



mtbmag

india.com

ISSUE 017 - JUL / 2015



SCHOOLBOYS

Schoolboys - we feature 3 very talented riders from 3 different countries! Piyush Chavan from India, Martin Maes from Belgium and Dan [Sheng Shan] from Taiwan. Read how they manage to sit in the school chair but then also race in the highest level in downhill and enduro! Hans Rey and Kenny Belaey must have also felt like schoolboys when they went to Corsica to ride the trails. When it's snowing, it feels like everything stops, but not for these guys - they went all the way up to Parasher Lake, stomping through deep snow to finally meet their end destination. We let you know how the clip-less HT Pedal X1 works on the trails. If you go out for a spin in the woods, it's always good to have some water with you, and a small bag for tools or food. We review for you the Synchron Water bottle and the seatbag. The Impossible Race in Gujarat was held for the first time, read what Abhishek Purohit was going through while he was racing there. Dan Atherton must be feel a bit like the first time in the school, when he attended the Dyfi enduro Race, which was more a pure XC race than an enduro race. Ride on - Keep it Real!

Mesum Verma

Mesum Verma - Editor in Chief




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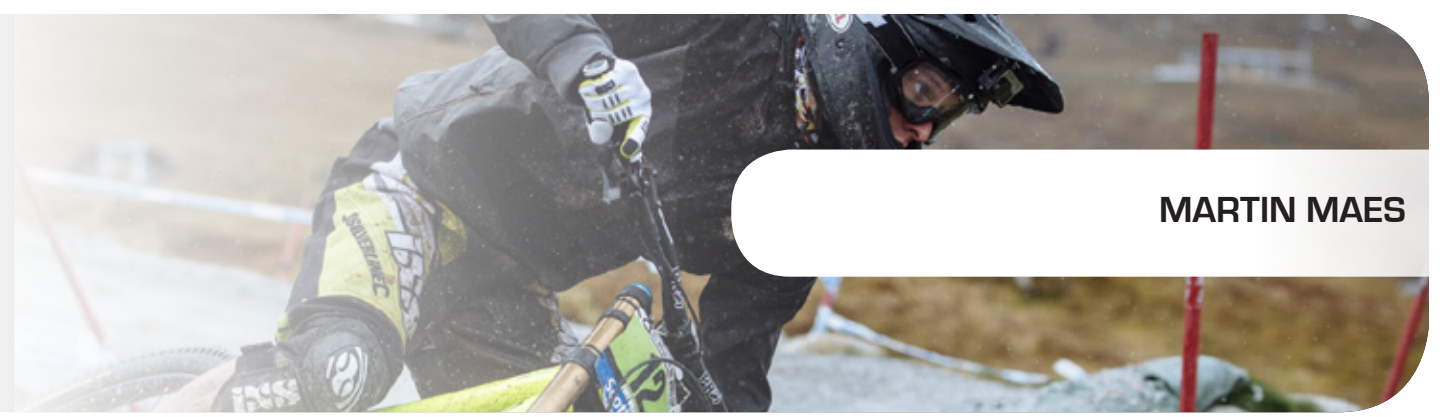
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TRIALS ON TRAILS



