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#yakru #enduro #race #nepal





# ON THE RADAR







It was Thailand's first foray into the world of the Enduro World Series, with Chiang Mai hosting the 3rd and final stage of the Asia-Pacific Continental Series of the EWS for the first time and participants were in for a treat as they experienced some of the finest trails in Asia.

Chiang Mai is the epicenter for mountain biking in South East Asia, with an extensive trail network located within Doi Suthep-Pui National Park, which overlooks the city. There is a wide variety of trails to be found, with steep, rooty and rocky, to fast and flowy with bermed corners and plenty of features.





The weather was perfect for the 4 day event, hosted by Trailhead Thailand - a leading mountain bike tour company, with clear blue skies and temperatures hovering around 25 degrees C. The trails were dry and dusty but in good shape thanks to the team of volunteers that has helped shape them for several months prior to the event. Over 200 people registered and participated in the event, from an incredible 37 nations. For many, the Amazing Thailand International Chiang Mai Enduro is the can't miss event of the year and was their





2nd or 3rd time participating, for others it was their first time visiting the region and for all those involved it was a memorable event in terms of biking, meeting new friends and experiencing the local culture. A number of professional mountain bikers from around the world also joined, including Cody Kelley (winner of the 2018 International Chiang Mai Enduro), Wyn Masters and Matej Charvat among others.

The event comprised of 8 special stages and 8 liaison stages taking





place over 2 days. Each day involved approximately 23km of mountain biking with 700-800m of gain each day. Doi Suthep-Pui National Park is renowned for its grueling climbs and participants were certainly tested during the event. The first 2 days gave participants a chance to practice each of the stages and familiarize themselves with the terrain and trail conditions. A shuttle service was provided by the organizers to take them to near the top of the mountain at 1500m for a morning session and afternoon session to ensure everyone had



enough time to practice. Practice day 2 also included a qualifying session to determine the starting waves for race day.

All participants gathered at 7am on the 30th November to depart for race day 1. A mass start from liaison stage 1 ended in the hilltribe village of Chan Khian, with school children presenting every participant with a handmade wrist band as a good luck charm before performing a short dance showcasing village traditions. With the Special Stage





starting near the village, a large boisterous crowd formed at the start to cheer everyone on with qualification winner, Matej Charvat starting proceedings on day 1 but it was 2018 winner Cody Kelley who came out on top at the end of the day. In the women's elite category, Ingrid Larouche was out in front on day 1 and led Chelsea Kimball by just under 5 seconds after the 4 Special Stages.

Day 2 was another tough battle between the men and women elite








riders with perhaps the 2 most technical stages 5 and 6 to get through. As the trails became dry, dusty and loose riders had to stay focused not to make a mistake and by the end of day 2 it was Matej Charvat, 3rd from day 1 that won, with Cody Kelley in 2nd and Wyn Masters in 3rd. Despite this, the win wasn't enough to seal overall victory which went to Cody Kelly for the 2nd year in a row with just 13 seconds separating him from Wyn Masters in 2nd place and Matej Charvat taking 3rd.



A full-page photograph of a mountain biker in a red helmet and black jersey riding a red and white bike down a stone step in a forest. The rider is in a dynamic pose, leaning forward. The background is a dense forest with many trees and green foliage. A black metal railing is visible on the left side of the path. The lighting is bright, suggesting a sunny day.

The top riders in the elite women's category remained consistent throughout the race and on day 2 Ingrid Larouche again took the victory by the smallest of margins over Chelsea Kimball and after 2 days of racing won by just 10 seconds with CJ Selig taking 3rd position.

With the Asia Pacific Continental Series wrapped up in Chiang Mai, the winners of the 3 race series were announced. Cody Kelley was the overall men's winner, Rowena Fry, the women's winner, the men's



under 21 title went to Roland Kyme, women's under 21 to Isabella Flint, Men Master 40+ went to Lionel Sequera and the women master 35+ went to Ingrid Larouche.

