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Zhang Yuan & Others

Aurelius Satlow



The “Ride Your Bike Mini Festival” writes its second year of history and even more riders than last year came to the small tea fields surrounding the village of Yinjiang, southwest of Ningbo, and had a great riding session together!

Again the organisation had to be done, only this time I had the moral and practical support of Mesum (mtbmagasia) from far away, as he has left China and is back again in Switzerland.

Honestly spoken, I miss the little riding sessions I had in Germany, the spontaneous coming together with friends on Saturday or Sunday afternoon and riding till dusk. Recreating a bit of that atmosphere here in Ningbo China is one of my personal aims for sure, and in the long term, helping grow the local riding scene.

宁波山地车公园
Ningbo
Dirtpark

Ride Your Bike Mini Festival 2.0

Fortunately the summer in South East China lasts long and temperatures still go up to 26 degrees even in the beginning of October. On 7th of October the sun sent its rays from a marine blue sky through some scattered clouds – perfect weather for the 17 riders who registered for the Festival and are expected to arrive about 9 AM. For now it was still 7 in the morning. I expected to be the only person on the spot, since I had to prepare lots and lots of stuff by myself. But then I got the phone call from Antoine and Gabriel, who made the 3 hour trip from Shanghai the night before, and 5 minutes later they appeared on the scene. Not only did they help me carrying up beverages, put up the flags and uncover the jumps, but I also could make two new friends sharing the same passion for mountain biking and we almost found ourselves chatting more than preparing the Festival.

What made the talk so interesting
to me was that when
I saw





Antoine
I realized that he
was the French Street Trial
rider from Shanghai, about whom I read
the article in this magazine some years ago!

Around 9:30 AM more riders arrived, half of them from Ningbo. The others drove up to 3 hours and even arrived the day before and stayed in hotels. They helped putting up the big sun tent with chairs for riders as well as spectators. The Dirtpark Ningbo is especially about doing jumps, though it can't be called a spot for genuine dirt jumping if one looks at the architecture of the jumps. One can easily ride there with an Enduro bike or downhill bike. However, the jumps and lines are still a real challenge for the majority of the Chinese riders. So for my little welcome speech at 10:00 AM I found it useful and interesting to talk about how I experienced the dirt jumping culture in Germany, and make the riders here aware that nobody can expect to be able to clear a 3 metre table jump on

the first day, not to mention a gap jump or a 2m high kicker. So I told everyone although dirt jumping is not a team sport and one sits alone on his bike, one should also not forget how important the talk with riding buddies is, for example to exchange experience about the exact speed or how to better position your bike during a jump. Since there is not a well-established riding culture and scene, I often see single riders coming to the spot, not knowing other riders and bravely trying to fight their way down the track. So that time I encouraged the riders who don't know each other yet to "openly talk about their problems and fear instead of trying to be heroes".

Zhiqiang, my good riding buddy and helping hand at building the spot over the last 2 years, translated my welcome speech from English into Chinese, so that the audience could focus on the content rather than having a funny time by





listening
to my foreigner-
style Chinese. After all the
words were spoken, we all started riding
in the beginner area. The lines there include 8 jumps,
always a very low one beside a bit higher one, so that a rider can
do 4 jumps on the 130 metre track, and by setting up two portable ramps I
created in total 6 jumps in the line which ends at a wall ride.

Surprisingly, all of the 17 riders who registered came and even one more. Most
of them were beginner and intermediate riders. The beginner line couldn't satisfy
the more experienced riders like Shuige, Zhiqiang and some others, and soon they
switched to the intermediate+advanced line area of the Dirt Park Ningbo, where
there are another 9 jumps in total. Recently, I replaced a 3m long table jump with
a movable ramp and a dirt landing. When the riders saw the 1.80m ramp many
were scared, even more because there was still the 4 metre gap to the landing

from my last riding session. But when we moved the ramp to the closest position to the landing some riders found confidence to try it. Many of them had never jumped such a relatively huge ramp before. For example, when Mr. Animal (a Chinese Rider with a special name) and Gabriel from Peru succeeded, one could hear the loud whoops, accompanied by hand clapping of bystanders.

