

A poor start in the second race of the day didn't deter Narita's regained confidence; the Honda rider sliced through the pack quickly and took over the lead on the second lap. Though Kawasaki's Ogata closed in at the very end of the moto, Narita crossed the finish line with room to spare and served notice that he is the rider to beat in 2018. 🍀





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- \*INCREASED REED PETAL LIFE DUE TO LESS STRESS ON REED PETALS
- \*UNMATCHED EFFICIENCY DUE TO DOUBLE THE REED TIP SURFACE



## ONCE A YEAR, THE MTA DISTRIBUTING TWO-STROKE WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS FILL THE AIR WITH THE SWEET SMELL OF PREMIX

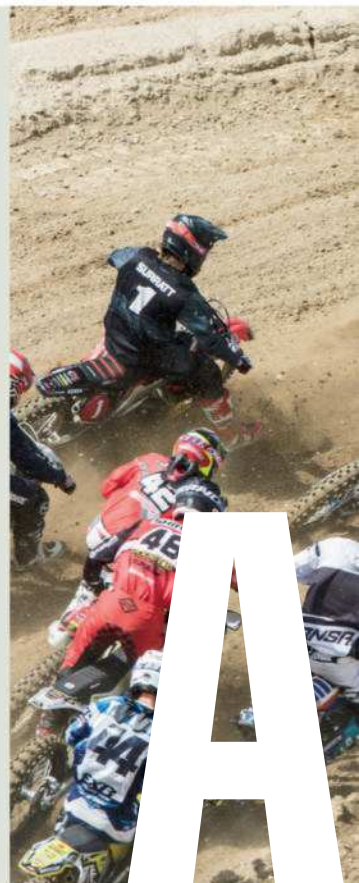
■ Back in the day, the White Brothers Four-Stroke World Championship was the most fun one-off event on the calendar, and racers showed up by the hundreds with wild creations, converted off-road bikes, and even vintage machines to thump around the track for an exclusive day of four-stroke fun. These days the tables have turned and high-performance four-strokes have taken over the sport at the highest levels, while the MTA Distributing Two-Stroke World Championships have become the most unique day of fun in SoCal. This year the event—now in its ninth year—attracted over 300 entries.

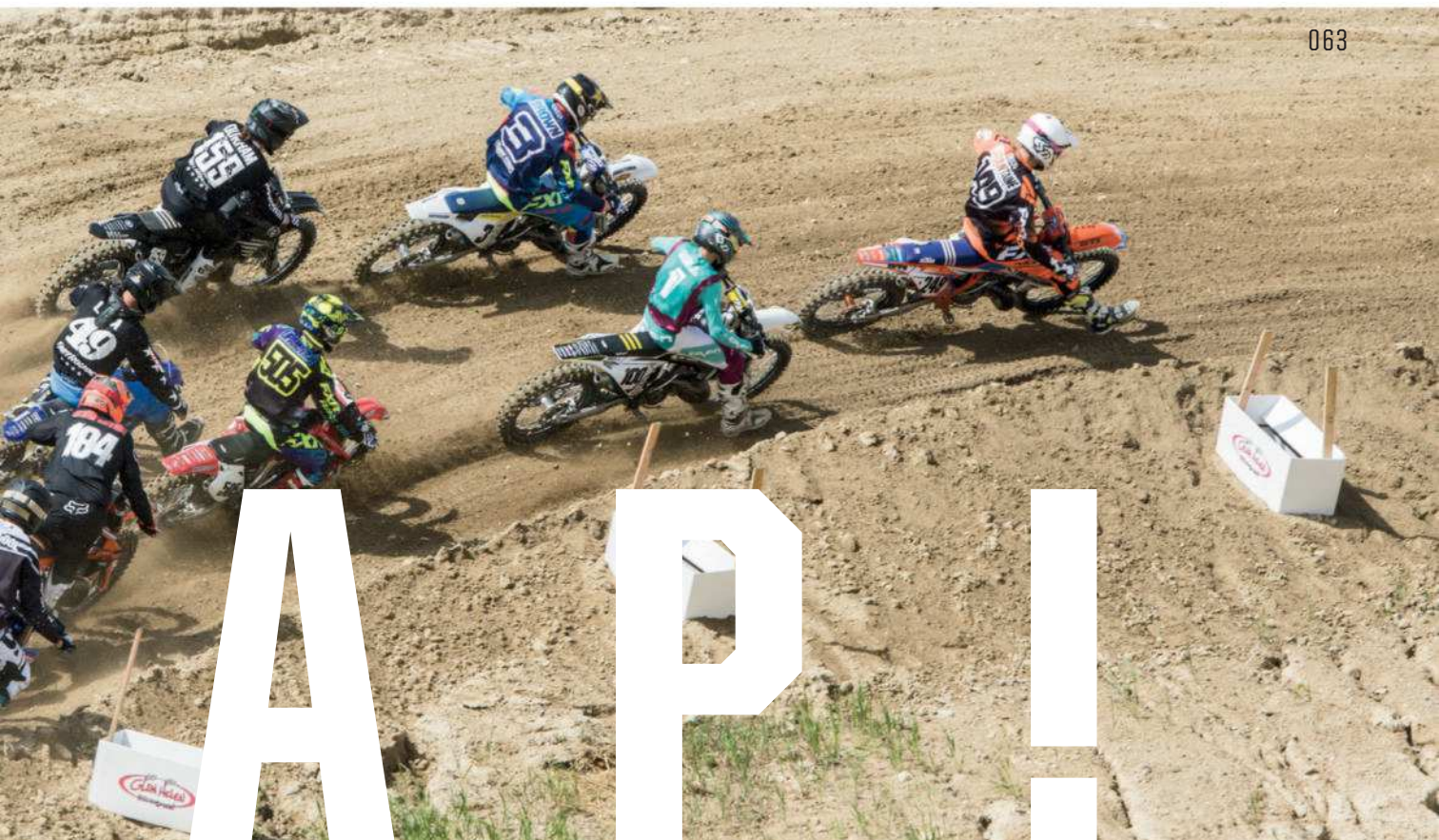
“Two-strokes are the most affordable way for someone to become involved in motocross riding and racing, and we’ve run this event for nine years now to get people pumped up about two-strokes,” MTA’s Jeff Laird said. “It’s definitely one of the most looked-forward-to races of the year, and it’s great to see people putting together bikes or restoring old ones just so they can come out and race.”

