

# mtbman

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ISSUE 031 - DEZ / 2016



## SUPER





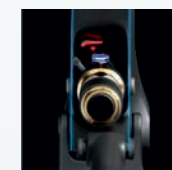
## SCOTT SPARK 700



Frame : Spark Carbon mainframe/IMP Technology/HMF/Bb92/Alloy 6011 SL swingram  
Fork : FOX 34 Float Performance Elite Air/3 modes with low speed adj./15\*110mm axle  
Shock : Fox Nude Trunnion/3 modes DPS/EVOL/  
Reb. Adj.Travel 120-85-Lockout 165x45mm  
Group Set : Sram X01 /X1/12speed/Single chain ring/Shimano XT disc brakes  
Aprox. Weight : 11.90 kg



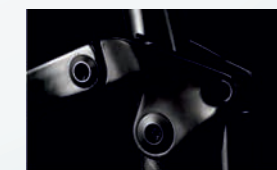
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## EDITORIAL



Mesum Verma – Editor in Chief

ride on  
keep it real!!

Mesum  
Verma

## SUPER

- a diary of the highest mountain bike race in the world, the Yak Attack, 10 days, 350km 15000m of climbing, 5416 meters above sea level at the highest point, 17 mountain passes over 3600 meter over sea level. Super excited? Matt Rousu takes us with him on this race, or can we call it hell on earth?

Taylor Vernon is not an unknown name, racing at the highest level in the downhill world cups, but it's tough at the top. Injury, fails and having the guts to keep things together, is not easy to do, but he managed still to get up again after all, which is super! He talks about his 2016 season, and what he went through.

Scott Sports India is coming out with head-to-toe riding gear, the concept comprises gloves, helmets, cycling apparel, eyewear and cycling specific shoes.

You think your riding is good? See Bella Chen from Munich with roots from Taiwan and how she rides her bike! Just super to watch it when she is taking big drops that many men would not dare!

## ISSUE 31

### BELLA CHEN

Interview



## CONTENT

### YAK ATTACK 2016

A diary from Matt Rousu



### IT'S TOUGH AT THE TOP

Taylor Vernon



### HEAD TO TOE

Riding gear from Scott Sports





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Hailing from Munich, Germany, with Taiwanese roots, Bella Chen rides and handles her bike in a way many could only dream of. The bike parks are her home, with hitting big and bigger jumps being her favourite. Get ready for some action with this super powerwoman!!

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Hi Bella, tell us a bit about yourself, what do you do? What is your daily job? Are there any other activities or hobbies you love besides riding your bike?

**Hi Mesum - Thanks for „having“ me!**  
I am a happy, down-to-earth person, who is really bad at telling jokes. For a living, I work as a developer, buyer and production manager in the fashion industry. When I am not riding my bike, I try to keep my body in shape with Freeletics and my mind with learning new stuff and watching videos of freaky science and funny animal fails.







How did you start mountain biking? While “normal” biking is quite a popular hobby, there not many people who would choose DH mountain biking as a hobby. How did you get infected with the “DH virus”?

**6 years ago, my ex-boyfriend sat me on a bike and pushed me down the hill. At the beginning, I just tried to survive, but I got used to the bike and soon began to have fun.**





You did other sports at a high competitive level, such as figure skating (international level) and Wu Shu (Kung Fu, multiple time national champion). Do you feel, that things go easier on the bike because you trained in those sports before? And would you also like to enter biking at a higher level, like go for racing?

When I started with figure skating, I was six years old, so I was a good age to learn what physics and g-forces do with my body and how to deal with it. This has helped me to progress in Wushu and it is definitely the reason why I feel quite comfortable on a bike. I participated in 2 races, but broke my collarbone in one of them right before the finish line. After that I realized that I have too much responsibility to take such risks, so now I only ride for fun. For me, it is much more challenging to learn new moves and try to adopt a stylish riding style.





You like to ride in bike parks. What are your favourite features? Big tables, drops, berms? Which bike park do you go often? Which one do you like most?

**I love the combination of flowy, fast and rough tracks with lots of airtime. That's why my favourite bike park is Schladming in Austria, which is like a 2 hour drive away from my hometown Munich. The DH track is just epic! It's long, steep, has perfectly shaped berms and well sized jumps. If you have the chance to visit, make sure you put some fresh pads on your brakes and tighten your spokes ;)**

Besides Whistler in Canada, where do you draw some lines with your bike outside Europe? You are in China for work sometimes - how do you like China? Would you like to take your bike to ride there some time? What's your dream destination for biking on this planet?

**The only destination outside of Europe that I took my bike to was Whistler. I actually don't know what my dream destination would be, as there are so many places to discover and it is hard to judge without knowing all of them. But it should definitely have no exhausting uphill sections. I would love to take**









my bike to China one day, to check out the trails and parks in epic landscapes. After all, I have Chinese roots and it would feel like returning to my place of heritage. Although I have been to China several times, I have always been too busy to go outside of the cities or industrial areas to spend some time off. Maybe I will have the opportunity soon to learn more about the bike culture in China.

Imagine that you're stranded in exactly that dream destination and you can take only one bike. Which bike would you take, the enduro bike or big bike? Is there any favourite food and drink you would bring? What tunes would be in your music box?

Hmm... I would probably take the enduro, as my dream destination, wouldn't only have good tracks but also beautiful landscapes. Although I really dislike pedalling, I'd have more possibilities to discover the surroundings with my small bike.







Besides, the small bikes nowadays are capable of hitting big jumps and rougher tracks almost as well as the big bikes. I am afraid we might have neither enough time nor space to list my favourite food and drinks. Let's just say I'm an omnivore in any possible way. My music box would be filled with mostly calm songs and maybe even some classical stuff depending on my mood.

You drop things that most girls and even most regular guys wouldn't. How do you conquer the fear of going over these big jumps, or dropping high road gaps? How do you control your bike under your feet - clipped in or flat pedals?