The jumps seemed to attract riders so much that they (and also me) totally forgot to ride the 150m single trail that I created up the mountain and which leads into the beginning of the jump lines. For me as the main builder of the Dirt Park, it was super interesting to see how riders use the park and find their own ways and style to ride the lines. Antoine, the Frenchman whose riding is strongly influenced by his Street Trial background, had a great fun to start in the middle of the main line and focus on doing high jumps over a table jump.





Everyone was astonished by the impressive height he reached on this pretty shallow jump with a dirt jump bike - I would estimate about 1.50 meters high.

By the way, something interesting about the landing of that jump: When I build it, I put a whole ceramic toilet for man and a washbasin into the basis of the landing. I found it near the Dirt Park together with other material of torn-down houses. I recycle lots of this trash as a kind of cheap filling material, since there is basically no earth/dirt in the Dirt Park itself, because it's located on a huge rock plateau. The same way, I found a broken but super stable rice cooker and used it as substitute for a rock in the front wall of another new jump, that we now call the "Rice Cooker Jump", because it's the first thing you notice when seeing the jump.

After our 2 hours session in the noon, I arranged a late barbecue with German sausages and French baguette on the spot, instead of the last year's "Chinese way of all riders leaving the place early at 11:30 AM to having a long lunch in a restaurant. Doing so, the group had the chance to walk around, change their chat partner and no one fell into the usual afternoon fatigue.

Under the still-hot Chinese October sun, the ride session went on the whole afternoon. This year I had made the decision for me to ride a bit more than last year, when I was always busy with observing the session and helping out here and there. So I tried with Shuige from Suzhou to test the two freshly built double jumps, both are slight hip jumps, the first with a 6.5 meter and the next with a 7.50 m gap. And how should I explain? Perhaps like this:

Mountain Biking isn't always about easy fun
and easy successes. Shuige had a
massive huck into flat,
because





he absolutely missed the direction and the landing, but fortunately he rode with a downhill bike. For both jumps it turned out that the speed wasn't enough and the line turns in front of the jumps were super hard to manage without sliding away in front of the jumps or even flying in the wrong direction after taking the jumps. First I was disappointed and thought I had made my first real serious building mistake in the Dirt Park after spending 5 months on these two jumps. While Shuige already had given up and took a rest in the chair under the tent, I didn't want to believe that, and then I transformed my disappointment into new motivation. First, I put the big kicker in the line before the jump 1.50m further from the landing I could take more speed. Then I did more runs to practice the line turnings and eventually found out how to get the turns, but still hucking the first one into flat and stopping at the lip of the second one. Then I filled the end of the gap of the

second bigger one with old tires and put a wooden panel above, doing so the gap was reduced to 6m. Finally I pulled it over this jump and my rear wheel just made it to the end of the wood panel. Me and Shuige still didn't clear these jumps, but I could at least prove that it is possible to fly into the right direction. Now it just needs a bit more speed, practice and confidence.

During the afternoon I noticed that Dan, the little Chinese boy who had already participated last year together with his father, was riding in the intermediate line area and almost cleared the 3m table jump, which means huge progress. But really surprising for everyone on the spot was his roll over the big wood kicker jump into the landing. One should know that the kicker is 1.80m in height and the landing even higher and with a 50 cm gap. Some riders stood directly to the kicker ready to catch him in case of falling and more riders on top of the landing. On his





first attempt, Dan had already got the right speed to roll up on the landing, then the riders caught him quickly. On his second attempt, he really made a nice small jump and landed on his own and rolled down the landing – loud “Yessss!” shouts, clapping and whooping in the Dirtpark! For his huge progress the little rider received the “Dirtpark Ningbo Progress Award”.

Also big progress in tricks was shown by Shuige with a No-Footed Can Can, not absolutely clean though; then a No-Foot One-Hander; a 180 to fakie 180 back over a ramp and last but not least the Air table-top on the big Quarter; together with his jib-style it made it fun to watch him riding and this together compensated for his jumps actually lacking height and extension.

Thus, the “Best Trick”-Award was his and he was happy about a stylish T-Shirt sponsored by Öhlins.

Together with 11 riders we finished that sunny, beautiful riding day without crashes in a restaurant with local Chinese cuisine. After arriving home, the riders sent me Thank-you-messages for organizing the event and expressed how much fun at riding they'd had.