Despite the tough racing, there was an amazing atmosphere throughout the event and camaraderie between riders and spectators. The event was supported by a large number of volunteers and support staff, all of whom are passionate about developing mountain biking in







Chiang Mai which was reflected in the atmosphere.

Race director, H.S.H Nawaphansa Yugala stated after the event *"It has been a privilege to welcome 200 participants from 37 countries throughout the world to Chiang Mai and the Amazing Thailand International Chiang Mai Enduro". "We hope the event leaves a lasting impression and has given the opportunity for people to meet new friends, experience Thai culture and ride our fantastic trails."*



Women's Elite					
1st	Ingrid Larouche	20:45.14	(1)	18:12.51	(1) 38:57.65
2nd	Chelsea Kimball	20:50.77	(2)	18:17.43	(2) 39:08.20
3rd	CJ Selig	21:24.07	(3)	18:35.31	(3) 39:59.38
4th	Hannah Binder	21:57.64	(4)	19:43.95	(4) 41:41.59
5th	Riska Amelia Agustina	23:26.76	(6)	20:36.27	(5) 44:03.03

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**Men's Elite**

1st	Cody Kelley	16:43.20	(1)	14:18.29	(2)	31:01.49
2nd	Wyn Masters	16:56.40	(2)	14:18.40	(3)	31:14.80
3rd	Matej Charvat	17:04.10	(3)	14:13.99	(1)	31:18.09
4th	Dan Sheng Shan Chiang	17:09.82	(4)	14:38.65	(4)	31:48.47
5th	Aaron Bradford	17:11.77	(5)	14:52.14	(6)	32:03.91





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# 泉林 欢乐世界

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“What an experience! To travel to China and race was very exciting, as I’ve never visited the country before, so it was real adventure. The race track was at a very interesting venue because there was a small theme park at the bottom of the track. The MTBer friendly hotel that we stayed in was also at the venue within walking distance of the race which was very convenient. The track itself was awesome! Super fast and loose with some very challenging sections including two very difficult rock gardens.



I arrived on Wednesday so I had 4 days to do practice runs before the race. I spent the practice time gradually building my speed and testing different line options. I had to be careful not to have any big crashes because there wasn't much grip on the loose ground. I actually had a small crash during my first practice run because I wasn't ready for how slippery the surface under my tyres was! I worked with the other riders to compare speed through different lines and by the end of







practice I was feeling good on the track and ready to go fast.

The qualifying round was on the Saturday and I had a wild run to qualify fastest by 4 seconds. I had pushed too hard in places and got sketchy, almost crashing in a few places. I felt like I could go faster in the race run by about 3 seconds, but I knew I needed to ride smoother and avoid being too aggressive to avoid crashing out.

On Saturday night we



went to visit the local city for a look at the culture in the area. It was really interesting to see how different everything is in China compared with England.

On Sunday it was race day. We had a short practice session in the morning of race day between 8 and 9am. I used this session to run through my lines a final time to make sure I was ready to do a perfect race run with no mistakes in the afternoon. After practice, we went and enjoyed the opening







ceremony for the event. It was really great to be at an event with such an exciting atmosphere where the organisers have put in lots of effort to make sure the event is well advertised and have good coverage. I couldn't believe that I was interviewed for TV, as events in the UK don't have this level of coverage.

