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ENDUROCROSS

Photos by Heather Avery



TRIED AND TRUE

Colton Haaker has remained consistent all year long and is a true threat for the 2014 championship.



ON A MISSION

Beta's Cody Webb is focused on one thing in 2014—win every race he enters!



DEFENDING CHAMP

Taddy Blazusiak is winning races in 2014, but the new crop of riders are definitely giving him some trouble.



STRUGGLE

Husqvarna's Mike Brown has struggled with untimely crashes thus far during the 2014 season, but he never gives up.

ROOST

QUICK HITS

ATLANTA ENDUROCROSS

Photos: Heather Avery

After an intense back-and-forth battle that at one time had Beta's Cody Webb in the lead by over 12 seconds, KTM's Taddy Blazusiak came from behind and ended up on top. Blazusiak took control on the 12th of 15 laps and held on to take the victory over Beta USA/GEICO's Cody Webb.

Rockstar Lucas Oil/JCR Honda's

Colton Haaker finished a close third to round out the Atlanta podium after winning his heat race earlier in the night. KTM's Taylor Robert and Red Bull's Geoff Aaron finished fourth and fifth, respectively. This marked the first time the GEICO AMA EnduroCross series visited the Gwinnett Center Arena in Atlanta, Georgia.



Welcome
We're glad
Georgia's
on your mind



Ryan Brempp

NOT YET

KTM's Taylor Robert is always in the hunt for a win, but has yet to seal the deal in 2014.



Ryan Brempp

LOG CHECK

Cooper Abbott was making sure the log was stable for the rest of his class to go over.

VEGAS TO RENO

Photos by Kato



ZIP-TY

Ty Davis teamed with Justin Morgan to finish second aboard a Zip-Ty Racing-backed Husqvarna.



OLD GUYS RULE

Max Eddy and Ryan Dudek won the Over-30 Pro class and finished third overall on a Chris Haines Adventure Honda.



2015 HUSQVARNA FC250

Momentum is building for the new generation of Huskys

Two years ago, if someone had told you that the most exciting brand in the dirt bike world would soon be Husqvarna, you would have told him to get in his spaceship and go back to the planet Dream On. But, it happened. Today, Husqvarna has the most talked-about, sought-after and interesting dirt bikes in the world. As virtually everyone knows, KTM purchased the company in January of 2013 and invested heavily in it. There were casualties along the way; the Italian-made bikes of the recent past disappeared, replaced by Austrian bikes with a heavy KTM genetic code. But, the bottom line is that the new Huskys will sell better and have more of an impact than they have in years. The 2015 FC250 is typical of the new hardware; it's fast, well-made and has its own identity.



The biggest differences between the Husky FC250 and the KTM 250SX-F are the plastic, sub-frame and airbox. Oh, yes, and that whole Swedish legacy thing.



THE SWEDE WITHIN

It's a little overwhelming to talk about changes for 2015 for this particular bike. Do we compare it to last year's KTM, last year's Austrian Husky, last year's Italian Husky or maybe even the Husaberg line that shared some of the same parts? Let's just look at the Husky on its own...for now. The motor is the star of the show. It's as modern and sophisticated as anything in the 250F world. It's a double-overhead-cam four-stroke with finger-followers between the cams and valves. The motor is designed to rev like crazy; the rev limiter kicks in just below 14,000 rpm. The fuel-injection system is Keihin, and the 44mm throttle body has the injector located on the top of the venturi, whereas most are on the bottom. Rumor has it that many of the Japanese factory MX teams swap their stock throttle bodies for this one because it works better. What really sets the motor apart is that it's electric-start only. There's no kick-starter, and there's no place to put one. It has a hydraulically actuated clutch with five coil springs, whereas most of the other Huskys have the DDS diaphragm spring clutch.

The chassis has a steel frame with WP suspension; the front suspension is the latest version of the 4CS fork, with the rebound adjuster on the right leg and the compression clicker on the left. The rear end has linkage suspension and a WP shock. All of that stuff is identical to the 2015 KTM 250SX-F. The big difference is the subframe. It's constructed of a polyamide material and is all one piece with the airbox. This feature was introduced on the Husaberg line but has never crossed over to the KTM side of the fence. The plastic is exclusive to the Husky, too, and gives the bike its own look and feel.

RIDE LIKE YOU MEAN IT

Riding an FC250 takes commitment. This isn't a casual motorcycle for old men and beginners. It's a bike that demands a youthful approach with aggression and attitude. The motor is a screamer. It makes its best power at the top of the powerband, so the rider is expected to keep it singing. In fact, if you ride at something less than race speed, you come away feeling that it's not very fast. The bottom-end power is lackluster, and there's no big hit anywhere in the powerband. It just revs higher and higher, making more and more power as it climbs. By the time the bike reaches its peak, it's producing more power than just about anything in its class. The one exception is its half-brother, the KTM 250SX-F. The KTM makes slightly more peak power because of a more open airbox. You can make the Husky run just like the KTM with a few strategically placed vents in the airbox. Don't feel like you have to do that, though. The Husky powerband has its own personality. It peaks earlier than the KTM, so you don't run into the electronic rev limiter as frequently. That actually makes it run cleaner at full race speed without as many pops and stumbles.

The Husky also has its own riding position and feel. The seat and subframe are slightly lower than the KTM's. You sit down in the bike, and it seems to have less of a Euro feel—you know, that stinkbug riding position. The actual difference in seat height is so slight that it's difficult to measure, but it makes for a substantial change in personality.