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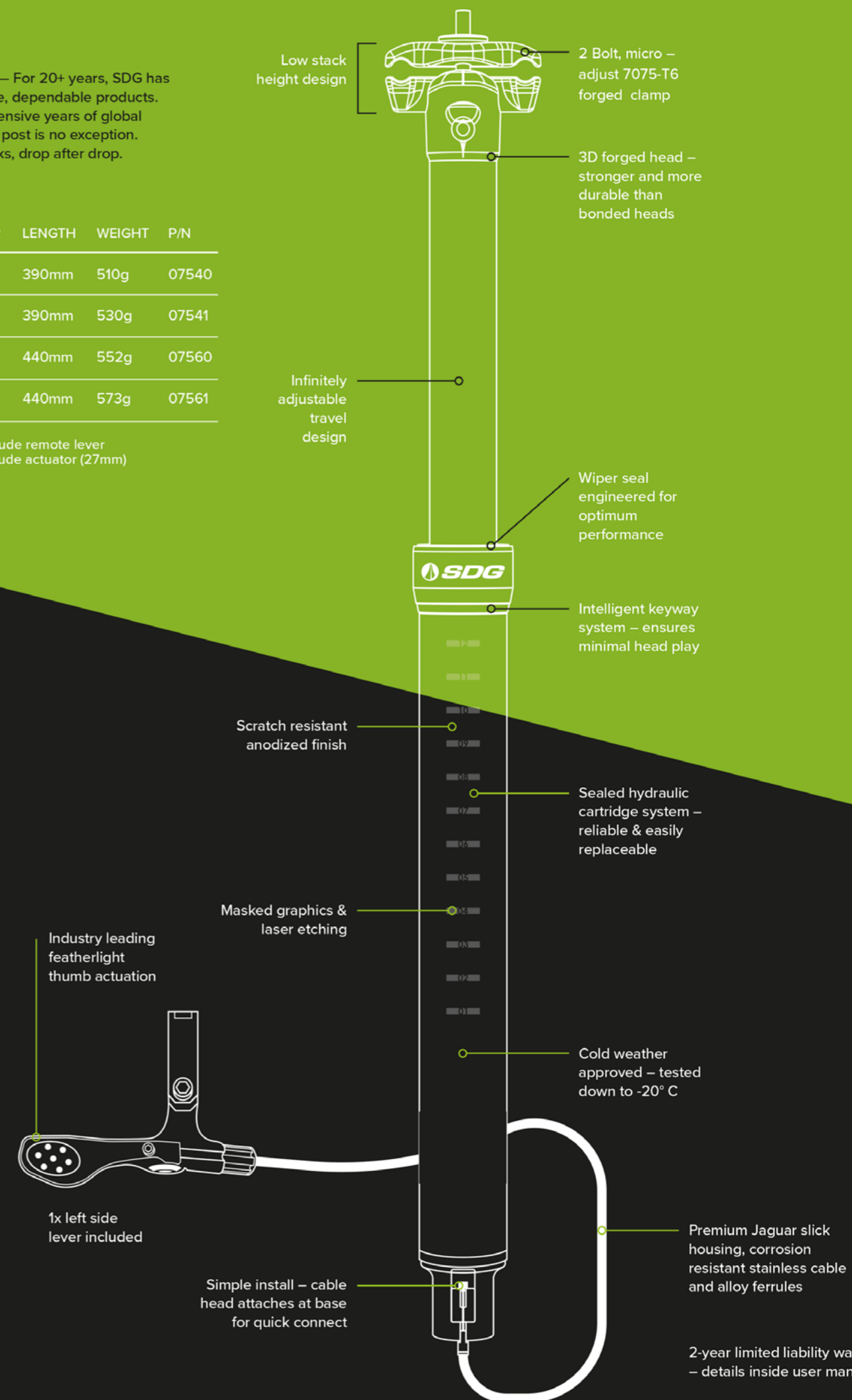
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2021 GDL 山地自行车系列赛 广东省 DOWNHILL SERIES MTB RACE 速降联赛

„The Rise of the Youngsters“



**There was a historic moment
at the GDL Race in October!**



Almost at the end of the season, the GDL Race organiser called riders to come down to Zhongshan in south China, for the second downhill race held at the venue this year.