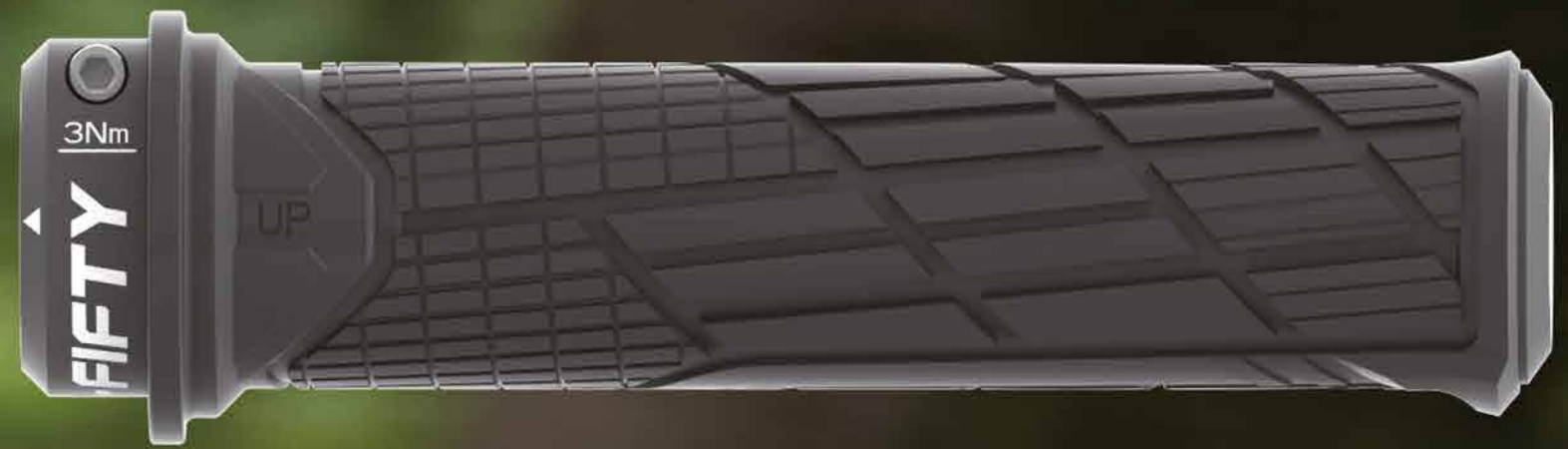
My race run went very well. I didn't make any mistakes and won by 2 seconds and my time was 4 seconds faster than my



qualifying run. The other elites rode really well making me push super hard to take the win so it was a great race. To see my race run you can visit my Instagram TV channel - [jackreading\\_mtb](#) I also have a YouTube channel with a video series called "MTB Life" so people can tune in to that by searching "Jack Reading" on YouTube and my episode on my China adventure is now live. Thanks to the event and organisers for having me in China, and I hope to visit again.







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Kristina Vackova, Col Elmore, Dane Cronin,  
Riley Seebeck, Sunil Sharma



Wilson Low



# DUST and ICE

AN ENDURO ON THE ROOF OF THE WORLD



# YAKRU

## ENDURO





The Ngawal Valley of the Annapurna Conservation Area of Nepal was the setting for a 3-day enduro race unlike any other: the Yak Ru Enduro. The 'blind' format race, held from the 13th to 15th of November, encompassed 9 timed stages between elevations of 3200 to 4100 metres above-sea-level and would prove to be the ultimate test of rider and bike.

The journey to the race venue had racers transported from the hustle and bustle of Kathmandu's congested street to the rarified air and primeval alpine environment of the Manang District where, from their accommodation and race HQ - the Ngawal Mountain Home in the village of Ngawal - they would launch their high-altitude campaign.

The race trails of the Yak Ru included lots of 'natural singletrack' – routes carved out by generations-old usage from villagers and their animals. Also in the mix were sections of some world-class hiking routes that were deemed 'just about rideable' by the organizers, including parts of the renowned Annapurna Circuit Trek, as well as tracks that passed through autumnal agricultural fields and ancient villages. Apart from the speed and 'natural flow' that these trails afforded, there were also significantly technical, high-commitment sections consisting of tight switchbacks, steep chutes, and rock gardens filled with loose shale and boulders.

On top of the demanding trail conditions that had to be raced



‘onsight’, racers also had to contend with the reduced oxygen levels of high altitude – a factor that reduced many uphill or low-traction segments of the transfers between timed stages to ‘hike-a-bikes’. Also, with early-morning flag-offs being significantly cold before the full warmth of the sun could hit the slopes, the athletes often had to layer up with extra clothing at the start to maintain their core temperature. The media and medical teams that followed the racers throughout the course were likewise challenged on-course. Still, the Himalayan weather gods were kind enough to grace all three days of racing with warm weather and clear skies, and these dry conditions would set the stage for some extremely fast, dust-laden tracks and competition.

