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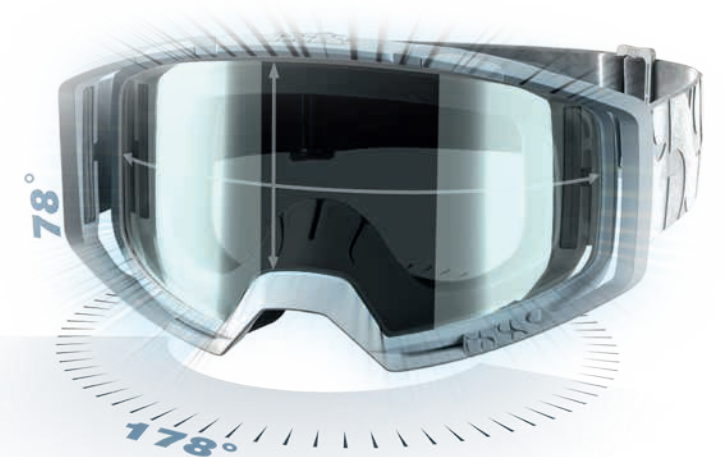






# TRIGGER

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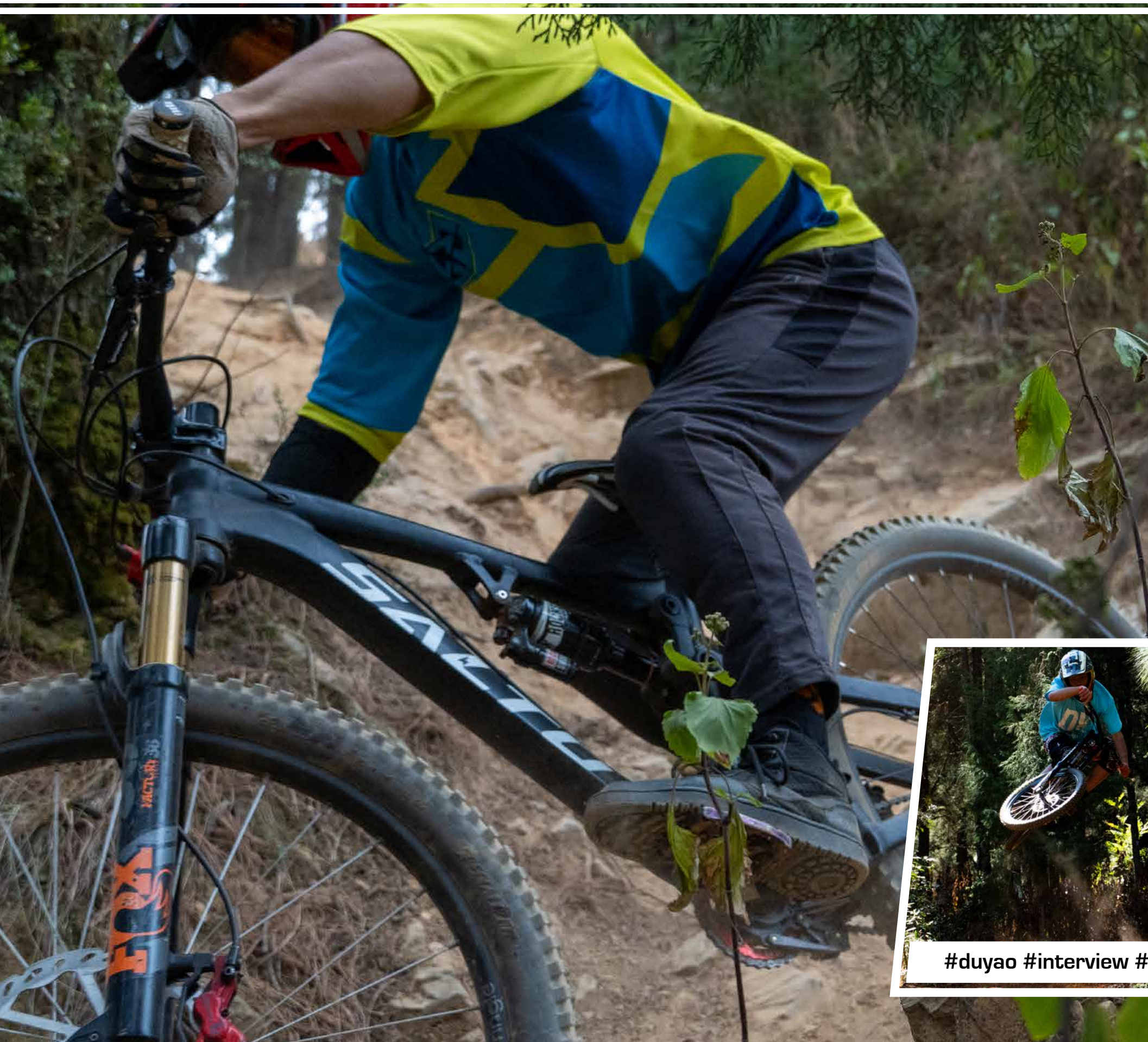
#CONTENT

