

WE RIDE JOSH GRANT'S SOBE/SAMSUNG HONDA CRF250

WE EXPECTED THE STANDARD HONDA LINE OF "CALL US BACK IN LATE SEPTEMBER." WHAT WE GOT NEARLY KNOCKED US TO THE FLOOR. "WHERE AND WHEN DO YOU GUYS WANT IT?"

Getting our hands on factory-backed Honda team bikes isn't easy. And it only gets harder when you ask to borrow Josh Grant's Samsung Mobile/Sobe Honda CRF250 right in the middle of the season. Honda is protective of their machinery as they should be. But the MXA wrecking crew has a great rep for getting the hottest bikes at the least opportune time. We tested Chad Reed's Yamaha between rounds of the Supercross season. We blasted around on Grant Langston's KX250F just days before the 2006 season started. Nick Wey gave us his 2006 CRF450 immediately after becoming one of the few privateers to ever podium at an AMA 250 Supercross. We wanted Josh Grant's bike and we had a plan.



Even though Honda is a tough nut to crack, we gave Team Samsung Mobile/Sobe/Factory Connection's J.C. Waterhouse a call. A former Team Honda

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insider, J.C. knows all the ins-and-outs of dealing with the Honda system. Our question for J.C. was simple: what were the odds of us getting our hands on Josh Grant's CRF250? We expected the standard Honda line of "Call us back in late September." What we got nearly knocked us to the floor. "Where and when do you guys want it, and do you want it dirty from the last race or clean?" Our reply was, "As soon as humanly possible, super shiny and preferably at our private test track so we can get it dirty in comfort." A week later, Factory Connection's top engine man, Kristian Kibby, called to firm up the date and time. We've known Kibby for a long time. Before his high-profile Samsung Mobile/Sobe gig, Kristian was Nick Wey's mechanic (during Nick's Moto XXX days).

TO THE MXA GANG, JOSH IS A LOCAL. HE ROSE TO FAME RACING AT OUR LOCAL TRACK, AND WHAT KIND OF FRIENDS WOULD WE BE IF WE CHOSE TO TEST ONE OF HIS TEAMMATES' BIKES?

You might wonder why we picked Josh Grant's Samsung CRF250 and not Billy Laninovich's, Jake Weimer's or Tommy Hahn's? The easy answer would be that Josh won several AMA 250F Supercross races this season and is the leader of the squad. In truth, except for personal peccadilloes, all of the team bikes are basically the same so it wouldn't have mattered had we gone with Billy's, Jake's or Tommy's. The real answer is that we picked Josh Grant's bike because we have history with Josh. To the MXA gang, Josh is a local. He rose to fame racing at our local track, and there's something about seeing a local boy do good that puts a big smile on our faces. That history between us goes as far back as testing the bike he rode before he landed his Factory Connection gig. So what kind of friends would we be if we chose to test one of his teammates' bikes?

EVEN THOUGH FACTORY CONNECTION IS THE OFFICIAL HONDA FACTORY 250F TEAM, THEY DON'T HAVE A TON OF ACCESS TO HONDA WORKS PARTS.

When the appointed time came around, Kristian Kibby and Grant's mechanic, **Naveen Dassanayake**, were nowhere to be found. We had to wonder if the bigwigs at Honda had gotten wind of our deal with J.C. Waterhouse and put the kibosh on us riding Grant's bike. We are conspiracy theorists at heart, but before we could connect our woes with the location of Jimmy Hoffa's body, the Factory Connection boys called and said that their rig had broken down but not to fear, they were going to rent a van and meet us.



Here's a little inside information for you. Even though Factory Connection is the official Honda factory 250F team, they don't have a ton of access to Honda works parts (and some of the parts they do have access to they decided not to use). Here are the reasons (in laymen's terms): While Honda has a ton of works parts for the CRF450, they have almost none for the CRF250. What works parts they do have are universal, like clutch perches, footpegs, triple clamps and front brake rotors (and all of these parts are super expensive). Also from the insider file, Factory Connection doesn't get these parts for free. So instead of spending a good chunk of their budget on miscellaneous works parts, they run Works Connection clutch perches and Lightspeed footpegs. That means that the triple clamps and front brake rotor are from the works part bin, but instead of getting them from Japan, the team had them sourced in America and made locally for a fraction of the cost.