For the first day of racing, the opening stage featured a descent from the Milarepa Cave holy site, under the imposing peak of Annapurna III; followed by two shorter stages close to the local Tibetan School. American rider Tom Sampson forged ahead of his fellow Yeti Cycles teammate, the Canadian Geoff Kabush in the men’s field. The North American duo was trailed by the Gabriel Sarsuelo Amigo (Trek TYK) of the Philippines. In the women’s race, it was an all-Antipodean podium consisting of Megan Rose (Yeti Cycles) of Australia leading out the New Zealander runner-ups Phoebe Coers (Mons Royale) and Robin Pieper (Ground Effect/Santa Cruz NZ).







The good weather continued into the second day of racing, with Stage 4 dropping from high above Ngawal – the start of which was accessed by climbing an imposing staircase built into the ridgeline adorned with shrines and prayer flags. After a short Stage 5 close to the village, racers then tackled a long and arduous 2.5-hour transfer stage to the top of the remote Julu Plateau, where they then dropped into Stage 6. This stage had several highlights, including the first truly steep and loose sections of the race; the challenge of dealing with pockets of deep dust on a high-speed section of 4WD track (that hid some potentially race-ending ‘baby-head’ rocks); and the novelty of racing through the main thoroughfare of Julu village. Sampson maintained his lead over Kabush and Amigo while putting significant time into 4th and 5th place-getters - the Scotsman Steven Cox and the Kiwi Ben Gibson - respectively. In the women’s field, Coers’ strong rally on the opening stage allowed her to finish the day just two seconds adrift of Rose, with Pieper a further 32 seconds back.

The third and final day of racing saw the athletes once again take on the now-infamous ridgeline stairs. The transfer then continued, traversing across to the neighbouring ridgeline to the start of Stage 7 - a remote shepherd’s trail which had only been recently scouted and recorded as a ‘first descent on mountain bike’ by the course marking crew just three days prior. In



contrast to the high-speed flow of this newly-minted line, Stage 8 featured a low-speed jank-fest through some old ruins near Ngawal village. A last short transfer then brought athletes to the concluding race stage, which dropped steeply (and loosely!) from the Ngawal Monastery before turning into a raucous, flow-filled descent to the final finish line.

The dust settling from the racing action saw Sampson emerge champion in the men's race, 28 seconds ahead of Kabush and almost 3.5 minutes ahead of Amigo. Rose triumphed in the women's category, having built a comfortable lead of 38 seconds over Coers over the three days of competition, with Pieper in 3rd place more than 2 minutes back.

The Yak Ru Enduro was as much an adventure as it was a race - for the athletes as well as the teams of bike-borne media and medical staff. The remote, almost mythical setting that is the Nepalese Himalayas was very much on the 'bucket list' to visit for all riders involved, let alone race in. The Yak Ru's successful conclusion hopefully cements the Ngawal Valley - and its network of raw, remote, pristine trails - in the pantheon of ultimate MTB riding destinations in Asia, if not the world.

The founders and organizers of the 2019 Yak Ru Enduro would like to thank all athletes, staff, volunteers, sponsors, and partners for their commitment and support in making this 'enduro on the roof of the







world' a true success in its execution, and a validation of their collective efforts and contributions.

"Yak Ru!"

### Final Overall Results

#### Men's Open

**1st** - Tom Sampson (USA):  
31:36.41

**2nd** - Geoff Kabush (CAN):  
32:04.88

**3rd** - Gabriel Ill Sarsuelo Amigo: 35:05.43

**4th** - Steven Cox (GBR):  
38:38.58

**5th** - Ben Gibson (NZL):  
38:44.65

#### Women's Open

**1st** - Megan Rose (AUS):  
40:42.34

**2nd** - Phoebe Coers (NZL):  
41:20.52

**3rd** - Robin Pieper (NZL):  
42:35.16

*Post-script: The next edition of the Yak Ru Enduro takes place 1 to 11 November 2020. Find out all the details and information for registration at [www.yakru.com](http://www.yakru.com)*





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## #special #thanks

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