With joy they faced the maximum attendance from the youth categories. They allow maximum 50 riders to register. The youth categories are U15 (which had the most people) and U18. It's very promising that this category had the most riders of the whole race weekend.



The other highlight was, not only the first time for GDL, but the first time in the whole of China, the introduction of a new category of racer! This was the E-Bike group. For the first time 6 E-Bikers attended the race. It was not only downhill, they had also to climb the mountain.



With new partners such as us the Swiss clothing brand Zimtstern, nothing could go wrong.

The rules for the new group are almost the same as the Enduro Race rules, just a bit adjusted. They started all at the same time, a group mass start. Two laps they did, and they still had to pedal hard uphill to beat the other competitors. Nothing too chill, and also to make sure that when they reached the downhill part, they'd be able to ride their own line without having other riders in front of them to slow them down.



2021



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2021 GDL 山地自行车系列赛
广东省速降联赛
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Many moms and dads came to watch their children. The Rise of the youngsters!! Thankfully so many parents came, they really increased the number of the spectators! Everybody was cheering for each rider. The crowd was quite noisy! In this group, the attitude was that attending the race is already a win for each of them! Everybody had a big smile on their faces, parents and also the kids!



From the youngest to the oldest! Still a handful riders are in the 40+ Masters group. The GDL Member and Team Captain of the Wildcat Racing Team got the fastest time down the mountain. The „old men“ clubs are all racing here out of pure love for mountain biking.

The women's category could still use a few more riders. With only two female riders attending, the podium position was quickly settled.





In the elite category, the Beijing GDR Team was dominating the training and the qualifying. But in the final, Xiao Cong had bad luck and faced a puncture. But despite having a flat tire, he made it to the second spot on the podium. Xiao Cong in 2021 is still the rider in China to beat!

**In total 101 riders attend
here in Zhongshan and it was
a successful weekend for all!**

See you all at the next race!








SPEED RACE WHITE




PANTS SEND IT



GLOVES RAD RED

 Aurelius Satlow, Others

 Aurelius Satlow

IT WAS A BLAST!

RACE WEEKEND IN BRAVE PEAK BIKE PARK / CHINA

A PASSIONATE DOWNHILL RIDER OF COURSE TAKES PART AT RACES. IF YOU'RE ONE OF THEM, IT MIGHT BE BORING TO TELL YOU THE STORY OF ANOTHER RANDOM BIKER'S PARTICIPATION AT A RACE. AT LEAST IF THE RACE HAPPENS SOMEWHERE IN YOUR OWN COUNTRY. THE MOST IMPORTANT THINGS HERE WOULD BE: HOW WAS THE WEATHER? WHO WON THE RACE? DID THE SPORTS PHOTOGRAPHER TAKE ANY COOL PHOTOS OF ME? BUT WHAT ABOUT RACING DOWNHILL IN CHINA? WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO GO TO A DOWNHILL RACE IN CHINA? COULDN'T THAT BE A WHOLE DIFFERENT STORY? WHAT IS THE SAME? THAT'S THE STORY I'M GOING TO TELL HERE.



As usual, a race weekend needs to be prepared, and for me here in China the most important thing to be done in advance is the early booking of the hotel, because there is basically only one hotel near the Bike Park and all riders who participate will stay overnight in this one. I missed my chance to book early enough, and the only left bed was in the huge 16-bed room (better described as a “hall”), and so the second most important thing was a pair of ear plugs for the night. Third: lots of different clothes! Unlike in Europe, where the weather and temperature in October is easy to forecast (basically cold) here in South-East of China the temperature can range between 11 degrees, in case of rain, up to 23 degrees if it’s sunny, and it even changes within one day.