Classes for riders of all skill levels, displacement, and age are featured, but the big daddy of the day was the TCX Boot Open Pro class. The class drew a nearly full gate of 37 two-strokes. Last year, NutUp’s Ryan Surratt won the overall aboard his famous “Craigslit Killer” Honda CR250R that he picked up for a song on the online classified website, and he returned this year aboard the same machine with big number-ones on the plates. Sadly, mechanical woes and a simply tired machine held him to fourth on the day with 3-6 moto scores, and the second-generation racer vowed to return next year with a bike that wasn’t a decade old.

BY DONN MAEDA  
PHOTOS BY CASEY DAVIS

(Top Right) *TransWorld Motocross* test rider Tallon LaFontaine pulled a massive holeshot at the start of the first TCX Boot Open Pro class moto aboard our KTM 250 SX test bike, which was massaged by the crew at Bill’s Pipes. LaFontaine was third overall. (Right) Robbie Wage-man successfully defended his 125cc class championship aboard a *Dirt Bike Magazine* KTM 125 SX.





## RESULTS

### TCX BOOT OPEN PRO

1. ZACH BELL (HUS)
2. DARRYN DURHAM (YAM)
3. TALLON LAFOUNTAINE (KTM)
4. RYAN SURRATT (HON)
5. RICHARD TAYLOR JR. (SUZ)
6. DALTON SHIREY (HON)
7. DENNIS STAPLETON (KTM)
8. DOUG DUBACH (YAM)
9. JUSTIN JONES (HON)
10. BEAU BARON (HON)
11. BRIAN MEDEIROS (KTM)
12. COLLIN SHINER (YAM)
13. JEREMY MCCOOL (YAM)
14. NICK SCHMIDT (YAM)
15. DYLAN KAPPELER (HON)
16. MATTHEW CERAMI (YAM)
17. ARIK SWAN (HON)
18. SEAN LIPANOVICH (HON)
19. BRIAN BEGIN (YAM)
20. MIKE BAKER (KAW)

### 125 PRO

1. ROBBIE WAGEMAN (KTM)
2. CARSON CARR (KTM)
3. SEAN BORKENHAGEN (KAW)
4. COLTON AECK (YAM)
5. BROCK SHOEMAKER (YAM)
6. ROBBY SCHOTT (YAM)
7. MITCH ANDERSON (YAM)
8. BRIAN MEDEIROS (KTM)
9. BRENT ROUSE (HON)
10. JAKE OSBORNE (HON)

Turning in a perfect 1-1 score and earning the championship was 3 Brothers STI Husqvarna rider Zach Bell, the former amateur motocross phenom who retired from professional motocross and Supercross some years ago due to multiple injuries. Since returning to racing, Bell has emerged a dominant off-road competitor, but he still possesses superior speed on a moto track. While Bell won the first go-round with a healthy cushion aboard his Husqvarna TC 250, the second moto and overall wins were not secured until the very last corner. Fasthouse/The Viewing rider Darryn Durham finished a distant second in the opening moto, and holeshot and led 99 percent of the second race aboard his Yamaha YZ250. After hounding Durham throughout the closing laps of the race, Bell made the right choice in the dual-lane section of the track before the finish line and scored a surprising, albeit popular, win. Longtime *TransWorld Motocross* test rider Tallon LaFountaine earned third overall aboard a *TWMX* KTM 250 SX test bike, which was built up for the contest by the crew at Bill's Pipes. A contracted Suzuki rider for the H.E.P. Suzuki Supercross team, LaFountaine was granted permission to race the event aboard a KTM by Suzuki, as they do not currently manufacture a two-stroke motocross bike.

Though not as packed as the TCX Boot Open Pro class, the 125 Pro division got the crowd to come watch the action, too. Their high-revving exhaust notes filled the air with nostalgia of years gone by. As he did last year, *Dirt Bike Magazine's* Robbie Wageman dominated the action by racing to a pair of uncontested wins aboard a very fast KTM 125 SX. Carson Carr raced a similar machine to second, while Kawasaki R&D's Sean Borkenhagen restored a 2006 Kawasaki KX125 specifically for this race and nabbed the final spot on the podium.

If you're a two-stroke diehard or have one stored away in your garage, do yourself a favor and make a point to fire it up and join in on the fun at next year's race. 2019 will be the 10th anniversary of the MTA Distributing Two-Stroke World Championships, so you never know what you might see!



(Above) Tallon LaFountaine earned third overall aboard our KTM 250 SX test bike. (Below) Zach Bell (100) passed Darryn Durham (159) in the last corner of the final race to secure the TCX Boots Open Pro Championship.