There are plenty of jumps that I am afraid of and when I am scared, I have no ambition to hit these jumps. I believe, that I have a well balanced awareness of my capability, so when I see a jump with a safe landing and a reasonable roll in and take off, I'll hit it. I'm running clipless pedals on both, my DH and my Enduro bike, as being clipped in gives me that extra level of control and I can save some energy in rough sections.



How you describe your lifestyle? Is there a life without biking? How many hours per week do you spend on the bike?

Living in a city, I only get to ride my bike on the weekends during the summer season. In the off-season, I hardly have the chance to go mountain biking due to the weather conditions. As an urban girl who works in the fashion industry, my daily life is a lot about work and mainstream interests, such as trends and social events. But my lifestyle, attitude and passion is all about mountain biking and I even display my bikes in the living room. One could think that these two fields of interests might be very contrary, but for me it works perfectly fine.







The last words are yours! Thank you very much, taking time for us! Ride on, keep it real!!

**Thank you, Mesum! My life advice to everybody: Don't eat the yellow snow!**







Stage 1: Langtang Himalaya view

# YAK ATTACK 2016



Matt Rousu



Leighann Gnyla / Matt Rousu

In November 2016 three cyclists from a small town in Australia set out to race the highest mountain bike race on earth; The Yak Attack in the Nepal Himalaya. Tania Tryhorn, Matt Rousu and Leighann Gnyla are residents of Mount Beauty, a town in the mountains of Victoria's North East, Australia.

We've lived and worked here for many years and have a strong connection to the small community of 1200 people. Mount Beauty is one of the countries mountain bike meccas, it has a fantastic network of hand built single track trails thanks to the hard working Team Mount Beauty cycling club. We spend a lot of time riding in these beautiful mountains of North East Victoria.

The Yak Attack. What the hell... 10 days, 350km, 15000m of climbing, a high point of 5416m

AND 17 mountain passes over 3600m! It's by no means the longest of distances (last year we rode over 400km) but the altitude and steep terrain is the real challenge. 2016 marks the 10th anniversary of the race so the organisers created a brand new route up into the Kingdom of Upper Mustang. As soon as I saw this route I was hooked, we only cover 4 days of the same terrain from last year with 6 days of new terrain which made it familiar but excitingly unknown. Upper Mustang is truly unique, it was a restricted demilitarised area until 1992 which makes it one of the most preserved regions in the world, most of the population still speak traditional Tibetan languages and the Tibetan culture has been preserved by the relative isolation of the region from the outside world. Mustang is in the rain shadow of the gigantic Annapurna and Dhaulagiri mountain ranges so is dry, barren and stark. It's a



rare high alpine desert.

### November 3rd

All of the athletes had arrived in Kathmandu ready to tackle the race, it was great fun catching up with old friends who had returned to race this special edition, riders like Yuki Ikeda, Paul Cooper, Tetsuo Shimada, Peter Butt, Neil Cottam as well as locals Tyler Mc Mahon and Jenny Caunt. The Nepali crew all arrived together which made it easy to catch up with Ajay Pandit Chhetri, Laxmi Magar, Roan Tamang, Aayman Tamang, Narayan Gopal Marhajan and RajKumar Shrestha. All the first timers or other returnees who I hadn't met were all equally excited to head into the unknown of Upper Mustang. Other notable riders who had joined the race were Cory Wallace, Thinus Redelinghuys, Wendy Lyall, Mireille Montminy and Tito Tomasi.

### November 4th

The race traditionally starts in the hills surrounding Kathmandu, however, this year the race began in the small mountain village of Besi Shahar which is generally considered the start point of the Annapurna Circuit. So we packed our bikes onto a bus and enjoyed a long windy drive up into the mountains, it was nice to see the countryside but I think cycling it might have been just as fast, haha... After arriving, everyone settled in and conducted last minute checks

on bicycles, enjoyed the sunset and mingled around the dining hall.

### November 5th

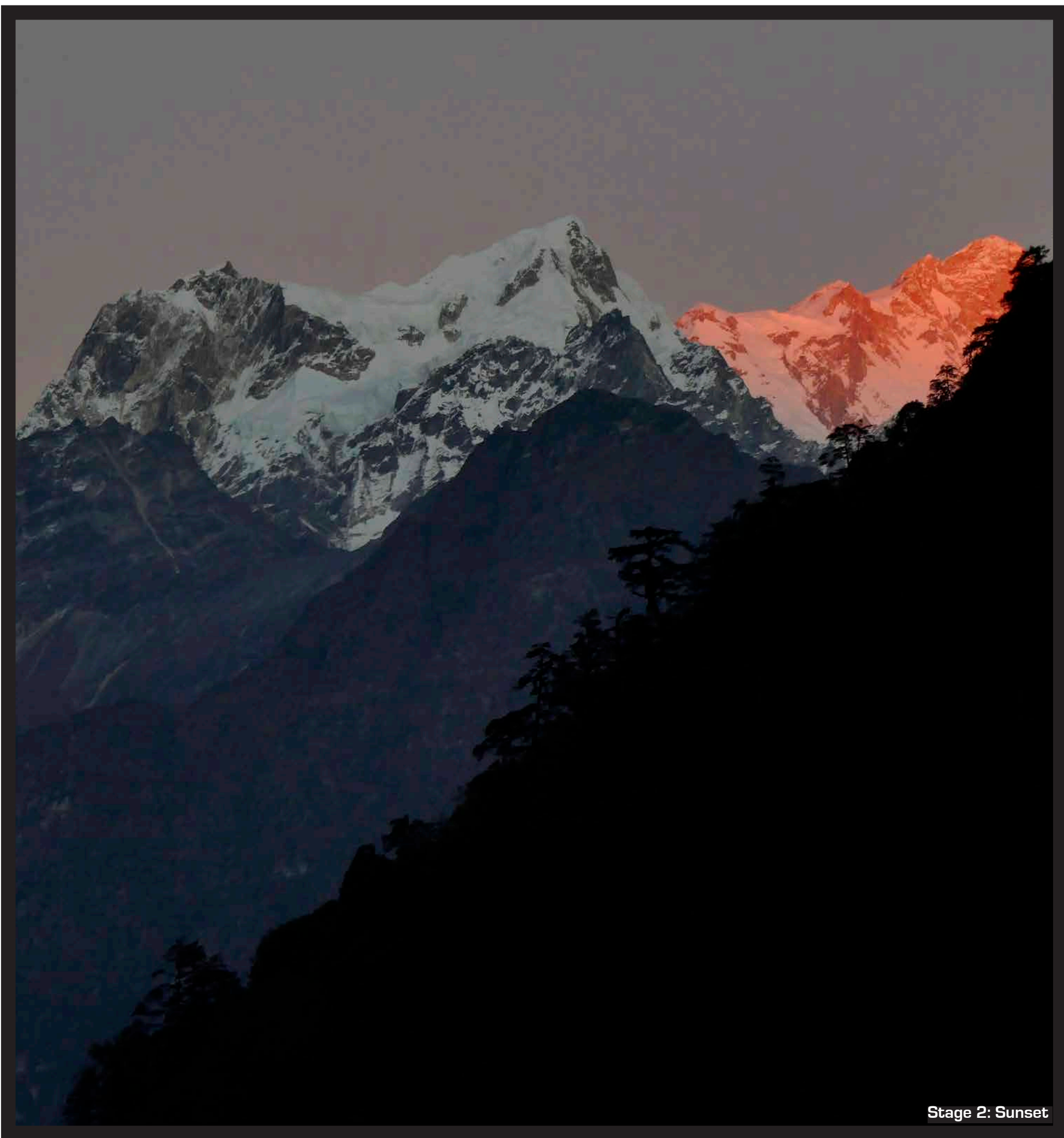
Stage 1  
Besi Sahar Time trial. 30km.  
1300m Ascent.