#ISSUE64

#APR2020

#cover #scottsecco

#rider #wynmasters #florentpoilane #codykelley



#madmantrails #bhutan



#duyao #interview #china



#contrasts #taiwan #1of3





SPEED RACE WHITE



PANTS SEND IT



GLOVES RAD RED



 Scott Secco

 Florent Poilane / Madman Trails of Buthan


Bhutan Philanthropy Ventures

**At the invitation of His Royal Highness, Prince Jigyel Ugyen Wangchuck, founder of Bhutan Philanthropy Ventures Private Limited (BPV), a commercially operating social enterprise founded to sustain the philanthropic activities of the Tarayana Foundation, organized a visit for Wyn Masters, Cody Kelley, Florent Poilane and film maker Scott Secco. The four travelled from 3 different continents to test some of the hitherto uncharted routes that the BPV intends to offer as part of a phenomenal mountain biking tour package under the Prince's direction.**







As they ride their way from the capital city of Thimphu towards the Madman Trails in Punakha, a panoramic view of some of the tallest mountains in the country opens up at the Dochula mountain pass (3100m ASL).



The crew then drop down the misty rhododendron forest following local pinner, Tandin “Junior” Wang, to reach the subtropical valley of Punakha.

This is one for the memory book. Without any warning or warm-up, “Junior” two-wheel drifts his way around the very first berm of the 10km descent.







Wyn, Cody and Florent realize at this point that it would not be the chill exploration ride they were expecting. It's Game-On! Inside-lines, foot-out off camber, big hucks over roots and rocks, loam flying around, "Junior" does it all on his beaten-up 26" bike.





After shuttling to Limbukha, the Madman Trail of Punakha is up next. At an elevation drop of over 1000m, this is a network of both natural and hand-carved trails running through a mix of pine and oak forests. It is here that Bhutan will host its first Asian Enduro Series from 5th to 6th of December 2020.





Last up is the encounter with the Tiger's Nest or Taktsang as locals call it. While legends say that Guru Rinpoche flew from this cliffside on the back of a tigress, our riders climbed their way up the steep trail to reach the sacred monastery, perched precariously at 3120 meters cliff face.





After couple of days of pure riding, the team decides that the glacial valley of Phobjikha is the next stopover, winter home to the endangered Black-necked cranes. In fact, with more than 70 percent of Bhutan's land area forested, the nation is among the top ten biodiversity hotspots in the world.





The perfect moment and perfect place for them to meditate and reflect on the adventure they had just lived - an experience which can only be realized through the seamless travel arrangement and meticulous coordination between the Bhutan Philanthropy Ventures and the Bhutan Olympic Committee which spearheads the foundation for sustainable network of Enduro (MTB) development in Bhutan.

For the visiting team of riders, the sacred land of Bhutan is one of the world's last frontiers. With myths, legends and spirituality all at once ever-present and still integral to the psyche of local communities, it seems to illustrate the delicate balance between old-world tradition with 21st century modernity and its associated hyper-consumerism. Certainly, with its philosophy of GNH philosophy Bhutan is striving to find the right balance.



The riders' giggles and shouts of joy and excitement still resound through the valley. Everyone is left with a feel that 7 days is barely enough to scratch the surface of the mountain-biking potential in Bhutan.







The visiting riders get a sense of the traditional reverence that locals have for the natural environment, organically co-existing with pristine green forests, turquoise glacial rivers, farm fields, and both domesticated and wild animals.

On the way back to the capital city, the team rides a small segment of the 160-mile Tour of the Dragon course, the world's toughest one-day mountain biking race.