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# THE FUTURE OF MOTOCROSS HAS ARRIVED

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## TRANSWORLD MOTOCROSS & BILL'S PIPES GO RACING

■ At races like the MTA Distributing Two-Stroke World Championships, there's always a lot of bench racing going on in the pits centered around the "What if four-strokes had never taken over" subject. Would the racing be closer? Would more people be able to afford to join in on the fun? Would the severity of today's injuries be less intense? Just how good could a bike be if new technology was still being developed for two-strokes?

Well, we can't do better than speculate on all but one of the answers to those questions. One has to look no further than the 2018 KTM 250 SX to see just how far two-strokes have come. While Yamaha remains the only Japanese manufacturer to produce full-sized two-strokes, the YZ line has received little more than cosmetic updates since the mid-2000s. The KTM 250 SX, meanwhile, has continued to evolve and is hands down the best two-stroke dirt bike ever produced. Equipped with a counterbalancer, the 250 SX powerplant doesn't vibrate like the machines many of us grew up on, and its powerband leaves little to be desired, anywhere.

Still, our friends at Bill's Pipes are never content to let a good thing be, and like clockwork, we got a call from the Corona, California-based shop a few weeks before the race. Our KTM 250 SX would be the machine, and our longtime test rider Tallon LaFontaine gained permission from Suzuki to race another brand, as they do not pro-

duce a current option. Two weeks before the gate dropped, Bill's motorman, Jeff Springman, tore into the SX powerplant and fired his porting tool up. "To be honest, KTM never stopped development of its two-stroke program, so the 250 SX is pretty darned good," Springman said. "We got about four more horsepower out of the bike and improved the delivery throughout the curve, but it was little gains here and there, nothing massive like in the glory days."

In addition to porting the cylinder and milling the head, Springman added a Moto Tassinari VForce4 reed valve and a Boyesen SuperCooler, re-jetted the carburetor to run on VP Racing Fuels MRX02, and finished the project with a Bill's Pipes Cone Look Pipe and an MX02 Carbon Fiber Silencer. LaFontaine added his personal WP Cone Valve Fork and Trax Shock and Mika Metals handlebars, chain, and sprockets; and Factory Effex whipped up a custom set of graphics.

There was no question about the power of the Bill's Pipes engine, as LaFontaine pulled a massive holeshot in the first moto and led several laps on his way to third overall. "The engine was amazing," LaFontaine said regarding the Bill's Pipes motor mods. "I rode the bike in stock condition and was very impressed, but modified, it had more everywhere! It remained easy to ride, though, which is important because everyone knows it takes more energy to race a two-stroke."

Needless to say, we can't wait for next year! 🍷



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# WORTH THE WAIT

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**AT AN AGE WHEN MOST RACERS ARE READY  
TO CALL IT A CAREER, JUSTIN BRAYTON HAS  
FOUND NEW FOCUS & DETERMINATION.**

■ Justin Brayton almost ended his professional racing career two years ago. Burned out by the year-round workload that came with contesting the Monster Energy Supercross Series, the Lucas Oil Pro Motocross Championship, and other events around the world, the veteran racer knew that a change was necessary if he were to continue racing any longer. “The last few years of doing the full season, it seemed like I would always have some injuries late in the outdoor season. After a few years of that, I wondered why it was happening and why I wasn’t excited late in the year to go train or race,” Brayton said. “Then Supercross would roll around and I would have so much fun and would love riding again.” Determined to stay on the starting line, Brayton worked out a unique program that allowed him to race on his terms aboard competitive equipment. This move has not only added years to the veteran’s career, but has allowed him to reach his full potential at age 34.

The timing of Brayton deciding to only race Supercross worked out perfectly with American Honda’s plans in 2017. The Japanese brand knew that it would benefit from more red bikes on the racetrack, especially during their first year with a then all-new CRF450R model, and they wanted to support an existing 450-class team. The rider and brand had an existing relationship from his previous time with the factory team, and together they worked out support for Brayton in his run to the 2016 Australian Supercross Championship, which then led to a new program with Mike Genova’s MotoConcepts Racing team in the United States. “There was the idea of a Supercross-only deal, and thankfully I had kept a great relationship with Honda and my previous sponsors, so the Honda in Australia deal came about and American Honda jumped on board to help,” Brayton said. “Things rolled on from there, and I called Mike Genova to see if something would be possible there with some Honda support. The pieces of the puzzle really came together so easily, and I think it was great for the team and Mike Genova.”

The MotoConcepts Racing team has been involved in a number of controversies both on and off the track in its early years, all things that Brayton saw or heard from his place in the pit area, but after some staffing changes, the independent

team was ready for a fresh start. “I have to be honest, when I first came here I didn’t know what to expect,” Brayton said, admitting his apprehension. “I had heard things, but growing up my parents told me that you don’t judge a person off of what other people think, you should make a judgment for yourself.” With Genova’s financial support, Honda’s technical support, and Team Manager Tony Alessi’s attention to detail, the team was able to make decisions based on a rider’s personal preference instead of a sponsorship endorsement, and the status as a “second tier” team put less pressure on the riders. These were things that Brayton noticed immediately and helped him to adapt to his new surroundings. “I get asked a lot of questions about how it is over there, and it’s great. There is so much freedom to be yourself and not have the pressure on you every single time you get on the motorcycle like you do at the factory level,” Brayton said. “It’s let me ride more freely, so if I need to finish in eighth place one weekend, it’s not a bummer. They understand it’s what we had that night and we still have fun being around each other, but on a night that I’m good, we try to go get the win. That really helps me going into the weekend, knowing that it’s not all or nothing. I think that starts with the leadership and that’s how Mike Genova runs the team.”