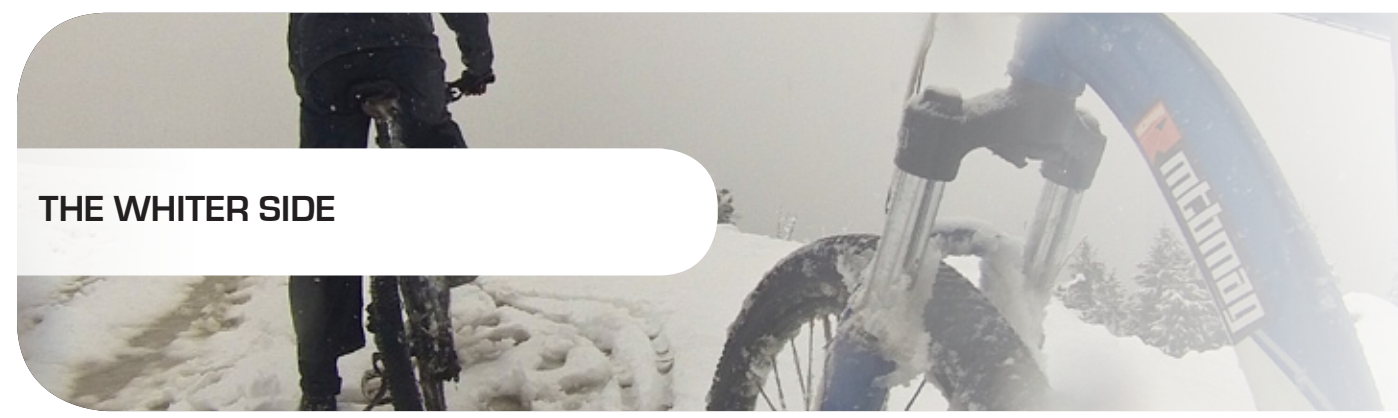
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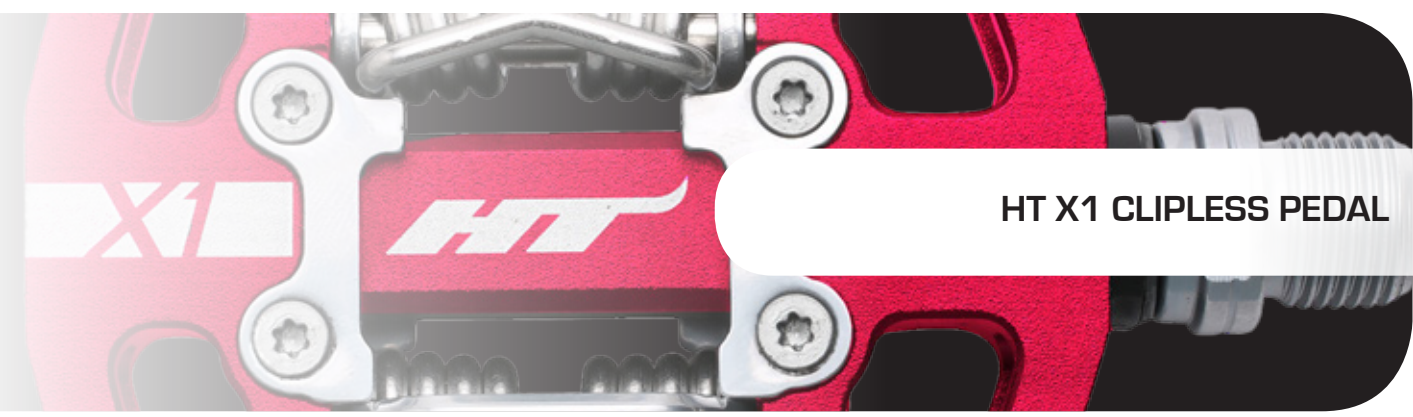
PIYUSH CHAVAN



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HT X1 CLIPLESS PEDAL



DAN ATHERTON DYFI ENDURO



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TRIALS ON TRAILS

on the French Island of Corsica

Take two world champion expert trials riders, put them on a boat en-route to Corsica and let's see what we get with the perfect mix of Hans Rey and Kenny Belaey.



Cedric Tassan
Carmen Rey



Cedric Tassan



Hans Rey
Kenny Belaey





Both the trials masters have brought with them enduro bikes and trials bikes so my van was pretty full. Off we go to the Port of Marseille in southern France. Since we have a little time to spare we decide to climb the steps to the Notre-Dame-de-la-Garde and make a little pilgrimage to the Virgin Mary statue that looks out over the city and looks

after the Maritimers. Hans says a little prayer for safe passage and I can only hope that Our Lady understands Swenglish!

Embarking on our ferry it was time to squeeze into our miniscule cabin and considering chilling out for a while, what better way to do that than to look at the incredible view from our ship's deck as we leave the port of Marseille behind. Whilst lying on my bunk that night, I could only be grateful for the calm waters as



I tried not to think too much about my hurting body.

After a smooth crossing we arrive in Ajaccio where we meet up with our guide Remy and drive to Sanguinary a rocky point, which is one of the most famous sites on the island. Unfortunately the weather is a disappointment giving us flat light, but no matter we will make do and so we set off on our first bike tour.

We follow Remy who sets a good pace


through the stunning forests, as we climb the road to the Bocca di Canarecia my body loosens up and I become less aware of the pain I am in. Then comes a twisty and flowy descent through the tight trees. I can see that Hans and Kenny are in Heaven in this natural playground. Once at the bottom we arrive at St. Antoine beach where Remy points



out a rocky and very steep shortcut trail butting up to the sea, riding the wall 20' above the ocean seems to be the way to continue to the trail even though it seems a little crazy. Crazy continues as the trail continues with very exposed rocky winding steps that lead into a narrow gully, no room for errors. Although this is a breathtaking sight it is also scary

since a fall would mean a drop of 7 or 8m to the rocky beach below.