It was really nice not to have to pack our bags for the 1st day as the stage started and finished in Besi Sahar. Ajay Pandit Chhetri had created the loop before the monsoon early this year, however, a large portion of the descent had been affected by a large landslide so the trail had to be changed at the last minute to include a 2km hike a bike through the jungle and past a stunning waterfall. We began in 1 minute intervals which is a nice idea but I prefer the more traditional start so everyone can ride together, time trials are usually a pretty lonely affair. I'd organised for Leighann and I to start together which was a much nicer way to begin the race. The stage itself was a really good introduction to climbing in Nepal, steep, rough and long. The 16km climb is regarded as a Hors Classification (the toughest level) and it began right out of the start gate, it would be one of the longest climbs of the entire race. We rode together and gradually all other riders would come by us. By the time we reached the summit we'd been riding for 2 hours! The view at the top was spectacular and made up for the shock to



Stage 1: Streets riding





Stage 2: Sunset

the system.

As we began our descent my free hub body seized, basically i couldn't ride without pedalling which became a nightmare on the steep descent. I decided to break my chain and ride the last 15km without being able to pedal. Most of the descent was fine but as we reached the lower slopes we came across many rice farms that we had to zig zag through, i swear it was the flattest part of Nepal. I had to get off the bike and walk/run alongside it for many kilometres, i don't really enjoy running so it was pretty frustrating, the terrain and view was spectacular and it would have been really fun (and fast) to ride.

In summary it was a fairly average start to the race but we were happy to be able to ride together in the Himalaya and excited about the days to come. Our's wasn't the worst day, Aayman Tamang was struck by a motorcycle and broke 3 ribs only 100m from finishing the stage, his race was over. I felt really bad for him as he had been training and racing alongside Ajay in Europe during the Summer and I'm sure he would have been on the podium this year. Tan also suffered badly on this stage, she had picked up a terrible stomach bug and was very ill during the race. She was far from her best but is a true Yak Attack warrior and decided to continue onto stage 2.

## November 6th

### Stage 2

Besi Sahar to Chame. 66KM, 2900m Ascent.

This is the toughest stage of the race. It's one giant climb from beginning to end, it's steep, rough and terrible to ride. This stage has taken out more riders than all the other stages combined, riders like Cory Wallace and Yuki Ikeda (who both suffered from stomach bugs) have failed on this terrain. I also suffered badly from a stomach bug last year on this stage and failed to complete it, so I was back for redemption.

Leighann and I began well, riding with the tail end of the field and pushing through the first 25km in about 3 hours. That's where the climbing really picks up and it becomes a lot rougher. Since last year there have been upgrades to the road which included long stretches of sharp rock cobblestones, it was terrible to ride on the flatter sections and almost impossible on the steeper pinches. We began to slow down but were adamant to keep pushing through the day. Race organiser Phil Evans was riding with us and kept telling us we had plenty of time which was encouraging. The climb winds it way up through a beautiful gorge like valley, the mountain walls go straight up on either side and the sky above becomes smaller and smaller as you travel up the valley. It's actually quite



amazing that a road exists there at all with sheer drops on one side and heavy waterfalls on the other!

As we crossed over the 40km mark we'd been riding for over 6 hours, we'd slowed a fair bit and Phil had decided to end his day, he was suffering cramps and wished us good luck as he climbed into the jeep. We were riding on our own with the jeep behind us and we continued to push forward, only another 25km to go! The next 15km took us almost 4 hours and it had started to get dark, we'd been out on the limit, pushing ourselves for nearly 10 hours. The mind has to keep you going in these situations, if that fails then the body will fail too. We kept pushing...