**BY MICHAEL ANTONOVICH  
PHOTOS BY MIKE EMERY**



## JUSTIN BRAYTON

In many ways, the team's attitude meshes well with Brayton's current outlook toward life. For most of his career, Brayton felt that he could not speak openly about certain topics due to the concerns that might arise from a manufacturer or sponsors, and much of his happiness was determined by whether or not he finished well at a race, two apprehensions that have now vanished from his mind. "When you're younger you feel like you're in the fight to get a ride the following year, make a few bucks, and impress a team manager so you can maybe get a place on their team. But now I'm just myself, and I wish that I could have done that earlier in my career, because it's not like I was a crazy kid that didn't train or was out partying," Brayton said. "It doesn't change my life one way or the other now, but six years ago it would have, when I wanted to be in that circulation of getting or keeping a ride and getting paid a certain amount. Now I'm fine with what I've done in my career, and I still want to do it and work hard, because it's something that I enjoy and I've challenged myself to enjoy it more this year.

"Racing is not my whole identity, but at one point it really was. It's so hard to live that way. Those six days in between races can be so tough when you don't do well on a Saturday night, and it can define your happiness, how many friends call you that week, and I hated that," Brayton said. "Now that I'm a little older it doesn't define me at all, whether I win or get last, it truly doesn't change my life. I still go home to my daughter who wants to go ride bicycles with me, and to my wife who loves me the same that she did the week before. That's a good spot to be in and that's helped my career, because I can ride freely."

Just as one would expect, Brayton's family is the most important thing in his life. His wife, Paige, and their two young children often stay in North Carolina while he travels to events throughout the United States and Europe, but the entire family heads Down Under to Australia for an extended vacation when he contests the country's Supercross championship. This tie to a "normal life" is something that helps Brayton maintain an even-keeled outlook on all that he's involved in and allows him to connect to fans of the sport. "I've grown into a family man with two kids and a wife, and I make that all known. I think I can relate to a lot of fans because as racers, we're nothing special. We have the same issues at home as anyone else; I just happen to ride a motorcycle well," Brayton said. "I feel like my autograph line and my fan interactions have grown in the past year just because they can be relatable with their kids. Our sport is a young man's sport, so I think it's cool that the older fans are fans of mine. After Daytona it was really neat to share stories, and I've had a lot of fans tell me that I give them hope."

Before the 2018 season even started, Brayton knew there was a chance that it could have been his last. All of the contracts that he had with the MotoConcepts teams and his personal sponsors were set to expire this year, and he was not in a rush to renew anything until he knew if he really would pursue the sport any longer. With this in mind, he made it a point to enjoy every experience that comes with Supercross, from the travel to the camaraderie to the competition each weekend.

"Going in to this Supercross season, I thought if it was going to be my last, then I really wanted to enjoy it. I wanted to have fun flying to the races and with the people that I'm around," he says. This positive outlook is easy to detect when talking to Brayton on racing weekends, and he wishes that his counterparts could develop the same enthusiasm toward "dreaded" tasks like travel. "One of my biggest pet peeves is when I ask people how they are doing and they say sarcastically, 'Just living the dream.' And I think that I truly am! When people are bummed to be at the races I just think there are so many people that would love to have your job. Look around at what we get to do. We travel the world, see cool things, work with the best dirt bikes, race in the coolest stadiums, and are around some of the most successful people in the sport. I think that is great," Brayton said. "I step back a lot and think of the people that I get to meet and be around every weekend. There are so many things that if you step back, it's something that we'll all miss, so we should enjoy it as much as we can."

Much of the conversation with Brayton for this feature was focused on the mental aspects of racing and what he's learned during his time in the sport. The physical efforts of riding are not often a challenge for Brayton, but he admits that sometimes his mind gives out before his body does. "Physically, I think I could handle the workload year-round, and I feel just as good now as I did when I was 25. But the main thing is mentally I need a break," Brayton said, explaining the topic further. "We're racing the clock every week and show up on the weekends trying to be the best that we can be. Doing that for 12 months out of the year got to be a lot. Now for most of May and all of June and July, I'm free from the racing mindset."

Since Brayton is a racer based in North Carolina, it should come as no surprise that he's developed friendships with his counterparts in NASCAR, most notably seven-time champion Jimmie Johnson. Through shared hobbies like mountain bike riding, Brayton and Johnson are able to see how similar their two sports actually are, particularly the mentally taxing task of needing to be at your best for most of the year. "Getting to know Jimmie has been awesome and he's helped me a ton. In 2016 we talked weekly before and after the races about mindsets, and I attribute that to a lot of my success now. By winning so many championships he's dealt with pressure that maybe no one will face, and I've learned a ton from him," Brayton said. "I talk to him all of the time and I pick his brain a lot on what we deal with on a week-to-week basis because it's very similar. To have guys like him in my corner to bounce ideas off of is pretty special. When you hear from a guy like him, who has won seven championships, if it worked for him to be at the highest level of his sport, why wouldn't it work for me?"

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Just as this issue was going to press, Brayton signed a two-year extension to his Supercross-only deal with SmarTop/MotoConcepts/Honda.



