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#ISSUE69

#SEP2020

#shiven #devender

#manali #india

#261 #days







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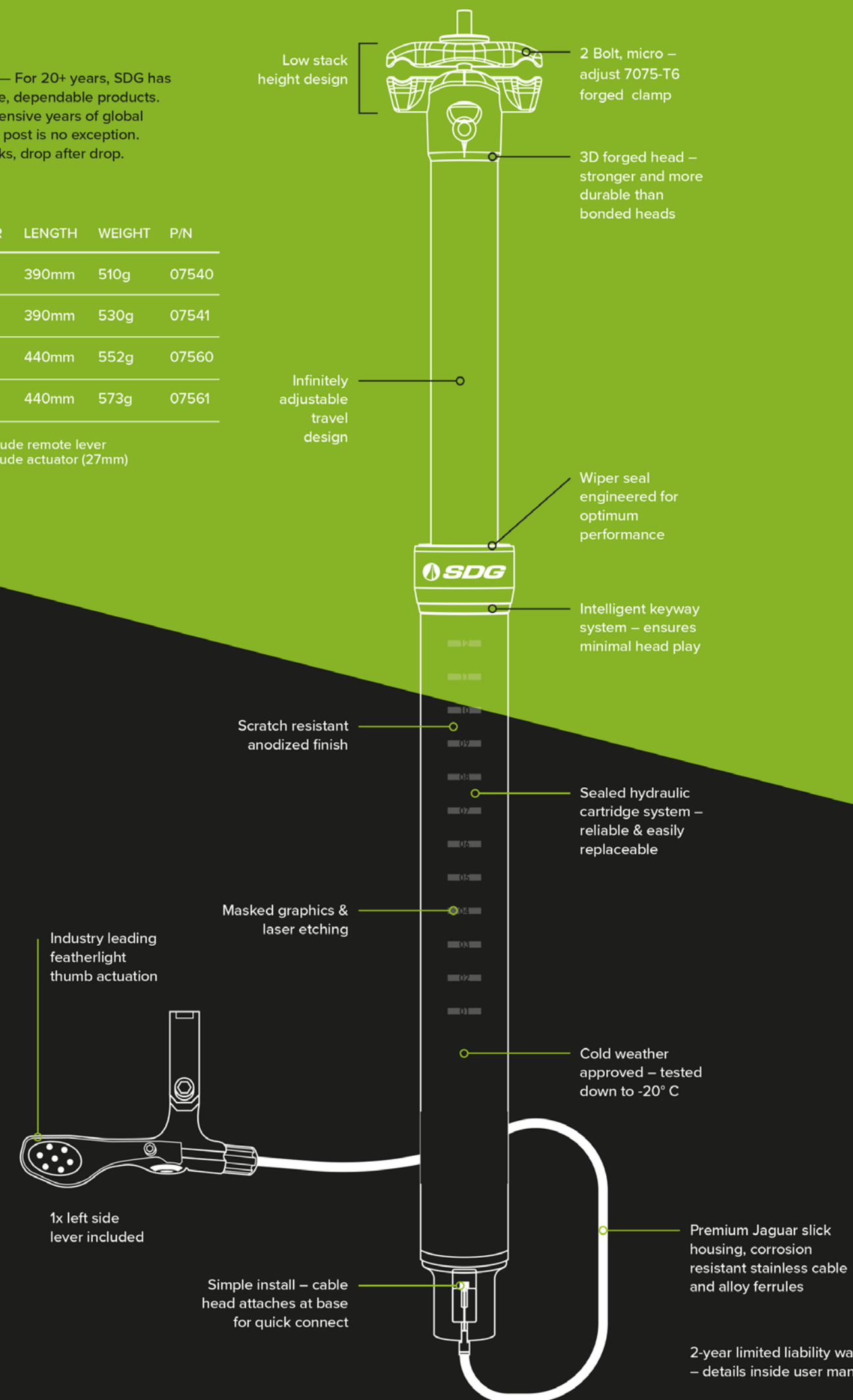
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# ରାଇଡିଂ ଓ ଟ୍ରାକ୍ ରଫ୍ଟିଂ ଓ ମାଉଣ୍ଟେନ୍

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Within the Indian as well international XCO-Scene you're both already well-known riders! However we would like to ask you to give a brief introduction about you! Who are you? Where are you both coming from? How old are you and how long are riding MTB?