After packing all the other usual stuff including bike, protection and so on, I set off by car on a Saturday morning from Ningbo to Brave Peak Bike Park (勇峰山地车公园) in the same Province (Zhejiang). The hot coffee I took with me in the car perfectly fit the sweet moon cake that was still left from the Mid Autumn Festival 3 weeks earlier. Weather was fine, roads weren’t crowded, and the podcast from the German ex-downhill racer Jasper Jauch made the 3 hours and 14 tunnels journey feel short. Meanwhile other riders arrived by plane in Hangzhou





and had to procure rental cars to get their bikes, gear, and selves to the small village in the mountains 120 km south of Hangzhou. The unluckiest are the riders who are too young to drive and not far enough to take a plane and then have to go by train and taxi, which takes the whole Friday before the practice on Saturday. And what is worst for them: they need to pack and wrap their bike fully into a box and send it to the Bike Park a week in advance and do the same before leaving back home. Seeing my rider friends dealing with these annoying issues, I felt really lucky to live only 280 km away from the Bike Park and be able to come and go with my car whenever I wanted.

After check-in at the hotel (of course with measuring my temperature proving that the “Health Code” in the mobile app is Green), I unpacked the bike and hopped into my downhill short pants, because the sun was shining and it was already about 18 degrees. However I came too late for the first Shuttle up the mountain and so I rode the 3 kilometers to the end of the downhill track, where the Pick-Up car was already loaded up with bikes and riders. On practice days of race weekends, every rider is allowed to take 2 shuttles in the morning and 2 in the afternoon, which meant that, for me, only three runs down the whole track were left. Since there were only 14

riders in my race class, the Elite-Group, it wasn't a coincidence to sit together with Xiao Cong, one of the fastest downhill racers in all China, in the same pick up car and chat about how best to ride the steep, narrow and partially mossy-slippery berms on the top of the mountain.

The road up the mountain is steep, super rough and stony, and the driver seemed to have fun making a rally race out of the 17 minute ride up the mountain. After arriving I always felt like I'd just finished a downhill run before the actual run. And so felt almost every rider and almost everyone needed a short rest, especially after pushing the bike up the last 60m to the start gate.

I didn't rush to start riding and rather tried to get some cool shots of how riders were taking the first three long high berms. After all riders left I wanted to do something I'd planned for a long time: practicing only these first three berms. So, I ran down three times, each time stopping after 200 meters and pushing back to finally figure out that the middle line was still the best for me. After that I had made a common decision that has to be made in that Bike Park: if you started riding down too late, the chance is high that the pick up at the end of the track has already loaded up other riders or even left. So I waited





for the next pick up unloading the next bunch of riders and bikes. One of faces seemed very familiar to me and it was Chen Chen, a fast and tough downhill rider from the older generation. I already knew him from the online interview we had some months ago about him building a pump track in Beijing, where he and his family live. So, what a happy surprise to meet him here!

Also Shuige was in the pick up, a friend from Suzhou, with whom I'd ridden in Ningbo just three weeks before. I tried to follow him on my run down, but he dashed out of sight after only three curves. I stopped my run at the middle of the mountain in the practice area for jumps, and what did I see: some riders attempting the big almost 8 meter road gap jump. Xiao Cong took the higher one of the two take-offs and pulled a beautiful extended suicide no-hander. I was absorbed by the intense atmosphere of the scene, so that I first forgot to take out my camera. But then at least I got one rider, Shuige, on the camera.

Seeing them flying really made me think about also trying it, and I carefully watched their speed and timed their pedalling before the jump, but finally the step-down character of this huge road gap scared me too much. Also, I hadn't had enough warm up yet, so I did the normal jump line including a

small road gap and then went on the downhill to bottom. Here I had another little surprise. I expected the track to be in a good condition, because the maintenance team normally brushes up everything right before the races. So, when approached the long wooden wall ride, I directly went on the highest possible line, because I love that feeling. But suddenly at the middle of the wall ride, one of the boards was completely missing, and a yawning gap of 25 cm forced me to brake and ride down, with my front wheel roughly touching the ground due to the steep angle. Luckily I could ride it out.

After this run everyone headed 3 km back to the hotel to have lunch in the restaurant there. The racing team from Changsha, which mostly holds the top positions in the all races across of China, invited me to their table and when they ordered “only a bit spicy” food, because of me, I knew it was going to be hot. For them, taking part in this race basically means competing against one other fast team rider from Shanghai and maybe one or two other independent hobby riders. All other riders of the Elite-group are basically only in that group because they can ride the full Bike Park line, unlike in the general-group or beginner-group. A lot of the other riders in the group said that they were not there for racing, but for having fun, meeting friends and riding





together during the practice runs and the day before and after the race.