## JUSTIN BRAYTON

There's no denying that Brayton is one of the most talented motocross riders in the world, as he's known for hitting the biggest jump combinations that track builders come up with on the weekends while maintaining a nearly flawless technique. Rarely does he look out of sorts or uncomfortable on the track, something that Brayton says he's able to do on even the most routine practice day. "When I watch myself on film, it doesn't even look like I'm trying, but I remember that exact lap and think how it felt like I was on edge. I have always been a smooth, calculated rider, and I would rather have a calculated style than a reckless style," Brayton said. "I feel like that's why I have longevity in the sport. I have been fortunate injury-wise and maybe that's because I don't take massive risks. People point out how I jump quads and how it's risky, but that comes easy. I feel so comfortable putting jump combinations together that no one else might do."

With all of that said, he admits that in the past it was difficult to bring the same comfort and confidence from the middle of the week into the weekend, but it's something he's managed to do this year. "On a Tuesday at Club MX, sometimes I feel unbeatable and there are times that I've thought, 'If I could bring this to a race, no one would beat me.' I felt that way when I was 25 and 26 years old, but I could never really bring it to the race. Now I feel like I can, and it's shown this year.

"I have a joke with a few of my friends: 'Okay, watch this.' I have this side of me that I don't want to say is cocky, but there is

a belief inside of me that is like no other," Brayton said. "There are days when I have it in me and don't show it. I'm such a respectful guy towards others and am so thankful to be racing. That's a double-edged sword a bit because I have the potential to win races and championships, so maybe I need that chip on my shoulder. There have been days that I think I'm the best in the world, but I haven't sealed the deal because of a mental block."

Brayton managed to piece everything together at the 2018 Daytona Supercross by Monster Energy. Throughout the afternoon qualifying practices, it was clear that Brayton was among the fastest in the field and he knew it as well, which turned to confidence for the night's racing. Although he says that there was not one thing in particular that dictated his attitude or speed, Brayton dominated both his Heat Race and Main Event, as he led 24 of the 25 total laps of the two motos, and upped his own intensity in the final laps to fend off a charge from Eli Tomac. "I got a great start and knew that if I got into the lead on the first lap that I could put down some good, consistent laps. That's what I did. I got a six- or seven-second lead and was just doing my thing. It felt like a Tuesday at Club MX," Brayton said, recalling the night of his win. "I made a few mistakes with five or six laps to go and I saw Eli was coming, but I stayed calm. I'm most proud of the way that I dropped my lap times, because with three laps to go, I was matching him. As a racer, that's the hardest thing because you're in a rhythm and then have to drop another second and a half off of your pace."



**WORTH THE WAIT**



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## JUSTIN BRAYTON

The Main Event win, the first of Brayton's career, came after 130 starts in the premier class and made him the oldest winner in Supercross. He was 33 years old at the time and turned 34 a few days later. Brayton has few, if any, enemies in the industry, and for this reason it felt as if the entire paddock shared the excitement and celebration of the accomplishment. "There are so many things about that night that I'll remember forever. It makes me smile so much because I know all of the work that went into it. They always say it's a lot of blood, sweat, and tears, but truthfully there was a lot of everything," Brayton said. "To see how many people in the industry were happy for me might be something I'm even more proud of. I have a lot of friends in the industry that were truly happy for me, and that was really special. When you're in a small sport like ours, it's tough to have everyone be your friend."

His parents were among the first people that he hoped to talk to after the checkered flag, as they were watching the race from their home in Iowa. "I talked to my mom and stepdad on FaceTime. My sister, my aunt and uncle, and a bunch of their friends came to their house at 11:30 at night and had a party to celebrate the win. Nothing would have happened without them taking me racing," Brayton said, acknowledging those who have supported him. His Daytona win was the fulfillment of a promise he had made to them earlier in the year. "I sent my mom and stepdad a text message when I was on my flight home from Anaheim Two that basically said I would win this year. I was sobbing on the airplane as I sent them this text saying how my true potential was going to come out and that it'd be my year. Thinking about that text and rereading it, there were so many special emotions and people involved."

When asked if he always felt that he'd reach this level in his career, Brayton admits that he felt it was unobtainable as a kid living in Fort Dodge, Iowa. "I never imagined this. And it's probably partly why I haven't been a champion or won a ton of races. I never even thought I would qualify for a Supercross Main Event. I know it's crazy to say that, but I was always an Ar-enacross guy and Des Moines was always the season opener. I watched that race as a kid and wanted to be like Buddy An-

tunez and Denny Stephenson and Chad Pederson. The Jeremy McGraths of the world seemed like cartoon characters. I never went to Supercross races and only got to see them on TV or in videos, so they didn't even seem real. For me to now be friends with them and to win a race, even now thinking about it is crazy."

With a win under his belt and a positive outlook on everything in his life, how much longer will we see the number 10 on the starting line? It's a question that Brayton doesn't quite have an answer for yet, but feels it will be for a little while longer. "It's still going to be year by year. I have so much fun during the week, and that's a time that fans don't get to see. On a Tuesday afternoon when I'm busting out motos, that's the time that's so much fun for me right now, and there have been times that it hasn't been that way. I think that when there is a time that I don't enjoy it and am really bummed to get on a flight and leave my family, that's when I'll be done," Brayton said.