Shiven: My name is Shiven and I hail from the Himalayan state of Himachal Pradesh, India. I am 23 years old and have been racing MTB since 2012. I am sponsored by Cannondale, Track & Trail, Steadfast Nutrition and Heini SportsWear.

Devender: I'm Devender Thakur, I'm 26 years old and have been riding since 10 years.





Meanwhile you're both pretty successful Cross Country Riders. So we're curious about how you came to riding XCO? Did you directly hopped into that or did you ride other sorts of MTB before?

Shiven: The first event that I entered was like a XC Marathon. So I have always been a XC rider. Later I discovered about the only MTB discipline as part of the Olympic programme, and that is XCO, so the focus moved towards that.

Devender: It started with some trail riding and then after doing some XCO races I got into XCO.

We know you ride in a team and together you often take part at a lot of local and international races. Could you report a bit which races you've been take part at?

Shiven: Yes, we both have been racing against each other since 2013. In 2014 we were both part of India's first sponsored MTB Team Hero Action Team. We went to Bike Transalp 2016 as a pair and won the attack jersey there on stage 2. We have been to the 2019 Asian Championships in Lebanon as part of the Indian team as well as in the 2019 South Asian Games in Nepal as part of Indian Contingent. We also went for a UCI Class 2 event in Iran in 2019. Apart from that we have individually raced a couple



of Asian Championships in Philippines, Thailand.

We heard you both do training together now. Is there a difference to individual training?

Devender: Yes, most of the time we train together and it is always better for us because during our training we push each other above the limits. There are a lot of things that get to learn from each other whether we are training or racing.

Since you're a professional MTB-Rider you do regularly training and you have chosen a pretty special place for that. Please tell us something where that is and why this place is so suitable for your training.

Shiven: Me and Devender live together in Manali when we are not hopping around for racing. It's a small town nestled in the Himalayas at 2000m above sea level. We have a perfect blend of trails, smooth highways, long/short climbs to make the training interesting. Furthermore, the clean Himalayan air, less traffic and high altitude are other major reasons to be training here. We often go up to 4000m in just 3.5 hours during our training rides.







How can a non-professional Hobby MTB Rider imagine your training? How is a typical week of training? Is your training completely the same?

Shiven: A typical week of training consists of about 18 hours on the bike and about 3-4 hours off the bike. The on-bike time constitutes of 3 endurance days, 2 intervals days, 1 recover day and 1 rest day mixed up. Off the bike work is about the core/upper body workouts, stretching and foam rolling.

Devender: Most of our training is the same, but apart from cycling I do lot of hiking and trail running which in my opinion is helpful for my cycling and overall endurance.



Did the Covid-19 Pandemic somehow influence your training?

Shiven: Yes, surprisingly in a positive way. The pandemic forced me to stay in Manali all this time which meant no deviations from the schedule. The initial couple of months were a bit tough as because of the lockdown, we were forced to train indoors, sometimes even for 4 hours! But after that it has been the best period of consistent training my whole life. Thanks to the pandemic, there are no tourists in the valley which means negligible traffic in a such a popular tourist destination.







What is in your opinion the special thing about XCO in comparison to Downhill or Enduro?

Shiven: I think the biggest difference XCO makes is that people can see riders battling it out for the top spot against each other. To see them pitted against each other makes it exciting as in contrast to DH or Enduro.

Devender: XCO is something that pushes you above your limits, your lungs are always on fire for the whole 90mins of racing, that's what I like the most.



What are your dreams and plans for the next years?

Shiven: The Covid pandemic has put the plans on hold for now, in any case they include a lot more of racing at international level and to keep on improving at every race.

The long term plan is to represent our country at highest sporting levels i.e. Olympics, World Championships, Commonwealth Games and Asian Games.

Devender: My dream is to represent India at higher level of racing like World cups and Olympic games, and for next year the main goal is to win the XCO national championships and top 10 at Asian championships.

Thank you so much, Shiven and Devender to have that pretty interesting conversation about your MTB and XCO-Riding in Manali/ India! We wish you both all the best for your future plans and success in the upcoming races!









Mike Buttgereit, Kevin Strassmeir, Xiong Ji,  
Mesum Verma

Mesum Verma

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Racing different formats makes racing interesting, and I had already raced XCO, XCO, Marathon, Mountain Climbs (only uphill), Downhill, and Long Distance Downhill (Bike Attack, Avalanche Cup). But I had never raced Enduro. It was my first time doing it and there was no better location than Chiang Mai Thailand to attend the ICE Enduro Race (International Chiang Mai Enduro).