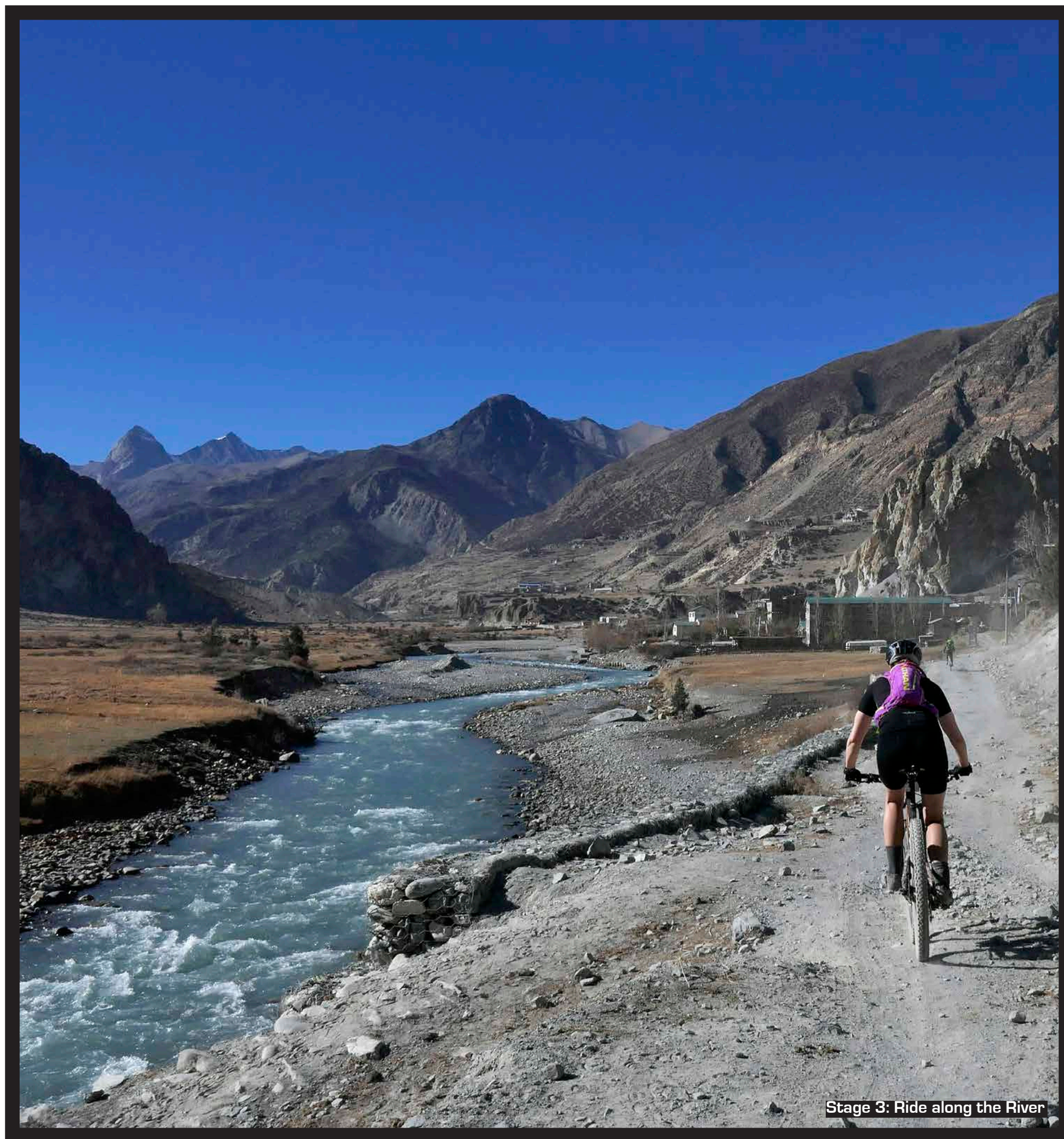
The sunset was absolutely stunning, a lone peak down the valley was lit up a deep dark red, I stopped for a quick photograph halfway up the last climb, it was one of the best sunsets I've witnessed and I was truly happy to be out there with Leighann pushing our bikes into the oncoming darkness. Our headlamps came out soon after and we kept pushing into the night. As we reached the water station at the 56km mark Phil asked what our intentions were, I was keen to keep riding as we had made it to the top of the climb and only a short 9km undulating section remained until the finish in Chame. He told us that it wasn't really safe to continue riding in the dark and

after about 5 seconds of looking down the trail into the gloom I wholeheartedly agreed, it was way to dark to keep riding. Our race was over. It was upsetting but I was happy. It had been an epic day and I was super proud of Leighann for pushing through the crazy mental barriers that this stage throws at you. We would continue riding along with the other racers but we wouldn't be timed for the remaining stages, in a sense the pressure of competing had been lifted and we were free to enjoy riding each day for the amazing scenery. Meanwhile, Tan had continued to suffer from a stomach bug, it had drained all of her energy and she was unable to eat, she also reached the 56km point and retired from the race. She decided to travel back to Kathmandu to recover, we were sad to see her leave but it was probably the wisest choice.

### November 7th

Stage 3  
Chame to Manang (3500m).  
30km, 1250m ascent.

This leg of the race is one of the more beautiful days on a bike, it begins by following the river upstream before one long climb of about 5km up through a pine forrest and a short punchy climb up to about 3500m. There is a nice descent and then we enter into a beautiful wide valley with the gigantic Gangapurna (7455m) looms high above Manang. Riding today with



Stage 3: Ride along the River





Stage 4: riding up above 4000m

Leighann was just brilliant fun, it's a ride that will be remembered for a long time. Arriving in Manang knowing that we have a rest day to acclimatise is also one of the highlights of the race as the area around Manang is beautiful and great to explore.

### November 8th

#### Rest day

Leighann and I spent the day relaxing and eating, I rode around the old city to explore. In 2015 we hiked up across the valley to acclimatise but this year we had done our acclimatisation hike up in the Everest region a few days before the race. We slept well and were feeling fine.

### November 9th

#### Stage 4

Manang to Thorong Phedi [4450m]. 16km, 1240m Ascent

The trail from Manang to Thorong Phedi is the best trail on the Annapurna Circuit, it's completely single track and has a lot of exposure. We rode above the treeline shortly after leaving Manang and would enjoy stunning views of the Annapurna range all day. It's amazing to ride at that altitude and can be mentally challenging, short climbs that would be easy to navigate at sea level become lung busting and it's easy to assume you're having a bad day as your legs hurt more than

usual. But in reality the amount of oxygen at that height is about two thirds of what we all normally breathe making even an everyday task like walking feel more difficult. So riding technical terrain at that altitude becomes much more challenging. It's what separates this race from almost every other race on earth and attracts athletes from countries far and wide.