That fact that he is able to race on his terms with the support of people that share the same passion is something he knows has lengthened his career, and he's grateful for the opportunity. "If I was done racing or didn't race professional at all, I would still ride with my buddies as much as I could. And that's not going to change when I'm 45 years old. I think the biggest reason why I can still have fun is I haven't had those big burned-out years and I'm smart enough to know that if I didn't go Supercross only, I'd have been done two years ago," Brayton said. "I stepped outside of the box and made phone calls to people that I really respect in the industry, and thankfully I haven't burned bridges with any teams in the industry, so I put together this amazing program where I go to Australia, race a few times in Europe, and then do Supercross here. It takes a lot of courage to turn down a couple of offers to do both Supercross and motocross, but I wanted to do my own thing on my own schedule. You need companies like Honda to back you and guys like Mike Genova to help out, and the stars just aligned perfectly. The life lessons I've learned through all of this are amazing, and it's why I've enjoyed every day of it and will keep it going. I want to keep at this for a while longer." 🍷



WORTH THE WAIT

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**TWMX GOES OFF-ROAD RACING W/ THE 2018 SUZUKI RMX450Z**

■ This season has been an interesting one for me, as I'm competing in my sophomore Monster Energy Supercross season on the West Coast with the H.E.P. Motorsports/FXR/Suzuki team. I've learned a lot and had been having a lot of fun, so heading into the break between San Diego and Indianapolis, I wanted to stay busy and keep racing. My buddy Mark Samuels suggested I come out and race the AMA Big 6 GP at Glen Helen. I've never competed in an off-road race, let alone ridden much off-road, but I thought to myself, "Why not? I'll just go out and have some fun and see what it's all about."

The only bike I had without Supercross suspension was the *TransWorld Motocross* Suzuki RM-Z250 test bike, and it was bone stock except for the suspension, which I had just gotten back from Race Tech and hadn't ridden on yet. But again, I figured that I had nothing to lose and it would be a lot of fun. I showed up at Glen Helen after two days of some fairly heavy rains, and the course was epic! I led the Pro 2 class for an hour and eventually finished second. As it turns out, not having a large-capacity gas tank was the difference between first and second. Sadly, it cost me the win because I had to pit twice for fuel. After the race finished, a few people suggested that I show up and race the next round of the World Off-Road Championship Series in Lake Havasu. With how well things went at Glen Helen, I was all in. Initially, the plan was to do it on the same Suzuki RM-Z250 that I had never even changed a tire on! About two weeks before the race, though, swap mentioned that Suzuki had asked him to test an RMX450Z off-road bike and that perhaps I should race that instead. The idea sounded sweet, and I happily agreed.

**BY TALLON LAFOUNTAINE**



To be honest, I had no idea what an RMX really was until I picked it up. Right away I noticed the lights, a kickstand, and a muffler that could be plugged up with a Slim Jim. I immediately wondered what I had gotten myself into. I knew that defending WORCS Champion Gary Sutherland races a factory-backed RMX450Z, but I had no idea that the bike was basically a decade old as far as technology goes. In stock condition, it had so many emissions restrictions that using it for anything more than a casual trail riding bike was going to take a lot of work. When it comes to finding horsepower, there are few as talented as my friend Jamie Ellis at Twisted Development. When I called him and told him what I was up against, I could tell that he hesitated for a few seconds before getting involved. "Do you know what's

involved in making that thing run?" Ellis asked. "Sutherland has a different wire harness, sub-frame, ignition...everything! Okay, bring it down."

After a strategizing meeting between Jamie, swap, and myself, we decided that we would do what we could to make the RMX competitive, but not go all out like Sutherland with parts and modifications that most people wouldn't or couldn't invest in. Twisted Development tore into the engine and decked and ported the cylinder, modified the guides and valve seats, installed a JE custom piston kit and valve springs from an RM-Z model, had Web Cam Inc. modify the camshaft and bolted on and fine-tuned a Vortex ECU on the dyno. To keep the bike cool and help put the power to the ground, they added a Boyesen SuperCooler and a complete Hinson Racing billet

clutch assembly. We were all surprised to learn that since the bike is not popular for competition, no complete high-performance exhaust systems were available from the aftermarket. We chose an FMF PowerCore 4 HEX slip-on because anything had to be better than the massive stock muffler with the tiny opening. To make sure that we didn't have a repeat of Glen Helen, swap borrowed a large-capacity fuel tank and quick dump from our friend Mark Tilley at *Dirt Bike Magazine*. Cycra Racing sent over a set of their handguards, Works Connection supplied some cool aluminum bling, and Race Tech firmed up the suspension for me. With that, we were just about good to go! The guys at Magik put the finishing touches on things with some rad graphics. Oh yeah, and I removed the kickstand myself.



Driving to Havasu, I was honestly worried about what I had gotten myself into. Everyone I spoke to questioned my sanity when I told them I was racing a mildly modified RMX450Z, but again, I was in it to have a good time and gain some experience. I put in about 20 minutes of riding during practice when I arrived on Friday, and I learned pretty quickly that she was a big girl to handle!

On race day, I had to compete in a one-hour qualifying moto in the morning before the actual Pro 2 race in the afternoon. I led the whole thing until the last lap when I missed the Lagoon Jump and was forced to go around it because the bike started to heat up and didn't have the power to send the gap like it did early on. The option around the water took 11 seconds—enough to lose the lead—but it was a great moto, and I was honestly trying to conserve energy for the 90-minute Pro 2 race later in the day. The track was brutally rough, and although Race Tech had firmed up my suspension, the girth of the bike was still a handful.