Big names came; Wyn Masters, Cody Kelley, Matej Charvat, and Dan Chiang Sheng Shan - just to name a few. Excited we were, Mike and Paul who came along to race in this beautiful area, too. We arrived safe and sound, got our bikes dialed and went for dinner just around the corner from the hotel. This allowed us to save time, and to go to bed early, so that we could have a fresh start for training the next day.





Training went well. We checked out some of the stages, just to see how the terrain was.

It's impossible to remember everything that happened, but mostly I remember nothing but having fun and riding the fast trails. Besides some small crashes, here and there, there was really nothing to be afraid of. Mike, also, had a small crash which broke his rear brake lever, but it was nothing serious. It was a bit difficult for him to finish that stage of the race while only using his front brake though.



We had a good time and were ready for qualifying on Friday, which they do so that the riders who have about the same speed are riding together and can proceed faster, otherwise the race organizers would need to wait too long to let each rider down the hill.

I had a good run. Not fast, nothing blasting. Mike came just after me. We rode together to the top of the mountain to have a rest and a coffee, and then to check out another stage. We couldn't check out all the stages (7 in total), but at least we checked out some of the ones we wanted to do. So then, only 3 would be „blind“ on race day.

While having our coffees, Paul came. He had finished the qualifying run earlier than us and had checked out another stage. He had a crash, nothing super nasty, but his face was full of blood, and he did not feel like riding down the mountain. Mike still had not quite sorted out his problem with the brake. He had another brake-lever with him, but it was not optimal. He and Paul decided to go back down the mountain in the pickup truck.

I then went with Nafees (a Bangladeshi rider) and some others to check out a stage I had never ridden before. I can't remember, I think it was stage 3. We rode together to the start of the trail, and then I let go. I did not see Nafees or the others. I then came to a spot on the trail where some of the riders were waiting, and I tried out a drop. It was a wooden bridge over a log. It didn't seem too big, there was a chicken line

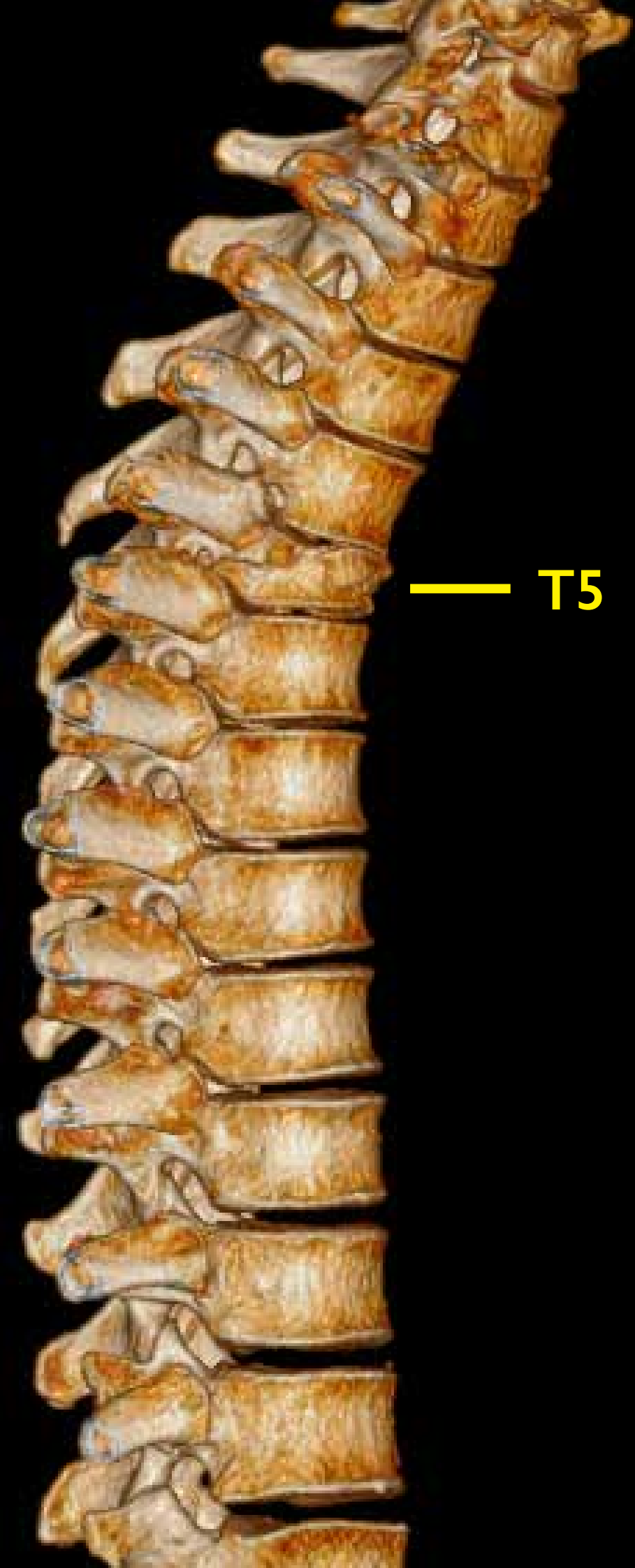
around. I waited a bit just to see how the other riders would manage the drop.