Leighann and I rode consistently and enjoyed the stunning mountain views. I loved riding the sketchy landslide sections, it was fairly dangerous and adds a real excitement to the stage. The trail up to Phedi is just brilliant. We took about 3 hours to ride the stage and enjoyed lunch at the nice hotel up there at 4450m above sea level.

### November 10th

#### Stage 5

Thorong Phedi to Muktinath via Thorong La [5416m], 11km, 1036m ascent.

The dreaded pass day. It's the day every rider fears! We woke up at 2:45am to organise a 4:00am start to today's stage. It's necessary to begin so early to try and avoid the katabatic winds that come tearing up the other side of the pass. Just waking up that early to race is a struggle, eating a bowl of porridge at 3:00am becomes the biggest task before setting out, I managed half a bowl, Leighann only a few spoonfuls she would vomit only moments



before the start, it was the start of a rough morning for her.

Our headlamps set on bright and the bikes strapped to our backs to hike up the 5km to the top at 5416m above sea level, we set off bang on 4:00am and it was pitch black. We kept everyone in our sites for the incredibly steep first kilometre, it was a pretty big shock to the system but we kept trudging along in the dark. Just as the first signs of light started to appear in the sky, Leighann began to feel worse. She was very nauseous, had a headache and began to feel quite dizzy, these are all tell tale signs of Acute Mountain Sickness, the best remedy being to descend to a lower altitude so the body can easily utilise a higher density of oxygen. We were still on the way up the mountain...

At about the halfway point Leighann asked Phil (who was walking with us) if there was anyone to take her bike to the top of the pass. Luckily there was a guide who was willing to help and Leighann could move faster. We made good time from there on as the terrain is less steep and the sun had finally come up. We caught up with Singaporean athlete Ching Soo, he was a great addition to the race as he was constantly happy and positive, just being around him would make you feel better. He was taking his bike off his backpack to push it up the rest of the climb and we enjoyed having another rider to

walk the final kilometre to the top with.

We reached the top of the pass on a sensational morning after just under 4 hours, there was absolutely no wind and no snow. A truly perfect day to cross over the high pass of the Annapurna Circuit. We could now descend to a more oxygen rich environment, and what a fantastic descent it was. Pure mountain bike single track bliss. The first 3 kilometres was all easily ride-able and very flowy and we made great time. Leighann's headache became worse but the dizziness had subsided a bit, we then arrived at a steeper and more technical section of the trail, I managed to ride a fair bit but Leighann was struggling so we stopped for some food and walked a few of the steeper sections. We then arrived at the Jeep trail, which is basically the rockiest and most bumpy road you can imagine, we chose to ride it though as it was a bit faster than walking down the steep walking trail.

After an epic day we rode into Muktinath at about 12:30, perfect timing for lunch! Leighann spent the rest of the day in bed trying to rest and recover, she couldn't eat much and Keith Green (the race doctor and racer) gave her a batch of tablets to help fight the altitude sickness symptoms.



Stage 5: Me descent





Stage 6: Kids with Tito

## November 11th

### Stage 6

Muktinath to Ghiling. 43km, 2500m ascent.

The great unknown! Today history was made, it would be the first time that anyone would race a bicycle into Upper Mustang and it was absolutely amazing. The only downside of the day was that Leighann would sit out today's stage, she hadn't recovered enough energy and was still suffering Acute Mountain Sickness.

We began today's stage with a brilliant 5km single track climb back up to 4080m, the view across to Annapurna (8091m, the 10th highest mountain on earth) and Dhaulagiri (8167m, the 7th highest mountain on earth) was most likely one of the best vantage points to witness these giants. Unfortunately I left my camera with Leighann, so I didn't get a picture, but the view was too memorable to forget anyway. What followed from the top of Gyu La was the best mountain bike descent I have ever done. It was super steep, loose, off camber and the soil was out of this world. The closest thing I can relate it too was skiing in powder snow, you would turn and the bike would drift and then sink into deep but grippy sand, a moment later the rubber of the tyres would bite and you would be back under control. The trail descended for about 10km through narrow gorges and would change from

black sand to red earth before finally weaving through giant yellow rock pillars. The diversity of the terrain in such a short section of trail was unbelievable and truly sensational. Everyone I spoke to had the same feeling.

But the stage was far from over.

What followed was the longest climb so far, 18km of climbing with 3 passes. The first was a long steep climb from 2900m up to 3600m, I rode alongside 2015 Yak Attack companions Tetsuo Shimada and Paul Cooper who were great company throughout the day. Once getting to the top of the 3600m you could then look up at the 3800m pass above you off in the distance and then upon reaching that point you could then look up and see the next pass at 4000m. It was soul destroying to achieve one pass just to look up at the next in the distance but it was also exhilarating to be riding up in Upper Mustang, every valley was completely different then then next, the colours of the sand and rock mountains would seemingly change at random, it's indescribable...

Riding down into Ghiling was a great moment, I rode the last 5km with Yak Attack first timer Craig Forsyth which was great fun. It took just under 5 hours to complete the stage.



## November 12th

### Stage 7

Ghiling to Lo Manthang. 38km, 1600m ascent.

The profile of today's stage looks like a row of shark teeth, up, down, up, down, up, down.. It was another brilliant day of riding in Upper Mustang. Leighann had decided to sit out today's stage and follow in the jeep again, after not eating for 2 days it was a wise choice as we are still riding up at altitude and the climbs are long and steep. To ride without any energy stores is just not smart. She was frustrated at not being able to ride as we came all this way to ride together, but her time would come.

The first climb of the day was the steepest and took us back over 4000m, it began straight away and many riders struggled to begin the day with a tough climb. I found myself midfield towards the top of the first climb but riders gradually caught up to me throughout the day and I was riding with the same riders as the previous day. The first descent of the day was by far the bumpiest of the race, my arms were wrecked by the bottom. The 2nd climb was brilliant, a typical switchback climb of about 4km where you can see riders zig zagging there way up the entire mountain. I'd look up at a spot and see a rider and think I could catch them, but it would take half an hour to reach that spot, then I'd look

down and see riders all over the mountainside, I felt it was a really great climb for the race as you had interaction with everyone and there was great camaraderie. The descent down the other side was brilliant, super smooth and really really fast.