As I was heading to the line for the Pro 2 race, I was told it was a dead engine start. I had never experienced one of those before! When the guy waved the flag to take off, my RMX fired right up, but I popped

her into gear and stalled it. Rookie move, I know. I got going about 15 seconds behind the pack and worked my way up to second place at the 60-minute mark of the moto. I had the fastest lap by almost seven seconds, and I actually thought I was in the lead for a while because I couldn't see anyone ahead of me, but the leader was gone and I was starting to fatigue. When I saw the white flag, I was so happy. I probably couldn't have made it another lap. Overall, I had a blast and was really impressed with how the bike handled, in spite of it being so heavy. It worked best in the high-speed and super choppy sections, and had solid top-end pull. All in all, I was surprised at how competitive the RMX450Z was, especially having ripped it around in stock condition beforehand. This was a really cool project, and we had a lot of great people chip in to help! I want to thank *TransWorld Motocross* for putting it all together; Jamie and the Twisted crew for getting this bike built on short notice and doing a great job; Race Tech for also knocking the suspension out and always taking care of me; Mark Tilley for the big tank; Jay Clark for the tires and mousse inserts; and Kobi Iseri, Avery Innis, and Chris Wheeler at Suzuki!



LaFontaine's performances at his first two off-road events were impressive enough that he was recruited to join Big 6 Champion Zach Bell and Jakub Alvarez on the factory backed 3 Brothers/STI Husqvarna team upon the conclusion of the Monster Energy Supercross Series.



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# BRANDON ZIMMERMAN

Hometown: Marshall, Michigan

Years Wrenching: 6 years

Rider: Adam Cianciarulo

Past Riders: Jayme Gardiner, Zac Commans, Zack Freeberg

■ For each and every person dedicated to our sport of motocross, there's a different story about how they initially got bit by the bug. For Brandon Zimmerman of Marshall, Michigan, it all started with his father, who loved all things motorcycle-based. He would give Brandon rides around the property as a very young child, and that naturally progressed into something more. The minute he got his own bike and could ride around the family property on his own, he was hooked. By the age of 12, he was behind the starting gate and competing at a local level. Soon that too progressed, and Zimmerman was competing at a regional amateur level. To top things off, his father had owned and operated a Polaris dealership, where Zimmerman spent time in the shop working on snowmobiles and ATVs. It only made sense that he would take an interest in working on and tinkering with his own motorcycles, learning from his father in the process. However, it wouldn't be until high school that he made a clear decision in his mind to pursue the dream of being a factory race mechanic. Shortly after graduation, he enrolled in MMI and headed to Arizona.

His first break into the racing industry after graduation would come in the form of a job at the now-defunct Hart and Huntington race team working as amateur racer Jayme Gardiner's full-time mechanic. This gig would allow him to meet more people within the industry. Among those people were the Cianciarulo family, and during that time Adam was navigating his way into the pro ranks. Zimmerman kept in touch with them after transitioning to a new gig at FCR Suspension in Ohio. When the eventual need for Cianciarulo to have a practice mechanic arose, Zimmerman was the guy they called for the job. From there, it was full speed ahead working with the young racer as he navigated his early professional career. A few odd gigs with racers Zac Commans and Zack Freeberg kept him busy while Adam was injured, but he stayed the course as AC's right-hand man through thick and thin. When Adam's original pro race mechanic Brett Mountain stepped down to pursue a different career path, Mitch Payton called Zimmerman and offered him the position. This was the ticket he needed to take the next step in his career and achieve his dream. The two have been inseparable since, and Zimmerman credits all of the continued hard work for his success there. Cianciarulo's Monster Energy/Pro Circuit/Kawasaki KX250F is among the most-detailed race bikes in the paddock, and Zimmerman broke down the details of the number-92 machine for us.





**Engine Package:** Our engine package is comprised of all the available modifications that the Pro Circuit brand is known so well for. No expense is spared, and no piece is overlooked—we go through everything. Whether it's special coatings or lightweight materials, we go all out to make sure we have the best of everything. Our crew chief, Zach White, does a lot of R&D with the help of Iain Southwell, and they'll try different things out on the dyno. Then they'll go out and actually test it with the riders to see what they like. In 2017 and 2018, Mitch has done a lot of work redesigning the air boot to give the bike more bottom-end power without taking away the mid- to top-end, and that part is available for sale to the public. All of the race mechanics here build our own practice, race, and test engines, and I know we're one of, if not the only team that does that. Adam prefers a lot of power on the bottom-end, so we build the engines with a lot of low-end torque and we'll fine-tune it more from there with mapping.

**Power Delivery:** We run a full Hinson clutch setup, and they are pretty bulletproof because Adam is really hard on his clutch. The sprockets are Renthal with a gear ratio of 14-52, driven by an RK chain. The wheels are factory KHI hubs from Kawasaki laced up to an Excel A60 rim with standard spokes. We run Dunlop spec tires, and he's one

of the only guys who prefers to run their sand tire here and there depending on the conditions of the track.

**Controls:** Adam runs the Renthal 997 handlebar, with their Renthal Kevlar grips. The entire team runs Pro Circuit triple clamps and personalize the bar setup with different sized bar mounts. He's gone back and forth with bar mounts the last couple of years, but right now he runs a pretty neutral setup, if not a little bit forward. ARC makes the levers, and they are aluminum. His seat is a standard seat foam, but with an added hump to keep him in place off the start. The seat cover is made by N-Style, and they also provide the graphics on the bike. The foot pegs are billet titanium that are CNC-machined out of a solid block. The shifter is a Pro Circuit billet aluminum piece that has a custom folding tip that won't break in the event of a crash and has a cover over the spring so it won't collect mud.