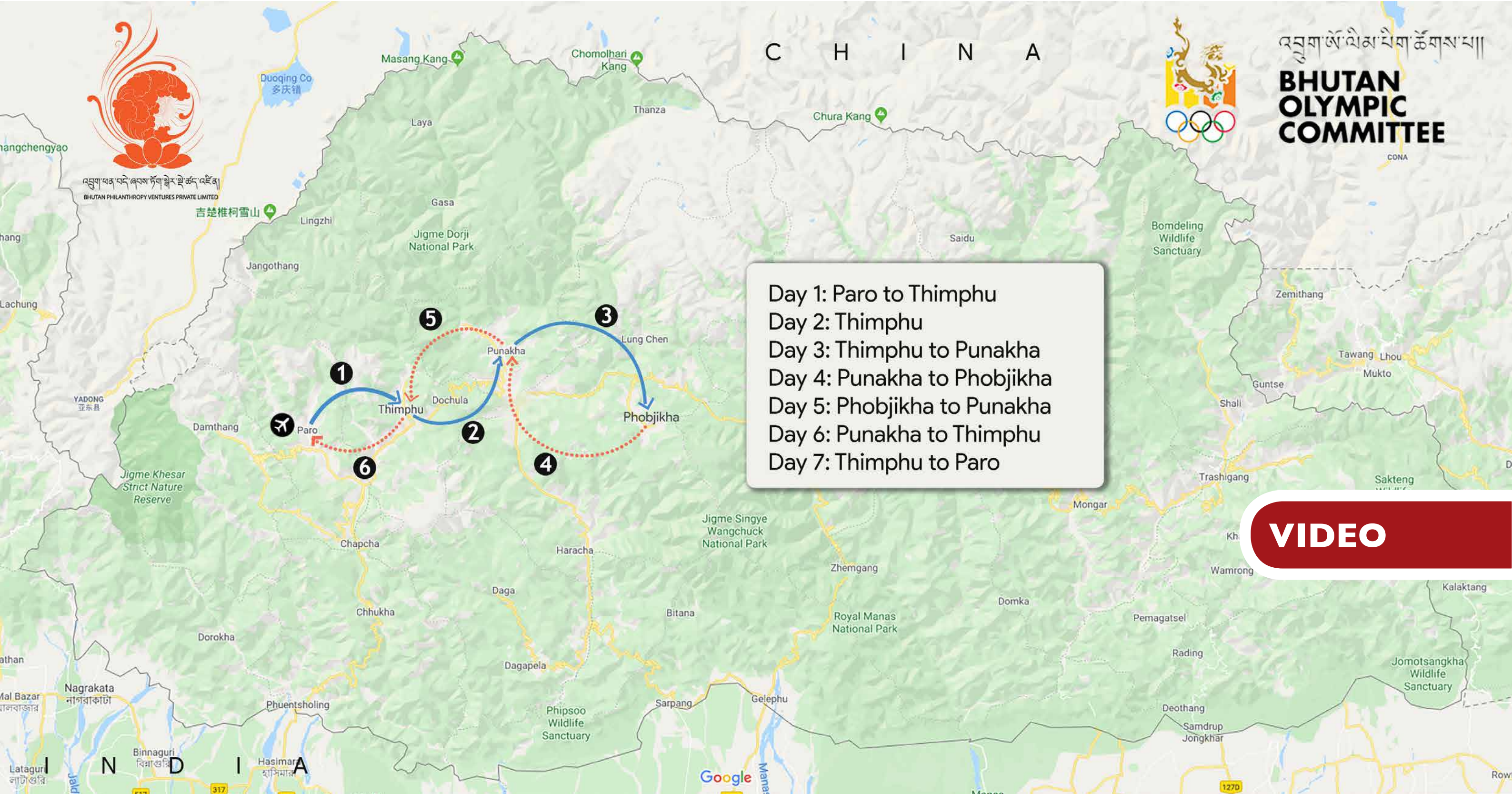
In Thimphu, the riders visit popular sightseeing spots but they do it on their bikes—rolling off the steps of the biggest Buddha statue in the world, wheelieing down the steep descent from the Bhutan Broadcasting Station towers into town and exhibiting wheelies, bunny hops, drop jumps, endos, and other manoeuvres.