It would have been impossible to photograph the two Trials aficionados riding together; the space was far too tight. So they set off one at a time. I picked my angles to shoot and watched as they implemented all of their Trials techniques; precisely and patiently maneuver, hop and nose wheelies foot by foot their All Mountain Bikes downwards. Skills which are beautiful as well as impressive to



watch against this stunning backdrop. After Kenny rode a beached tree trunk we continued to loop around Minaccia cove to the meadows beyond.

We follow the coastal Corniche path and see just how wild and beautiful Corsica is. After another steep and steady climb we reach the point of Corba and then tackle the fast and rocky descent in a cloud of dust to the Cala di Reta. At the tip of this bay is the Parata, a tower and another famous Corsican monument

from where we could see many trails looping around us as we took in the 360 degree view. Kenny showed us some of his moves, with his dynamic energy propelling him up steps and rocks. He is a virtuoso who plays on his bike like a musician his instrument. His pedal strokes are rare and only applied at the exact precise moment they are needed, his



skills are magic to watch. He rode his full suspension bicycle as it was a motorcycle. Hans then took the trail down, tackling the very steep, very technical steps, it was slow going but he cleaned it.

It is time to follow Remy again to our camp for the first night. After several kilometers of narrow winding roads we

reach a dirt track, which Remy successfully negotiated with his 5m long trailer. We arrive at Lava Beach where there are a few dilapidated huts along with the most spectacular view of the gulf.

As the sun sets Hans becomes excited about the prospect of seeing Mercury, apparently tonight it should be visible to the naked eye and this is a rare thing. But even though the sky is clear, we can't even locate Venus despite the technology of astrological apps on our phones.

Time for beer, the local Corsican brew is pretty strong but goes down well at the end of a long day accompanied by sausages, sardines and kebabs. Sitting on the beach, eating and drinking in the company of interesting people we feel like we are on vacation.

In the morning we managed to squeeze in a little stand up paddle board session and a game of Boules before heading off to our next destination, the village of Piana and the Calanche cliffs which are

so incredible they are listed as a UNESCO world heritage site. This probably the most famous and busiest place in Corsica and Hans and Kenny are captivated by what they see.

We know that the ascension will not be easy, in addition taking photos takes time and so after discussion it is decided






that I will leave my bike behind. With a path littered with rocks and still another 450m of elevation to climb, I am thankful many times for this sensible decision. With the smells of Corsican nature accompanying us we are grateful for the shade of the forest until we reach the Piazza Moninca where the granite boulders on the trail give way to beautiful flowered scrubland with pink rocks as a backdrop.

There are many terrains I will attempt

on a bike, but quite frankly, unless you have the trials skills of Hans and Ken-ny, attempting this trail would be simply insane. Continuing our arduous climb we see no one but a few hikers, we are conscious of the need to press on if we are to make the most of the light for our photos.

A photograph of two mountain bikers riding on a dirt trail along a rocky coastline. The biker in the foreground is wearing an orange long-sleeved shirt, blue shorts, a blue and red backpack, and a black helmet with 'GT' branding. The biker in the background is wearing a blue and yellow shirt, yellow shorts, and a black backpack. The trail is made of dirt and small stones, and the background features a rocky shore, the sea, and a large, grassy hill under a cloudy sky.

Once at the summit of Capu d'Orto we are stunned by the view from our perch 1300m above the ocean. Our eyes take in the sights of the Gulf of Porto, snow capped mountains, the gorges of Spelunca and the Gulf of Sagone. Corsica may be just a small piece of France but this island has a lot of diversity, it is simply fantastic!

Hans and Kenny prepare for another treacherous descent; right at the beginning Hans jumped a huge rock, which even Kenny was not comfortable with. It is interesting to see that these riders know and respect their limits; they have incredible skills but remain modest. There can only be a few riders in the world that could ride this trialsy trail without setting a foot down. Challenges like these continue to validate and identify the talent of Hans and his GT Team mate and how they are true practitioners of their trade.



Although the slabs of rock along the way are big and have a steep camber, the granite makes them grippy and the riders have plenty of lines to choose from.

After a time we are back at the place where my bike lays hidden and thankfully it is still there. We proceed on but after a while it became evident that we are lost. No problem, I pull out my phone and use my VTOPO application, with speed and accuracy it pinpointed our location and we were able to find our way back to the

path with little time lost. Although the trail is tricky, it is also fun and beautiful, but we are running out of time, the sun is low and so there is no more time for more photos. Kenny is on a mission, he almost cleans the last 20 switchbacks in the dark, it was very hard and everybody was exhausted.



