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INTERVIEW



Hi Tomomi, can you tell us a bit about yourself, where are you from, how old are you and what is your daily job?

I'm from Nara, Japan. I'm 28 years old and I work as a filmmaker and consultant for SNS.



You got infected with two wheels at the tender age of 5. MX riding was your passion, how did you get into it, and how successful were you at it? Did you race also, or did you do it more for fun?

I started MX riding under the influence of my father when I was 5. My father used to be an amateur motor racer. He was a very good instructor and taught me and my brother his skills. But I never competed in a race. I rode just for fun with my older brother. It has immediately become a great passion. I liked the speed and it gave me a feeling of freedom.



At the age of 12, you stayed on a two-wheeler, but now without a motor. How did it happen that you changed the field to Trial bikes?

I could ride MX only on the weekend. So, I always rode a cheap MTB on weekdays and got to be into it. I rode my MTB like my MX and also sometimes tried to ride my MTB on the rocks, too. However, as I rode my cheap bike harder, it broke. Then my father sold his moto and bought me a pure trials bike when I was 12. That's how it all started. It was a KOXX Levelboss 20, the highest-end bike of this brand. That's how my second passion had started.



What is the feeling when you ride the Trial bike, what makes you happy? Is it from accomplishing a trick, or riding some feature that normally people can't ride?

My first impression is "Wow! it's so light! I can jump easily!". I can ride on rocks, logs, anywhere I want. I love the feeling when I ride on some feature or crazy situation. Every time I'm on my Trials Bike it feels like an adventure. I think this is the same feeling as I started riding MTB. So I always look for fun spots. And of course, when I accomplish a difficult trick it boosts my mood.

How was the experience in South Africa at the UCI Trials World Championships, when you were only 20 years young?

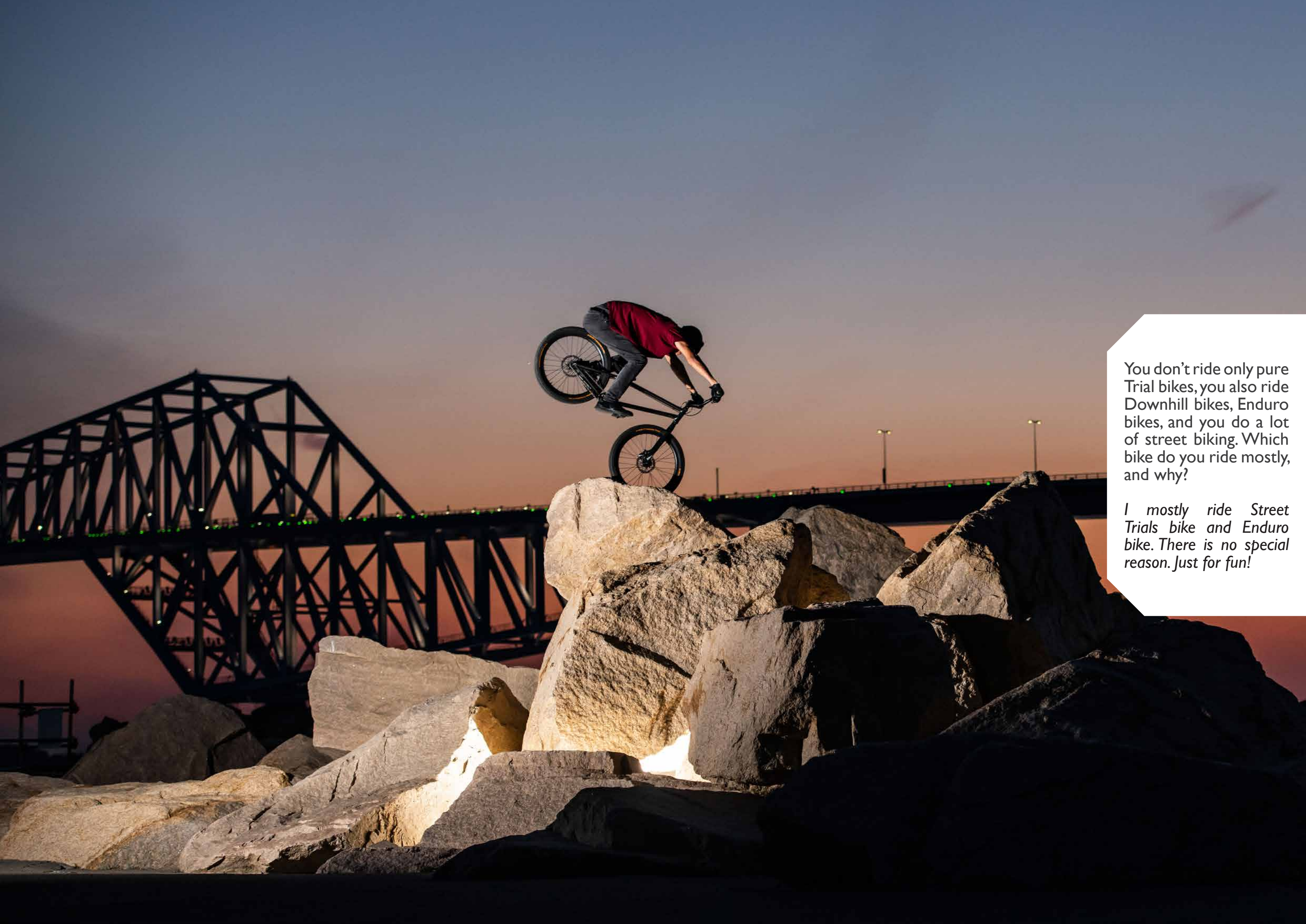
Yes, I competed in the World Championships when I was just 20. It wasn't a good memory for me because I suffered to a hairline fracture on my tail bone one month before the race. Thus, the result was too bad. But it was a good experience to see world-class level and a couple of years later it is a nice memory that I experienced World Champs as a participant. It broadened my world and horizon.