**Brakes:** We run an OEM Nissin master cylinder and a works billet Nissin caliper. The front rotor is 270mm made by Braking. The rear brake is a combination of a stock master cylinder and caliper, but we use a titanium vented rear piston inside the caliper. The rear rotor is standard size, made by Braking, and we run stock brake pads in both the front and rear.

**Bits and Pieces:** The exhaust is our Pro Circuit Ti-6 full titanium setup, and we keep the end caps black carbon fiber so it's the same as the product we sell. The engine cover on the left side over the ignition is an all billet CNC'd piece. The skid plates, countershaft cover, and rear chain guide are all carbon fiber. The radiator catch can on our bikes is pretty trick and basically catches any coolant that could boil over and siphons itself back into the system when it cools down so you don't lose any coolant. We also run external oil coolers to help keep oil temperatures under control. All of our fasteners are either titanium or high-grade aluminum, and certain things are drilled out for weight. There are lots of specialty coatings and anodizing on our bolts and side covers, like our titanium axles that are DLC coated to help them slide in and out easier.

**Suspension:** We're currently on Pro Circuit's Showa A-Kit spring forks and Showa A-Kit rear shock that are tuned and serviced in-house by our guy Jim "Bones" Bacon. We also run the Pro Circuit linkage, and everything else we have on our suspension setup is available for purchase to the public, down to the factory-looking special titanium nitride coatings. Adam likes the feel to be pretty plush initially, but still be stiff enough to hold up to his weight or when he goes for a big quad or jump on the track. 🍕

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*Eli Tomac*

**MOTO-9** 



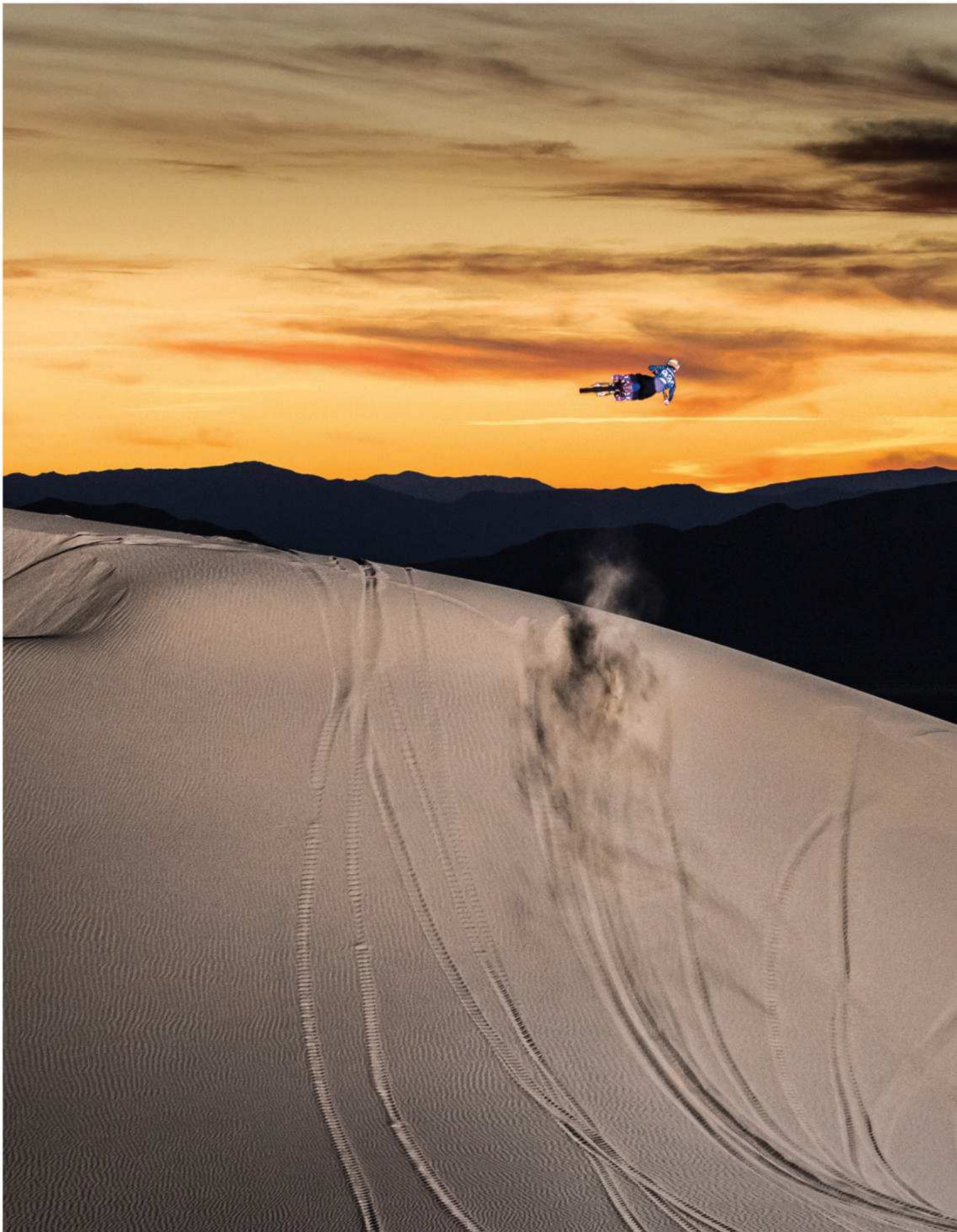
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