After driving to Lawa-La Pass before dawn, the crew hikes up to a vantage point making sure not to disturb the herd of Yaks grazing around in the dark. The sunrise with the sea of clouds slowly dissipating and exposing the valley rewards their effort.

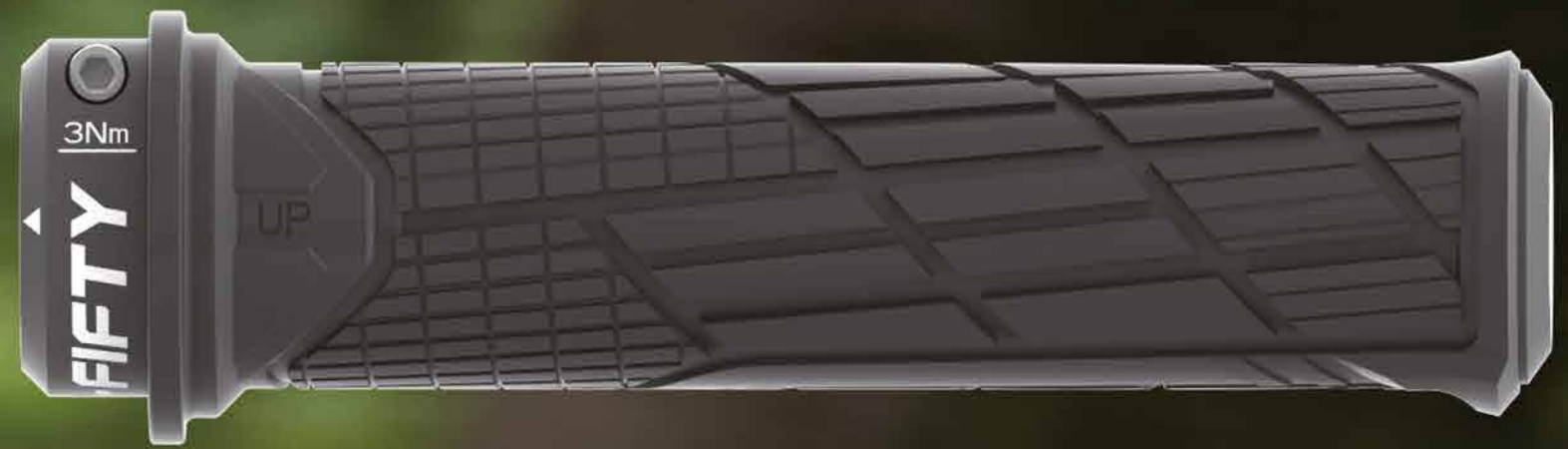




As the team heads back to their own homeland, they do so with the conviction that the best way to discover the Kingdom of Bhutan is by riding into its alluring wilderness. Having encountered a place that is as stunning as it is welcoming and hospitable, the team got stoked in the right spot—the heart—which is what Bhutan does best.

For more information about the Madman Trails of Bhutan, the inaugural Asian Enduro series in Bhutan taking place in December 5th to 6th 2020 and MTB tour packages, please contact Mr. Karma Dorji, email: [karma@bpvbhutan.com](mailto:karma@bpvbhutan.com) or visit our website [www.madmantrails.com](http://www.madmantrails.com) / [www.bpvbhutan.com/mtb](http://www.bpvbhutan.com/mtb)





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Scott Rapoport

Scott Rapoport

## INTERVIEW

I first met Du Yao a couple years back in the city of Kunming, China. I knew him as the guy who could throw a backflip on a DJ bike off just about anything. He would occasionally show up on Kunming's mountain bike trails riding a downhill rig that his friend had let him borrow. As is so often true for those with skills on a BMX or dirt jumper, Du Yao's transition from small to big wheels was remarkably smooth and fast. The 27-year-old is now a sponsored freerider and downhill racer, with plans to participate in races throughout the country in the upcoming season. Over the past two years, I have watched as his abilities on the bike, and his infectious love for the sport, has influenced and helped to propel the Chinese mountain bike scene forward. This is a day (or a few) in the life of Du Yao, a professional Chinese mountain biker.



DU

YAO

杜鵑



The local downhill trails and jump park (where these photos were taken) are located in the west of Kunming, and are accessible by bike from nearly anywhere in the city. The area is named after the local temple, Bao Zhu (pictured in this article), which shares the forested hillside with the trails.