The third and last climb of the day was twice as long as the first two but at a gentler gradient, about halfway up there was this beautiful and massive Stupa, it was literally in the middle of nowhere and was so amazing to see during the stage. I couldn't help but stop and wonder at it. The descent into Lo Manthang was brilliant also, a wide open road where you could ride almost anywhere you wanted, a super fun way to finish the stage. Craig and I would ride into town after just under 4 hours.

## November 13th

### Rest Day around Lo Manthang

The organisers of this year's race had planned a 20km stage that would start and finish in Lo Manthang but they decided to cancel the stage in favour of a rest day.

It was a great idea and everyone thought it was the best choice. After a healthy sleep in Leighann and I decided to join a group ride out to Choser (the last town before entering China) and the famous caves out there. It was fantastic to ride alongside the other riders at a leisurely pace



Stage 7: Middle of nowhere





Stage 9: Me

and explore exposed ridge lines and ride up barren valleys, I felt like I could ride anywhere up here, the only limit being imagination. It was brilliant. We explored the caves of Choser which were very impressive and very old, over 1000 years!!! We also visited the local monastery which has been built into a giant wall, it was super impressive and interesting to step inside.

On the return ride Leighann was again feeling ill and vomited once more, she was very weak but finally could stomach food, she was back on the bike but not ready to tackle the queen stage of the race the following day.

#### November 14th

Stage 9 Lo Manthang to Chele, 54km. 2825m ascent.

Quite possibly today's stage was the toughest of the race. Although 10km shorter than stage 2, every part of today was up over 3400m. We crossed 6 Passes! The first up at 4250m and the second up at 4150m. 2 over 3900m and the final two at 3800m! It was an epic day.

The first 20km was on single track, we climbed straight away up a remote valley strewn with boulders with mountains all around, it took me a while to get going this morning but by the top of the first pass I was feeling good. The single track between the first 2 passes was brilliant, very flowy yet exposed, you

could see all the way to the top of the 2nd pass. I was riding alongside Paul, Tetsuo, Ching Soo, Rachel and Julia. The descent down the 2nd pass was another one of those fantastic trails, although not as bike friendly as the trail on Stage 6, the terrain was simply stunning, we rode through huge rock formations on loose black sand, the trail was littered with rocks and was also quite steep which made for a technical descent where looking ahead was critical.

Upon reaching the bottom we were greeted with a massive open boulder field where there was no discernible trail, many people just continued riding the fall line thinking to bump into a trail sooner or later. I followed Tetsuo and Paul down the boulder field before Paul noticed people riding above us on a road, so we traversed across and descended a super steep cliff face to join them on the road, we only lost about 20 minutes, some other riders were not as lucky...

After finding our way back onto the road the stage turned into a great battle of climb after climb. We almost covered the same amount of ground as stages 6 and 7 combined. What made it worse as the day wore on was the really strong headwind which continually blew into us, but we persevered and pass after pass we fought on. I rode with Paul and Tetsuo for most of the day with Craig not too far



to complete the stage. It was an epic day but it was also sad to leave the upper reaches of Mustang behind. I felt like every pedal stroke was taking me further from a mystical and wonderful region of the world which I fell for instantly.

After the long last descent into Chele I could feel the sense of wonder and achievement amongst my friends. We had truly experience something special.

November 15th

Stage 10  
Chele to Jomsom, 30km,  
1280m ascent.

Leighann and I began the race together and we would finish it together. She had recovered enough strength to ride the last stage and it was a joy to share the trail with her again. We actually missed the start of the stage as we still had our down jackets to put in the sweep vehicle at the start, but there was no Jeep. Luckily a cameraman was filming and we left our jackets with him after watching the entire field ride off, haha.

It was another beautiful day in Nepal and another new section of trail was found by Ajay for us to enjoy. We had stunning views of Dhaulagiri all day and one last fantastic single track descent out of Kagbeni before a brutal slog into the headwind through the Kali Gandhi riverbed.

The finish in Jomsom was good and the sense of achievement was real. We enjoyed a relaxing afternoon with old and new friends who now have all ridden alongside each other in this wonderful country Nepal.