In the afternoon I unfortunately didn't get a seat aboard the Pick-Up. Riding shotgun in the truck bed, three of us were on the narrow hard bench with our faces 25 cm away from our bike pedals. During the shuttle ride we had to cling somewhere all the time to avoid being thrown up and down and slamming our heads against the bikes because of the potholes. Arriving on the mountain top, we felt like just having finished a downhill run. This ride I decided to go with my roommates from Shenzhen and Guangdong and we did a full top to bottom run, which takes about 7 minutes and really feels exhausting, especially the pumptrack-like section through a dense bamboo forest. We 5 riders stayed together the whole afternoon and interrupted our second run to practice the jump line at the middle platform. It's actually amazing how well some of them can ride and jump, if one considers the scarcity of bike parks and good trails in China. For example, the one rider from Guangdong told me that the closest Bike Park, the Zhongshan Bike Park, was still 3 hours from his home, and so he rides only 1 to 2 times per month and sometimes not at all for 3 months because job and family don't allow it. And that kind of story I often hear when talking with downhill rider friends in China.

After all the practice on the first day, all riders gathered in the hotel restaurant. When Xiaolu came, one of this day's riding buddies, he suddenly brought two whole plucked chickens and wanted to "bake" them outside and asked me for help. I first wondered about why he said "bake". We walked to the nearby river. There he wrapped the chickens in aluminium foil, started digging a hole into the ground, and the other buddies searched for dry wood and stones to make a camp fire above the buried chicken. Now it became clear to me how to "bake" it. Some villagers were curiously watching our activity and gave critical comments about our method. It turned out that they were right: the wood was too wet. To our surprise one old man wanted to help us. So, in the darkness two of us followed him along the river to his house, where he gave us a big bunch of dry tree bark. Using that, the fire finally grew big and we passed an hour around the baking chicken by talking about our mountain bikes, riding experiences, our jobs and so on. That was the first time in years for me to enjoy a campfire atmosphere together with friends. With the now-baked chicken, we went back to the restaurant, sat around the big round Chinese table and had our earth-baked chicken with different vegetable dishes from the kitchen there.





The next day was race day and the elite-group's run was 10:45 AM without practice or warm up runs before. This time I sat with Geraldo in the pick up, a super friendly rider from Brazil living in Shanghai. I started as the last of the 14 riders in the elite group since I wanted to take photos. The Chinese guy who did time measurement at the start gate saw that, and when my start came he offered to take photos of my start with my camera! I can barely imagine that happening at a downhill race in Germany. During the run I had one severe line mistake and ranked 10th, not too bad considering competing against China's fastest riders, and riders 20 years younger. And Geraldo who is even 5 years older than me went almost 10 seconds faster! First place took Xiao Cong with 5 min 57 sec.

The evening after the race, most of the riders prepared to go home, but many stayed another night to Monday. I planned to get to sleep early after all the riding, because me and my Loose Riders China friend Xiaoyuan wanted to ride together the next morning. But then Xiaolu lined up 6 cups on the big table in our 16-person room, filled them with all with beer and called loud for "Russian Beer Roulette" – the rest you can imagine! Although the heavy drinking, next morning all these people were up to get the shuttle at 9 AM! We

all had a rad riding session over the big trick jump, Xiaoyuan showed his amazing trick skills, for example the no-hand no-footer. Unfortunately, after that, at our run down the mountain I had pretty hard crash when I overshot the table in the finish area, though luckily nothing serious happened to me. However, after that all my power was gone and I felt that riding more than 2 days was enough. Since I already had paid for two shuttles up the mountain, I did the second last run but then went back to the hotel. My mind full of new impressions of the race weekend and nice memories with old and new friends, I cruised back home.

What made that race different than experiences in Germany was the strong community feeling that I had there; many riders came from pretty far and stayed for three or more days, all living and sleeping in the same hotel and even the same big rooms, eating together on the big round tables in the same restaurant. And since the scene isn't as big as in European countries, I know lots of riders already from the big 500-and-counting member wechat group, and meeting riders at the race means discovering the faces that belong to persons that I've already chatted with.



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