We wouldn't be doing our job if we didn't give you the lowdown on every aspect of Grant's bike. He uses Renthal TwinWall bars and Renthal half/half grips, a Works Connection Elite clutch perch, One Industries graphics and seat cover, Factory Connection-valved Showa kit forks and shock, Hinson clutch (basket, inner hub, pressure plate and clutch cover), Lightspeed footpegs, Pro Circuit engine mods (exhaust, cams, radiator hoses and head work), Sunstar sprockets, EK Chain, Cycra plastic, Ferodo brake pads, Factory Connection shock linkage and Bridgestone tires.

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NOW THAT WE'VE TAKEN THE DREAM OF BUILDING YOUR OWN JOSH GRANT REPLICA AWAY, YOU'RE PROBABLY WONDERING WHAT IT WAS LIKE TO RIDE IT. IN ONE WORD AMAZING.

After reading the list of stuff on Grant's bike, you probably think you could build a replica if you had the money. The answer is that you could get close, but not all the way. Why? You can't get the piston, cam, transmission, triple clamps or front brake rotor. They are unobtainium. Yes, you could get Pro Circuit to do your engine (but as good as their customer spec is, it isn't pushed to the limit like Josh's engine). And you could buy a Wiseco piston that would mimic the special one-off JE piston that the team uses. Additionally, you could make do with an aftermarket front rotor and triple clamps, but, in truth, the transmission is really what makes this machine so unique and you can't get one of those. Trust us, we've tried every angle.

JOSH GRANT'S BIKE HAS THE BEST 250F ENGINE WE'VE EVER TRIED, (AND REMEMBER, WE'VE TRIED PRO CIRCUIT'S WORKS KX250F ENGINE) AND EVEN BETTER, IT'S ABSOLUTELY PERFECT FOR A BEGINNER AS WELL AS A PRO.

Now that we've taken the dream of building your own Josh Grant replica away, you're probably wondering what it was like to ride it. In one word -- amazing. Instead of pampering Josh's bike on some ultra-smooth track full of nothing but manicured berms and sweet jumps, we took it to our sand track and started turning laps. Stiff pro-level suspension works well in two types of conditions: Supercross, which is what Josh's bike was valved for, and deep sand, where you want the bike to wallow as little as possible. Another thing that probably didn't hurt the suspension's performance is the fact that the average MXA test rider weighs 30 pounds more than little Josh.

Not everything was perfect, though. Because he's short, Josh runs bar mounts that move his bars back 3mm and has his bike equipped with a short subframe that lowers the rear of the bike 10mm. With our average test rider being six feet tall, this took a little getting used to.

Knowing that we could hit any bump with little to no evil repercussions gave us the confidence to really see what Pro Circuit's engine work did for the CRF250. They eliminated every flaw the stock CRF250 has (bogging, weak bottom-end, wimpy clutch and big gap between second and third) and came up with the perfect 250F engine. There's no bog whatsoever. The thing rips from the moment you twist the throttle until you hear it banging off the rev limiter. The gearing is spaced out perfectly, so you no longer hear the engine struggling to pull third if you shift up early. The clutch took all the abuse we could throw at it and never needed to be adjusted.

Josh Grant's bike has the best 250F engine we've ever tried (and remember, we've tried Pro Circuit's works KX250F engine), and what makes it even better is that it's absolutely perfect for a beginner or a pro. Hard to believe, but Grant's engine can do no wrong. If it

had a weakness, the deep sand we were riding in would have made it evident real quick. It didn't. So where does this leave us? In the same boat you're in. We want to build our own Josh Grant replica. We are still plotting a way to get our hands on that transmission, piston and cam. Don't worry, we'll try to get a second set for you.