Kunming's mountain bike club, Jade Dragon, builds and maintains the trails, and also provides shuttle service. There are a couple of purpose-built downhill trails, as well as countless natural tracks that weave through the enormous forest park of Qipanshan, just behind Baozhu's main summit. Kunming's winters are almost desert-like in their dryness, and so building occurs in the summer months, when the rains soften the dirt.

Du Yao has also built a pump track and dirt jump spot near the city center. In







addition to being a spot where local riders can come to improve their skills, it is also a bike school for young children to learn the basics. These types of pumptracks are becoming increasingly popular in China, but not many of them have a teacher with an ability level as high as Du Yao's.

It's always fun to watch the parents' and kids' reactions to what he can do on two wheels. Mountain biking is often done deep in the forests, away from the masses of people in city centers, and so it is quite rare for your average Kunming resident to stumble into the local trails and see what is possible on these bikes. By building this spot in the heart of

Kunming, Du Yao has not only created a place where China's younger generation can discover mountain biking, but has also helped to increase awareness and understanding for the sport.



*How did you  
get into riding  
mountain bikes?*

At the beginning I was a street rider and focused on tricks and technique, but I also realized I really liked riding in natural environments. After about two years of street riding, I met an Australian BMX rider named George Jackson, who was living in Kunming. I learned from him how to hit big jumps and pull tricks in the air. He also showed me how to dig proper dirt jumps. With mountain biking, specifically free riding, I started because I wanted to ride bigger and faster stuff.


I saw that it was harder to control a mountain bike in the air, and I wanted to learn the skills required to improve my ability. Along with going faster and jumping longer, free riding and downhill has given me more experience, allowing me to become a better bike rider. I'm now sure











that freeride and downhill are the disciplines I want to pursue.

*Who are your sponsors?*

When I was strictly a dirtjumper, I was supported by the Chinese brand DPS bikes, who gave me frames and parts. After getting into downhill riding, I joined the Pivot Racing Team (no relation to the Pivot bike brand), which is run by the owner of a professional bike shop in Langzhou.

They have supported me with the Salto enduro bike. Through the Pivot Racing Team's recommendation, I have also recently been sponsored by the domestic brand RST Suspension.

*What do you think the future of the Chinese riding scene is?*

I think the Chinese riding scene is getting better and better. There are



several riders who are relentlessly pursuing their passion and working hard to improve the sport here.

Although the overall level of mountain biking is lacking behind other countries, it is continuously improving. More and more races are now being held in which professional riders from around the world are invited and participate. We can learn a lot from them.

*What do you think is holding back the Chinese mountain bike scene's development?*

There are lots of people riding mountain bikes, but there can be a lack of understanding regarding the sport's culture and fundamentals. Proper mountain bike trails are rare, and those that have the skills to build them rarer still.

Most riders only have access to natural forest











roads and hiking trails, not specifically built for mountain bikers.

I think we just need more people to learn and understand the fundamentals of the sport, and to help grow awareness of what mountain biking is really about.

*Who is your favourite professional rider?*

There are many riders I like. But the one who has had the greatest influence on me is Matt Macduff. When I first started riding bikes, a lot of his street and dirt jump videos were circulating around China.

I would often watch his videos and then go out to practice new skills. In recent years, I have seen that he's sacrificed a lot to pursue his dream, and has gotten some serious injuries.

But he is doing



what he wants to,  
and I find that very  
inspiring.

*What's your favourite  
part about riding  
mountain bikes?*

I love the feeling of flying  
down a trail, being able to  
pump and jump the bike.  
Recently, I've gotten really  
in corners and riding berms.  
I think it's an essential skill,  
and it's also a ton of fun.

*What do you see yourself  
doing in five years? Do you  
have any specific hopes or  
goals?*

I actually don't have much of  
a set plan for my future. I just  
want to keep doing what I'm  
doing now, the future is just  
a natural process.

But I'm certain that in five  
years I'll still be riding  
bikes, and be a better  
rider than I am right  
now. Riding is a huge  
part of my life and  
will always help to  
ease my troubles.









Thomas Lecoq / Others

Thomas Lecoq

CONDTUET  
RROIN  
STZ

1/3  
FIRST STORY, OUT OF THREE

In the cycling world, Taiwan is well known to everyone and it's a good bet that the bike you're riding right now is stamped „Made in Taiwan“, coming from one of the many factories on the island dedicated to frame production or bike assembly.