Only 3 years later in 2016 and 2017, you became the Japanese Champion in Trials. How is the scene in Japan? Are there many Trials Riders? Is the scene big, and how does the level of competition compare to the rest of the world?

Speaking of pure trials, there are some world-level riders Tom Shiozaki and Kazuki Terai in Japan. But the scene is not big. So, the level of Japan National Championships is lower than the rest for example in Europe. But I think the scene in Japan is growing, so let's talk again next year.



You don't ride only pure Trial bikes, you also ride Downhill bikes, Enduro bikes, and you do a lot of street biking. Which bike do you ride mostly, and why?

I mostly ride Street Trials bike and Enduro bike. There is no special reason. Just for fun!

How do you get the ideas to do your movies? Do you get inspired from who, or what? How did you get the storyline for „Chase Her“?

When I make videos, I always decide tricks at first. After that, I talk with my friends about the ideas and we determine the location and story. The storyline of 'Chase Her' also came from a conversation with my friends. I think I shouldn't try to do all things by myself. There is a limit to how much I can film, edit, and imagine. My friends are a great support and give me very good inspirations.





What is your next project? Can you maybe tell us a little bit about what you are working on?

In this year, I plan to make 2 big videos. I'm going to ride a street trials bike for the next project. There will be some world-first tricks. It's going to be one of the best films of my life. Sorry, but I can't tell you more. Stay tuned and watch it.



Last words are yours!

Thank you for always watching my videos! Next project will be the most fun film ever. So please keep checking my channel! Cheers!