The overall winners of the race

OPEN MEN

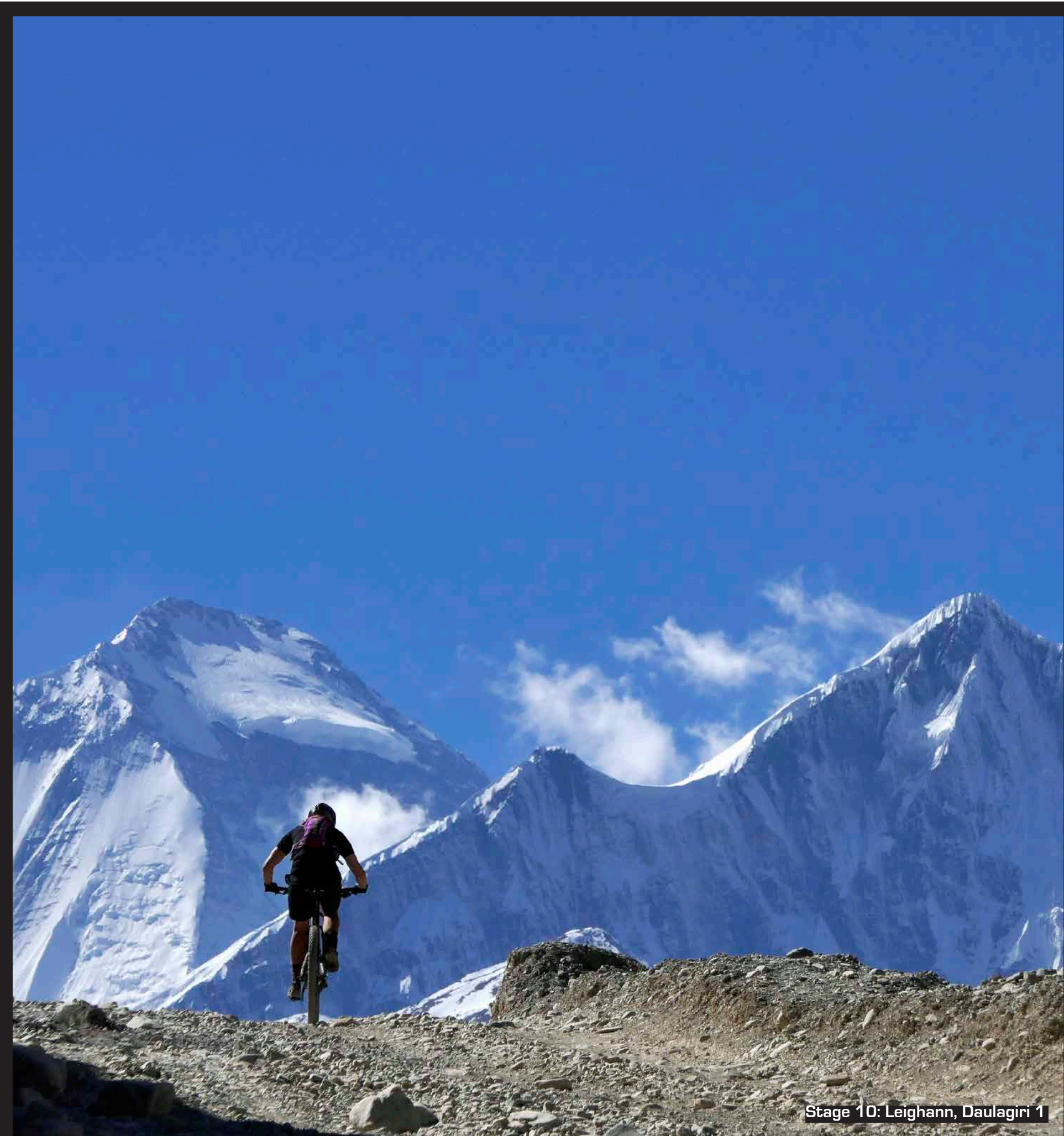
- 1. Cory Wallace 22:32:48
- 2. Thinus Redelinghuys 22:45:51
- 3. Peter Butt 24:15:18
- 4. Ajay Pandit Chhetri 24:48:06
- 5. Yuki Ikeda 24:55:55

OPEN WOMEN

- 1. Sabrina Filzmoser 34:46:48
- 2. Laxmi Magar 35:55:24
- 3. Rachel Walker 40:33:58

I was lucky enough receive an official finishers certificate thanks to the organisers of the race for recognising my effort to continue racing all of the stages of the race. I was really there to ride alongside my Fiancé Leighann, I believe that if we can ride such an epic mtb race (regarded as one of the toughest of 2016) together, than we can achieve anything together. I am one lucky guy!!!!

The epic terrain and amazing culture will always keep me coming back to Nepal and the Himalaya, there's so much left to explore and many amazing people to meet and ride along side with. I can't wait to come back an discover more trails that will make it onto my all time favourites list, until then, happy riding and thanks for reading!



Stage 10: Leighann, Daulagiri 1





# ITS **TOUGH** AT THE **TOP**

## TAYLOR VERNON

but maybe even tougher when you're consistently falling just outside of that magical top twenty Elites, with all the uncertainty that brings with it. Taylor Vernon is one of the toughest riders we know, in 2014, just 13 months after catastrophically breaking his back in Les deux Alpes 2014 he came back strong to take his first Junior World Cup win. Here he talks about the 2016, season, injury, fails and having the guts to keep on until shit comes right.



TV: Well, 2016 definitely ended better than it started, two personal bests in my last two World Cups. It was about time to be fair. If I'd been 29th at Lourdes and 23rd at Cairns – THAT would've been what I wanted to build on, but the season started out shitty, no other word for it! I was niggled by injuries and by low self confidence if I'm honest. Looking back at Lourdes I could have pushed on for more, the track changed from wet to dry for race runs and I rode in wet mode. I feel good on that track so I kicked myself. 32nd ??

Coming in to Cairns I felt great. The team arrived early and had an amazing week acclimatizing. We checked out the Great Barrier Reef and managed to get some good riding and testing in so I had the bike feeling good.

Practise was awesome, I love that track! I was stoked to Qualify 23rd (my best ever place in the Elites) I felt like I could kick off the season... until I nailed myself in practise.

It was the silliest little mistake but those Cairns trees are tough and they took me down! As I got wheeled in to hospital I was so bummed. I literally had flash backs of last time I got taken to hospital when I broke my back and I got pretty emotional. I kept asking myself "Why?" Just as things started to go my way I get shut down!







At the time my shoulder didn't look that bad. The Doc said that I'd bashed my auxiliary nerve and it should come around in the next 2 weeks. But to this day it still hasn't come back so I've been racing with one shoulder. That side of me looks about 10 years old. It's such an annoying injury because there's nothing you can do to make it stronger you just have to sit and wait. It has affected my season a lot, although I attended the races I was just plodding down.

Well, I didn't plod at Fort William, that was a mess. It never really goes my way that place. I was having some big crashes but felt like I was riding OK – I didn't make the connection with my weak shoulder. In Qualis I said I'd just have a clean run to get me down but I ended up having an off and qualified 81st. It couldn't get any shitter. From qualifying 23rd to 81st in the next race. I was sat there with my Dad like WTF. I was super bummed for Gee-man too we both walked out of there pretty battered.

I couldn't stay on my bike at Leogang either. At this point I had to take on board that it was my shoulder, I had to take a step back, I was really questioning myself, my confidence was zero. Then



we had a bit of time off, I did a BDS race and came 6th with some good racing and that was good for me. Lenzerheide was fun, I felt like I was actually racing my bike again. I ended up 42nd which isn't a great result but it felt like heading in the right direction.

And once things start to go right...National Champs went well too, I was stoked that there was such a stacked field, the Brits are really on fire these days. I managed 8th place just 0.5 off a top 5 position. Such tight times and really good racing. I was so happy to be amongst the top boys and managed to just sneak ahead of Gee-man for the first time ever which was quite nice haha

MSA is rad, one of my favourites, we got lucky with the weather so the track was prime. I had been out on the moto training hard, it was a fast one, with speeds of 70kmh!