Much has been written about the 4CS fork since it was introduced on the Husaberg line three years ago. At the time, it was seen as more of an off-road fork, but it has made a transition into the motocross world. Internally, it's simpler

HUSQVARNA FC250



The price of the 2015 Husky FC250 is about \$50 higher than the KTM 250SX-F, which is a very similar motorcycle.

than the WP bladder fork that it replaces, and so far it's been well-received. The Husky has a cushier, more compliant feel than anything with the older fork. In part, it is probably due to the fact that it has a much smaller axle, and that allows the front end to flex more. Most test riders still report that more progress has to be made in this area. The fork doesn't do anything wicked, surprising or ugly, but it still doesn't score very high on the comfort meter. It transmits an annoying amount of chop and chatter to the rider. Almost everyone responds with a knee-jerk reduction in compression damping. With the clicker so readily accessible on the left side of the fork, it isn't unusual for the bike to come off the track with different settings from on-the-fly tuning. As you might expect, lighter riders like lighter settings, but for almost everyone, the fork never really feels plush. Again, in line with the true character of the bike, the faster you go, the less you think about it. The rear suspension, on the other hand, generates virtually no complaints from even the grumpiest test riders, no matter how fast they go. It works on a wide variety of tracks and seems to suit a broad range of rider weights and riding styles. We started with the preload set around 103mm for most riders. We found that you could get away with anything between 95 and 105 without a problem. The KTM never seemed so amiable.

WHY OWN ONE?

There are a lot of people interested in the Husky. It seems that most riders want to like it, and that's not always true with other brands. If the top brass in Austria wanted, they could probably sell more Huskys than KTMs, just because of the good will and the legacy associated with the brand. In real-world performance, reliability and accessibility, there isn't much difference between owning a KTM and a Husqvarna. They come out of the same factory. The good news is that it's a good factory making great products. It's simply a matter of choosing the tribe, speaking the lingo and making the pledge. □

HUSQVARNA FC250

Engine type	Four-valve, DOHC 4-stroke
Displacement	249cc
Bore & stroke	66.4mm x 72.0mm
Fuel delivery	Keihin EFI
Fuel tank capacity	2.0 gal. (7.5 l)
Lighting coil	No
Spark arrester	No
EPA legal	No
Running weight, no fuel	232 lb.
Wheelbase	58.9" (1495mm)
Ground clearance	14.8" (375mm)
Seat height	39.0" (992mm)
Tire size & type:	
Front	80/100-21 Dunlop MX52
Rear	110/100-19 Dunlop MX52
Suspension:	
Front	WP 4CS, adj. reb./comp., 11.8" (300mm) travel
Rear	WP aluminum piggyback, adj. prld. hi & lo comp., reb., 12.5" (317mm) travel
Country of origin	Austria
Suggested retail price	\$8149
Manufacturer	www.husqvarna-motorcycles.com

GOOD NEWS

- Very fast on top
- Good rear suspension
- Electric start
- Excellent brakes
- Hydraulic clutch
- High-quality parts

GRUMBLES

- Weak bottom-end power
- Harsh fork
- No kick-start backup

BACK IN THE DAY

Husaberg's mark

Today, anyone riding a two-stroke sees himself as an underdog. But it wasn't always that way. Back in 1988, it was a two-stroke world and thumpers were only seen as play bikes and street machines. There were just a few people who saw any potential in them for racing in the dirt. Among them was Swedish enduro champion Thomas Gustavsson, who had been instrumental in the development of the Husqvarna 510 four-stroke a few years earlier. Gustavsson and a group of Husqvarna employees were left out in the cold when Cagiva purchased the company and moved it to Italy in 1987, so they decided to start their own firm. The design would be loosely based on that of the Husqvarna, with a greater emphasis on weight reduction and more devoted to racing. The Husky, on the other hand, went in the other direction in the hands of the Italians, so in a very short period of time, Husaberg became known as *the* four-stroke to have if you wanted to go racing. In world enduro competitions, Husaberg immediately racked up championships with riders like Anders Ericksson and Kent Karlsson. The company really caught the attention of the world when Joel Smets won the Open-class World MX Championship in '95, '97 and '98.

For all its racing success, Husaberg was never a very profitable company and struggled to produce a few hundred motorcycles in any given year. In 1995, KTM purchased the company in order to jump-start its own four-stroke line. The very first KTM 525EXC of 2000 actually shared many parts with the Husaberg. In 2003, production was moved to Austria, but it wasn't a repeat of the Cagiva scenario. KTM maintained an engineering staff in Sweden that was a sort of "skunk works" for new designs. The result was the 70-degree motor of 2008. The motor was reconfigured with the cylinder laid down over the gearbox. The bike was well received by the press, and the design probably influenced Yamaha's reverse-cylinder layout. Still, the cost of manufacturing the motor made it impractical in the long run. In later years, Husaberg motorcycles became rebadged KTMs, some of them were even two-strokes.

Motorcycles with the Husaberg name were discontinued in 2014. KTM had purchased Husqvarna from BMW, and there was no practical reason to continue with two former Swedish brands. KTM called it a "reunification" of Husqvarna and Husaberg, even though they had never been united at any time. But the legacy, at least, lives on. Without Husaberg, the KTMs and Husqvarnas of today would be very different—and probably not nearly as good. □



In 1988 Husaberg was founded, dedicated to making competitive four-stroke dirt bikes.



The early 'Berg made us four-stroke fans before it was fashionable.

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