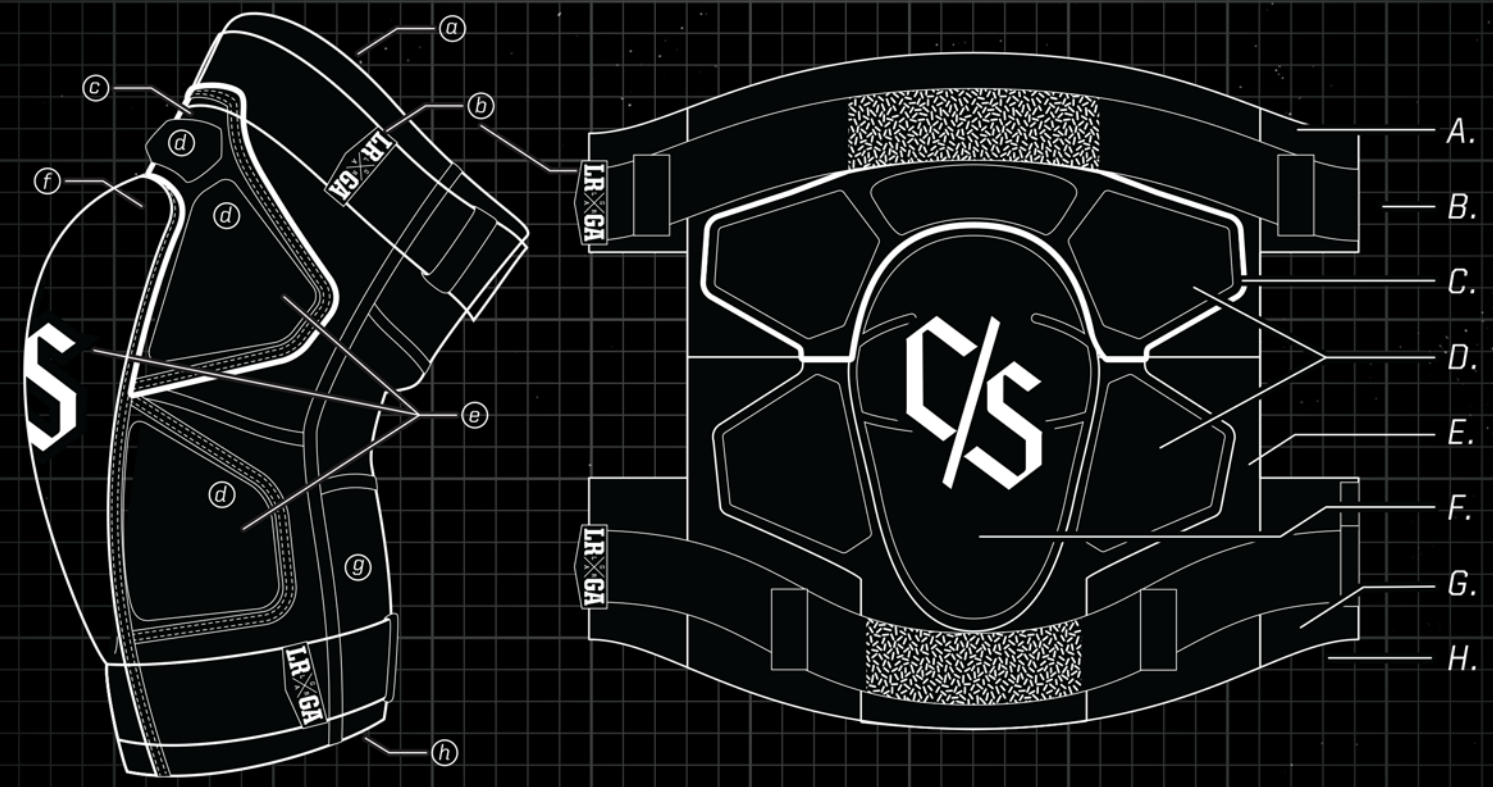
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- h. Ride position ergonomic fit



Zhao Shun Lian, Gong Yan Quan
Wang Zheng Jun, Steve Gould, Da Lei
Aurelius Satlow

IS PUSH BIKE A WAY TO CYCLING ?

INSIGHTS AND REFLECTIONS
ABOUT A RECENT TREND IN CHINA





About 5 years ago the first push bike clubs in China were founded. These are clubs that offer practice riding small balance bikes and push bikes for 2 to 5 year-old kids as a kind of leisure time activity. In the last 2 to 3 years there has evolved a real hype about that, especially in the bigger metropolitan areas of East and South China such as Beijing, Shanghai, Hangzhou and Shenzhen, but also in North and West China like Kunming and Urumqi more than a dozen of push bike clubs can be found within one city.

For example, in Ningbo/Zhejiang Province there was only 1 club in 2018, but in 2020 there are already more than 10!

How did this thing started? Why is it such a trend nowadays? How long will the trend last and can it offer a way to later cycling especially mountain biking? In this article we will shed a light on the phenomenon of push biking and also include insights from some trainers and bosses of Chinese push bike clubs, who we talked to in order to prepare this article.

A BMX Rider from the US (and now trainer in a bike center in Jiangsu, which was one of the first push bike clubs in China) told us that push bikes as a new model of cycling for kids were first available in China in 2012. From there it took another 4 years till the first push bike clubs.

Most kids who come to these clubs are 3 to 6 years old. Some start at the age of 2, but the latest they stop is about the age of 6. One of the bosses sees herein one reason for the trend in that: *“push bike cycling is one of the few*

sports that you can participate in from the age of two.” The courses are led by a trainer one to three times per week, and one course is about 1 to 2 hours on average. The average stay of kids is between a half and one year.