This country is still quite mysterious for many of us, and suffers from a lot of misconceptions. „Only factories, armoured cities teeming with people...“



Yet, far from prejudices, this country is full of surprises... There is apparently much more than that in Taiwan; a rich culture, simple people, a cuisine to lick your lips, a lush nature never far away... It is a country that is opening up to tourism and wants to make a new image for itself.

The question seems a bit silly, but while Taiwan is at the heart of bicycle manufacturing, do people there ride as well? Is the mountain bike scene active? Is there any way

to mountain bike in Taiwan? If so with whom and how?

During our trip to Thailand with Fabrice last year, we met a group of nice Taiwanese Endurists. This year, I took the opportunity to go to meet them to exchange with them and ride on their paths, in order to answer the question that drives us and that is at the root of our trips: how is the riding there?







## ABOUT TAIWAN

Taiwan is an island 400 km long and 120 km wide, located between Japan and the Philippines and 160 km from the south-eastern coast of China, with a population of 23 million. This relatively small area is home to the charm of the Far East, subtropical nature, Chinese culture and several Asian religions.

Taiwan, an industrialized country with a standard of living equivalent to Japan or Europe, experienced exceptional development in the 1970s. Seen from the West, Taiwan is best known for its economic effervescence, and we have in mind cities that are bustling and bursting with activity, which is true.

Taipei, Taichung, Tainan or Kaoshiung are cities in constant turmoil, subtly blending ancestral Chinese culture with a modern and lively way of life. Centuries of ancient



traditions meet the modernity and dynamism of the 21st century.

That said, few people realize that nature is omnipresent in Taiwan, and the island is 60% mountainous. It is divided by a 270 km long central mountain range that stretches from north to south and has more than a hundred peaks over 3,000 m in altitude!

Religious customs, lively festivals, delicious dishes and local art are as much a part of this country as the cordial and warm welcome of its inhabitants.

### **MOUNTAIN BIKING IN TAIWAN**

Although they are the world's leading bicycle producer with a cutting-edge industry and world-renowned know-how, the Taiwanese only really got into cycling belatedly.







Over the last ten years or so, they have not only been producing bicycles, but also using them and having fun on the handlebars. Under the impetus of the Taiwanese government, which has multiplied initiatives, the country is seeing more and more bicycle-related infrastructure appear in the cities, and events around cycle tourism and road cycling are proliferating.

There are many cycling festivals, and the president of Giant himself has cycled

around the island several times, which has also contributed to the popularity of the sport. One of the world's most challenging cyclosportive events attracts participants from all over the world every year: KOM Taiwan and its dreaded 120-kilometer dry ascent, where riders start from sea level and ride their way up to Taiwan's highest peak at 3275 meters above sea level.

What about mountain biking? As far as mountain biking is concerned, things are



slightly different. The excitement and fervour enjoyed by road cycling and cycle tourism have not yet reached mountain biking in the same proportions for several reasons.

Reasons related to the natural environment and the climate first of all. The topology of the island is favourable for road cycling with superb mountain roads, but is not very favourable for mountain biking. As explained above, with its 100 peaks flirting

with the 3000 m for an island only 120 km wide, the valleys are very steep and have few paths or wide open spaces that are easy for mountain biking. With a hot and humid subtropical climate, it is not easy to maintain the paths, which become covered very quickly with vegetation and gullies under the effect of heavy rains, discouraging the efforts of even the most reckless.

On the other hand, the government has so far not put up the same funding as







neighbouring Hong Kong for example, where the authorities have invested several hundred thousand euros in infrastructure dedicated to mountain biking.

Finally the Taiwanese, although they love the mountains, are more inclined towards hiking, which is very popular on the island.

Mountain biking is therefore not as widespread as road biking and cycle tourism in Taiwan, but that doesn't mean that mountain biking is absent, and as often in

such cases, it is developing under the energetic influence of some new passionate riders. It's a good thing we had the pleasure of riding with some of them.

I have an appointment with Dan Chiang and Penny Chou who are two emblematic figures of the Taiwanese mountain bike scene. While waiting to ride with them, I took the opportunity to explore alone the mountains north of Taipei and I wasn't disappointed!

*(Read in the next issue Thomas solo rides)*



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## #SPECIALTHANKS

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