There is one mistake I should not do again. I did not check it out on my own. There was a rider there filming and advising other riders. Earlier, it seems to be, that two riders went too fast, not for the drop, but after the drop, and they crashed into each other. So the rider at the drop, the one with the camera, said, "Don't go too fast." When I rode down, he even screamed again, "Don't go too fast!"

It must be that I got a little distracted and got again on the brakes. That was another mistake I made. Never listen too much to others, especially if you didn't see what happened earlier yourself. I went, and saw the height of the drop, nothing too big, but I was far too slow on the approach. I couldn't do anything. My front wheel dived, I let go of the handlebar - sure, I got not out of the SPD pedals. First my hands. But then my head collided with the earth.

The impact was super hard! The landing is a flat one; packed hard dirt (or even stone), I can't quite remember. I can just remember I got quite a bit down, and I felt like I couldn't breathe properly. First I was a bit afraid that something could have happened to my neck, but I was very relieved when I was still able to feel my legs and could still move my head.

Luckily some marshals were there, and they asked me about my pain, and I said that the pain was immense. But mostly,







I was in shock because when one of the marshals asked me whether I could walk down to the fire road, I did it, on my own - no help - and the trail was not easy. I even had to climb a bit.

Cut!

I got into quite an accident earlier while I was snowboarding; also on the spine, also in hospital, also the surgery went wrong. But this accident at the race in Chiang Mai was a nightmare. It was down the mountain - which possibly could have made me paralyzed as nobody really cared about I had, with no painkiller, and treating like me kinda; I think, this is nothing serious. At the International Hospital I also had to wait quite a long time. 8 hours after the accident, I was laying in the hospital bed in my own room when I got the verdict: T5 cracked down to 50%. Then I finally got some painkillers... after 8 hours!!

Well, right now, I could tell you a whole story about all the things that went wrong in those 8 hours, but I will not, because it is not helpful to either you or me.

First things come first!

I need to focus on what comes next! And the next thing for me was, "How do I get back to China?", because being back home was the most important thing for me. Even though I live alone there, I know I have friends around who care about me. I was given the green light by my doctor saying that I could travel back by airplane on the Monday (The accident had happened on a Friday).

Mike helped me, since he had the same flight back to Nanjing like me. I was still in quite a lot of pain when I arrived in Nanjing. Traveling was anything but easy, and I was really really in a lot of pain, even though I was on painkillers.

In the hospital in China the doctors didn't agree with the idea of me wearing a corset. Instead, they recommended that I should lie down in bed for 3 months, and only get out if I really needed to. They said that I should not even leave my bed to go to the toilet or to get food to eat. Well, I live alone, so of course I left the bed!

While in rehab, I talked to many of my friends in Switzerland, also ex-pro riders, who helped me quite a lot with their advice. They told me I should be focused and try to do sports everyday. So then I bought a roller for my bike, so that I could ride my bike at home. I rode everyday, just a little bit at a time. I started at just 10 minutes, then 20 minutes, and so on until I could ride for an hour every second day.

The whole Corona situation helped me, actually. I had to stay home anyways. So I rode my bike, did some exercises with a balance board, and tried to stay fit.

In the first 3 months, the worst part were the nights, I could hardly sleep because there was so much pain. After 3 months, it got a bit better, but I still had quite a lot of pain during the night. I was also starting to ride a rental bike some kilometers on the road; to go shopping or go to the river here in Nanjing. And I couldn't be happier being back on the bike, although it was not a proper bike,





but I was happy.

In the begin of March, after 116 days, I rode my CX bike around the Purple Mountain (33km). On May 21st, 2020, I got back on my MTB riding my downhill bike at the Brave Peak Bike Park near Hangzhou!! Almost 6 months after the crash, I was now riding my bike fast down the hill; in conditions that were not good at all because of the torrential rains; and for that reason it was very slippery. My top speed was 72 km/hour and I knew, good I'm back on the bike!!