Another reason for the strong trend of push biking is what is spearheaded by push bike clubs themselves: It's a sweet sight when parents see their kids jetting around on the little bikes. But this might be just a reason on the surface. Parents in China not only want their children to do something in their free





time and not only want their kids to just ride bikes and have fun. Taking a deeper look, one can find they want to improve their kids' physical abilities, gain mobility and to become the fastest kid in the club. There have always been trends of leisure time activities for kids in modern China, like it was soccer for some years, or sending the kids to piano lessons, and here it's the same pattern: It's not just for fun, the kids have to learn and become good at the specific techniques. So in push biking the kids are trained to keep balance, ride curves and gain basic bike-handling skills.

Another societal reason for the trend is that Chinese parents often lack time since both have to work, and so they seek opportunities where they don't have to deal with their children by themselves. Although grandparents play an important role in child raising in China they don't always have time for that either.

Now the question can be raised, whether push bike will continue as such a strong trend? The push bike clubs have a pretty optimistic view. A coach from

Hongkong states: “in 2012 99.9% of people had no idea what a balance bike was but now most people have seen kids zooming around on them. We are still in this industry’s infancy and I predict a lot more people will be purchasing a balance bike for their child as a necessary part of a child’s development.” But it seems there are some conditions to be kept. First, there have to be professional clubs to promote and develop courses carefully. A push bike trainer from Jiangsu told us there are two sides of the story: “There are push bike clubs that are just trying to make money and doing bullshit courses, the teachers are not trained and don’t

care how their kids are being taught.” However, most of the push bike we talked to directly seem to be aware of the necessity of good skilled trainers and push bike clubs that take initiative: “Important is to keep the sport going from balance bike onward to kids mountain bike, but it needs people with initiative.”

But it is also quite possible that push biking is a temporary phenomenon that could be replaced by other new activities. Actually now it is already just one of the various sports activities in which kids either take part in parallel, such





as for example skiing, skateboarding, trampoline, bouldering, hiking, paddle boarding and others. Especially when linked with mountain biking in particular, push biking is often regarded by the Chinese society as a dangerous kind of sport.

Now let's take a deeper look at the question of what the kids are doing after completing all the courses. Some of the clubs let the kids participate in more races. One of the coaches notes that push bike and race events cannot attract

kids in the long term. So, after the push bikes he started putting the kids on BMX bikes and teaching them tricks, riding ramps and how to jump. Actually 3 of the 7 push bike clubs that we talked to mentioned BMX as the next kind of cycling that they let the kids do. BMX seems to be something like a link between push biking and other cycling such as MTB, since those are bigger bikes that have pedals and still can be ridden in the city on flat ground, and their geometry fits as well as to streets and ramps.

However, once the children hit around between 4 and 6 years old, there is a vast drop in children attending special interest sporting classes in favour of more traditional schooling and study. What is possible in Hangzhou, where there is an Enduro MTB club that you can join, seems relatively rare elsewhere. Its boss told us that his job was to “*pick up the grown up push bike kids*” and bring them closer to the MTB. The majority of kids are taking a way other than cycling after leaving the pushbike clubs – one of the bosses told us it would only be about 30%, but another one said “*honestly more than 90%*”.

Kids in push bike clubs don’t just “*learn*” to ride a bike, but they have to compare their performance with others, especially at race events. Push biking in China is hardly possible without a trainer, drill and improvement and this reflects a basic principle in today’s China that continues from primary school to later work life - be the best! In Europe, there are also some so called tiger parents who want to train their child to become a professional, but in China it seems that this proportion of parents is much larger. Many parents lose sight of the fact that there is a difference between good sports promotion and





excessive drill. In European countries there are a few such cycling clubs for this age group, and yet many kids learn to cycle, but mostly within the family, and they later further develop through play within their peer group.

A positive effect of push bike clubs is that there are more places for cycling, especially in the huge Chinese cities. However, the following also applies in principle: Learning to cycle was possible even before push bikes existed. From this perspective, the claim that these children learn to cycle in push bike

clubs must be viewed critically. In addition, measured by the average Chinese income, push biking is a relatively exclusive hobby that only a few kids have compared to the total population. In this regard, it cannot be said that push biking brings the Chinese nation closer to cycling, let alone leads to more mountain bike riders. And it's definitely not the ideal way when only kids of richer parents get the opportunity to learn to ride a bike. It's a pity that Chinese parents don't just take the time and teach their kids by themselves. The reasons are obviously a lack of time and often also a lack of skills on the

side of the parents.