Quali sucked. I literally plodded down, super-careful to save my wheels after writing off about 5 in practice. But we made it in the big show and I still had some life in my shoulder come Finals so I went for it! I was in 24th before my arm got weak in







the final sector and put me back to 29th but I was pretty stoked with my best Elite result to date. So yeah I walked away from there smiling, just thinking "what if I hadn't fallen at Cairns? But that is racing I guess, it's cruel!"

Andorra was cruel for sure. I'd never raced there before but I reckon it's one of the hardest tracks on the circuit, long, physical, fast and super steep at the bottom. The track got so beat up and dusty it was like riding on sand...

On my first attempt at a full run I came in to one of the harder sections on the lower part of the track. I landed off the bridge gap and started dropping low, heading towards a big stump, there was no way to slow down, I just had to slam in to it. I'm sure you've seen it all over the web! Broke my nose and bumped my head so it was off to hospital again.

I woke the next day sore everywhere but I was determined to ride. The bump on my head made me so groggy that I thought I was going flat out but I was actually going slow and everything was coming at me fast!! I literally scraped in to Finals with 73rd. That night I walked the track and had to



figure stuff out and get my shit together ready for race day.

And yeah, next morning, I was riding with a bit of fight in me. The head definitely wasn't 100 percent but I was feeling a lot better. I was enjoying it! I said to myself "I'm going to go out there and put in a fast one, if I make mistakes I make them, the weekend was already at rock bottom...

Actually it got a bit worse, I was riding so shitty! I was saying to myself "this is a disaster, I need to find a bit of rhythm" so I kept cracking on and at split 2 things started to get better, by the time I was near the bottom I knew I needed to go for it so I charged on to cross the line 3 seconds up, into the hot seat!

I stayed in the hot seat for a good while to end up finishing with another PB for me in 26th. I was super -stoked that I'd had the character to turn it round and proud to walk out of there happy. Big Gee-man trucked down despite his injury and Rach won again for a full house of World Cups which was awesome. The team had a pretty big night that's for sure and it was great to have the family there keeping my chin up, my mum was out of the





running by about 8 o'clock!

I would have wanted more if it all sailed smoothly, it would have been nice to creep up on that top 20, but I will get there soon. I just need to fix up my shoulder and work on things for 2017...


**As I write this rehab is going awesome and I know I can do it.**





# HEAD TO TOE RIDING GEAR RANGE

 Mesum Verma

 Scott Sports

SCOTT Sports India, the Indian arm of the globally recognised multi sport company SCOTT Sports, leading manufacturer of high-end cycling, launches its first ever Head to Toe riding gear range. SCOTT's new "Head to Toe" concept comprises of gloves, helmets, cycling apparel, eye wear and cycling specific shoes for biking enthusiasts with a focus on Make In India.







**SUPRA PLUS HELMET**



**ENDURANCE SF GLOVES**

Price of Head to Toe Riding Gear  
range starts at INR 1800/- and  
go up to INR 20,000/-



**RC TEAM BIBSHORTS**



**RC TEAM SHIRT**



**LEAP SUNGLASSES**



**ROAD COMP SHOE**





The SCOTT Supra PLUS Helmet offers a great combination of contemporary styling, excellent fit and the added safety of an integrated MIPS Brain Protection System. All of this at a price point which ensures even the most cost conscious cyclists can benefit from the very latest in helmet safety technology.

The SCOTT Leap LS sunglasses are our multi-functional sport shields of choice that challenge the standards of comfort and performance, guaranteeing an unobstructed field of vision and unparalleled fit. Equipped with our industry leading light sensitive lens technology these sunnies have you covered in any light or weather conditions. We've even included an extra clear lens.



The key highlight of the "Head to Toe" riding gear range is the exclusive range of cycling apparel with a focus on Make In India as the fabric and padding is imported from Italy and manufactured here with fits as per Indian body types. The cycling apparel comprises of jerseys, padded bib shorts and shorts. The cycling specific jerseys are made of technical fabric aided to keep cyclists comfortable during all their rides and feature a silicone gripper on the waist for an optimum fit, along with back pockets to store essentials. Cycling specific padded bib shorts and shorts feature an anatomic padding which aid in a comfortable ride without experiencing any problem.



The SCOTT Endurance SF glove is built for the all day epic rides. Highest level gel padding on palmside reduces shock and vibration for a smoother ride and maximum performance. The TPX taped frame construction on back of hand gives rider a seamless fit and the span mesh chassis provides excellent ventilation.



“We at SCOTT India are committed to provide Indian Cyclists the opportunity to buy all what SCOTT has to offer from its global range of products. Many a times I see cyclists in our country wearing cheap imitation apparel whilst on rides, and that’s because International cycling brands don’t always make their range of products available to the Indian consumer. We wanted to change that and as part of our Make In India initiative we are very excited to present to the Indian consumer a range of Cycling Apparel made in India adhering to the same quality and fabric standards of SCOTT globally. We are working closely with our suppliers in India to work on a range not only for the Indian consumer, but also export globally to our other markets from India,” said, Jaymin Shah, Country Manager, SCOTT Sports India.



The SCOTT RC Team 20 short sleeve shirt is a quarter zip jersey that offers 3 classic back pockets for storage while riding. The all over print will show your team spirit and give you the performance you need.

The SCOTT RC Team bibshorts feature SCOTT’s ++ Performance padding and mesh bib straps for the ventilation and comfort you need on race days. The new silicone leg hem grippers hold the shorts in place and the UV-protection fabric protects you from the sun’s harmful rays, so all you have to think about is your riding.



Proving that great fit and high performance don’t have to break the budget, the SCOTT Road Comp shoe is perfect for discerning enthusiasts and recreational riders who appreciate great fit. The adaptive fit pattern features a wrap canopy with velcro adjustable d-ring positioning and two lower direct mount anatomic fit straps that can articulate to adapt to the shape of the foot. The injection nylon and glass fiber sole has an increased range of cleat adjustment with a stiffness index of 6.





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