Initially, I had planned on attending the BP bike park which would have been my first race in June. But somehow, I hurt my big toe. (Don't ask me how, I still don't know). I was pissed off to say the least. I had to postpone my comeback and wait for the next race which was only in August.

But then - on August, 15th - after 261 days, I was finally back between the tape! Sure, I was not at the speed I wanted to be at, but I was not slow either! It was a good comeback! Next step is getting faster again!!





The entire time what helped me mentally was just to focus on what I want! I wanted to be back on the bike, I wanted to do racing again! And I did it!

**Ride on!! Keep it Real!!**

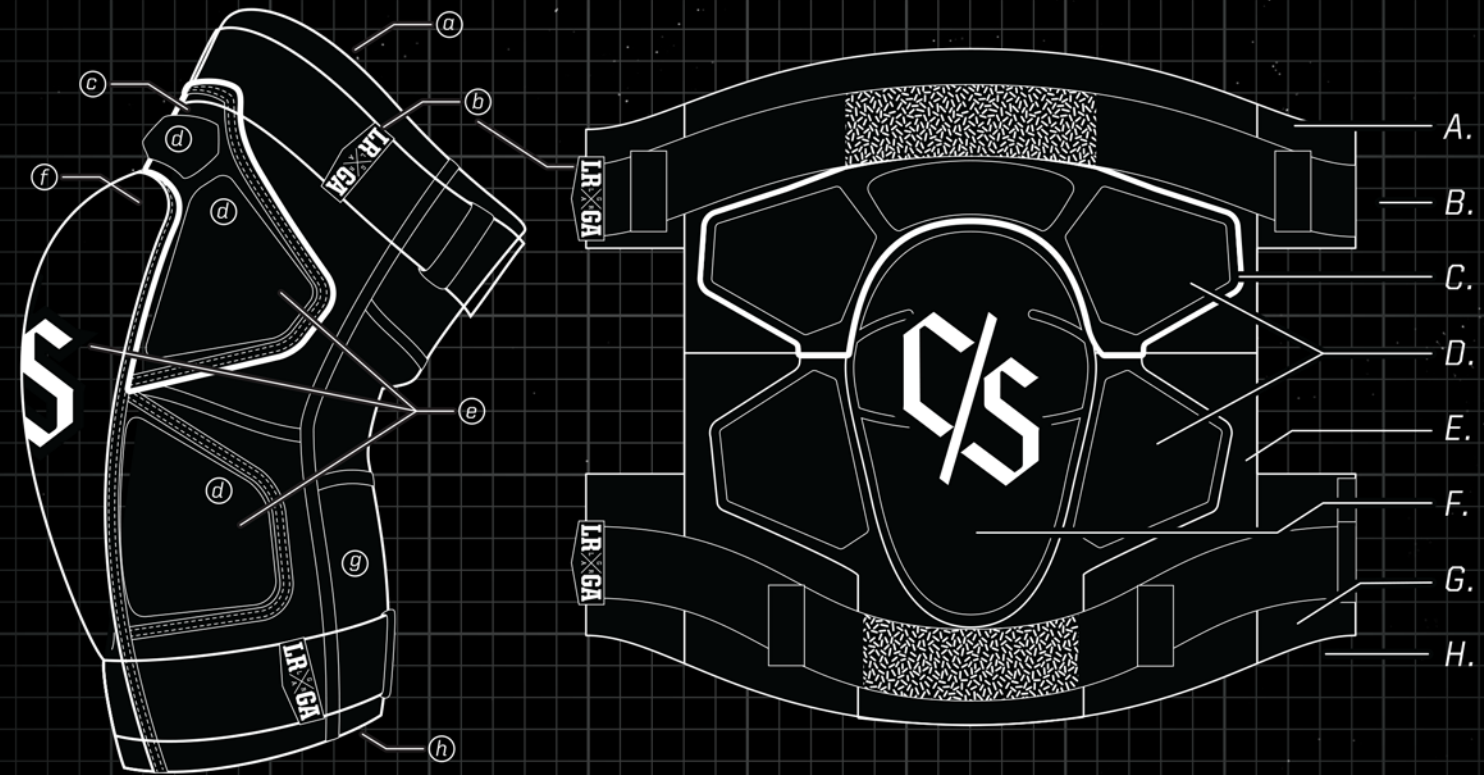


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