To sum it up, even although push biking is a strong trend nowadays that even might continue, it stands beside other activities that Chinese parents let their kids do but also let them stop doing by the age of about 6 years, since they then put them into other sports or predominantly school programs and *“that’s the beginning of the end, when parents force them into endless hours of school”* as a push bike trainer states. In that way the connection between push biking

and later cycling in China is pretty weak. On the other hand it plants a seed in the kids by transmitting some basic bike skills and the feeling of riding a bike and this can also be seen as a chance that kids will later return to cycling. But at the moment the strict timetable in school and the high pressure to be the best doesn’t allow kids to just try out things and really go after hobbies. After finishing school the family expects them to work hard and marry as soon as possible.







Amazing Sports, Mesum Verma

Mesum Verma


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GET
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A full-page photograph of a mountain biker riding down a dirt trail. The rider is wearing a white jersey with orange accents, blue pants, a helmet, and gloves. They are leaning forward on the handlebars. The trail is a mix of dirt and rocks, with a large tree trunk on the right. In the background, there are many bare trees and a wooden structure on the left. The sky is blue.

Almost
10 years ago,
when I started racing in
China, the scene was small
and it was easy to remember
the riders attending the races.
Some riders disappeared for
good, and some I see again.
Still riding and still in the
scene, but maybe not
racing anymore.




Amy Chen



Amazing Sports got my attention, at first just because of the logo. I was wondering, who is behind this company, which has an elephant in their logo, and a wheel, which looks very similar to the wheel in India's flag. The logo was quite simple and really had less meaning than I thought: they searched for a „cute“ logo with an animal in it, which children would like, and even though they want to promote all sorts of outdoor sports in China, the base of the company is cycling, which is why the wheel appears in the logo.



The founders of this company are all bike lovers. Some I've seen years ago at downhill races, all still riding bikes, but not racing anymore. But most have children by now, and they want to give them, and other kids, something back, to get infected with riding a bike.



Last
year they went all
together to Canada. Well it
has to be Whistler! Bike Mecca,
all cyclists want to ride there at least
once in their life, so of course they do
too. They were deeply impressed with
what is happening over there, so many bikers
they saw, covering all age groups and genders.
Thousands of mountain bike trails, all over the
mountains. Why can't we have this in China,
they asked themselves? The seed of an idea was
planted. Because of course they understand
the simple rule, that few bikers means few
mountain bike trails, few mountain bike
parks and few mountain bike stores
and services. They realized, we
must create more bikers
in China!

Pump tracks are not few in number in China, but most are somewhere out, hard to reach. Even the Velosolution pump track near Hangzhou can only be reached by car, it's fairly expensive to ride and stay, and therefore mostly has no riders. And it doesn't create more bikers, because it's an exclusive thing only for rich people. Amazing Sports wants to change that, so they started to build a pump track in the middle of Shanghai. The location can't be better: it's in a shopping area, surrounded by restaurants, other kids' activities and attractions, and the metro stop is only 50 meters away!





A | I

the people involved in Amazing Sports work at it as a part-time job. The main man, CEO Joe Chou, runs an advertising company and also handles the advertising for Amazing Sports. Ding Zai Gang is known to many riders, as he was the main man behind BPBP (Brave Peak Bike Park) before he left there and started as the chief builder at Amazing Sports. Hu Ge is the operations director, developing a reproducible operating model for the company. The pump track needs lighting, who could be better than Amy Chen, who is herself a lighting engineer and helps them design this. She is also the manager of the first pump track in Shanghai. Responsible for the IT system is Kevin Ren, who is a software engineer at the Alibaba group. Like all the people above, Sam Lin is also an investor in this company. Sam works in the construction industry. One other investor also put his time and money in it, but did not want to be mentioned.

A full-page background image showing a mountain biker in a black and red jersey with 'FOX' on the front, wearing a black helmet with orange visor and red gloves, riding a green and black full-suspension mountain bike on a rocky, mossy trail through a dense forest. The rider is leaning forward in a racing posture. The forest has many thin trees and lush green foliage.

Amazing Sports is in talks for more pump tracks in Shanghai and other cities. But they are also in talks to build mountain bike trails outside of the cities. Still a challenge is finding investors for those ventures. They are also developing a reproducible operating model for the pump track which includes lessons for kids, ticket fees to ride there, and a marketing strategy for packages for the investors.



Hu Ge



The core concept is for them: build more pump tracks in the cities, easy and affordable for all, meaning more bikers, meaning more fun. Hard to get, but that's why they are aiming for it: building hundreds of pump tracks, producing millions of mountain bikers and then building a few great mountain bike parks. The plan is that, in time, it is a win/win business for the company and the investors!



Sam Lin

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