The next morning was set aside for some pure trials time, south side of Ajaccio you will find Verghia where there are huge granite slabs lain in the sea. Trials moves always take concentration, precision, focus and skill, even with all of this in place it is possible for error to occur. Kenny fell between two rocks, a gap which saw him land in the ocean, but

very thankfully he was not injured. I'm still amazed by some of the moves Kenny pulled on that beach, sometimes its was hard to comprehend, even after watching him do the same move over and over. Like this rock that was 130cm/51" tall with a 150cm/60" gap before it. Hopping from standstill position on his backwheel up the vertical rockface, placing his front on the edge of the obstacle, while engaging immediately into a second move that lands him on top of the rock with both wheels. Not

even the best basketball players good do such a vertical leap.

It was time to head back to the beginning as we board our ferry in Ajaccio on course for Sanguinary.

Our time together however had not quite come to an end. After a little relaxation at my house we set off to meet Kenny who was having a training session around the rocks where I had sent him thinking it would be a great place for

some trials. After days in Corsica carrying my professional camera equipment, I now found myself with the potential of possibly the best content for pictures from the whole trip and yet all I had with me was my iPhone.





Mesum Verma



Mesum Verma

Chiang
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INTERVIEW



Hi Dan, you are from Taiwan, please tell us a bit more about you.

I am from Taoyuan, 20 years old, studying at the School of Kinesiology of University of Taipei. I am the youngest kid in the family. This is my second year with my main sponsor GIANT. I ride 7 days a week. Mountain biking is my life.

How did you get in to biking? How old were you when you first were on a bike? Did you first try other sports, or go straight into mountain biking?

I like many kinds of sports. Table tennis, roller skating, board jump, swimming, hiking. I am influenced by my family. My father and older brothers have ridden MTB since I was little. I started to ride on a trike at 3 and smashed some of them because I wanted to do some jumps on it. Then I start to ride bikes, most of time on a trial bike. The trial technique helps me a lot when switching to MTB. From 10 years old, I started to participate in races and since then no turning back.

Did you always have the most interest in downhill biking? We know you also often ride some XC - Races in Asia.

Downhill is always fun and I am focusing on it, but XC riding is also in my training schedule. I race in all kind of MTB race in Taiwan. For Asian Championship, I race both DH and XC.

How many races do you attend in

Asia? And in which country in Asia do you ride the most races? In Taiwan, or somewhere else?

I have been to Malaysia, Lebanon, China for Asian Championships and most other races are in Taiwan.

This spring, you went to Lourdes for the first UCI downhill world cup in 2015. How was your experience there? How can you describe the differences between you and the top 10 riders? We mean, what is needed to be a top 10 rider?

It is a very valuable experience to me. Lourdes is a new track to everyone, no one has an advantage. This is my first time to race in highest level race and it is really tough. Riders did not have much time to practice but we need to pick it up as soon as possible. I see how professional those World Cup riders are, pre-race, in the pit, warm-up, track walk, line choice, after-race brief, everything. The experience and core strength are the biggest differences between me and top riders. To be Top 10, the environment is the most important. In a good environment, not only can I have a technical place to train but also peer riders to compete, that is very crucial.

You still study, how does a normal day look with Dan?

Just like university student but less time in classroom. Usually, I have 4 classes in the morning, there are more sport-related subjects in the





second year in university. Afternoon is the training time for my major, cycling sport. Sometimes in the Gym and most time on the bike. I ride route bike for cardio training with my classmate. I am the first and only student in MTB specialty so I am authorized to have my own time on dirt, mostly in the mountains around Taipei city, XC, AM, DH all kinds of MTB riding.

Beside biking, what other things do you do that you really like, and spend quite some time on?

Studying, Internet, eat good food, make sightseeing tours.

You certainly have a training plan, do you also strictly follow a diet plan? Or do you eat everything that you want? If you don't have to care about what you eat, what you like to eat and drink?

I often eat light, natural, unprocessed food. Taking much salt, oil or meat makes my body sluggish so I try to choose light food. I seldom take soda or alcohol, I prefer juice.

Do you like to listen to music? How important is music for you, in your daily life, or training?

Yes, I do. I don't have a preference for certain type music. It depends on my mood.

You travel quite often. What is the best trip you've been on? Maybe also

share some funny story with us?

I went to the Sea Otter Classic in California few years ago and had a chance to ride trails there. That's my first time riding outside Asia. The big trees, fresh and dry air, smooth sunshine and riding pals makes me feel like I'm in heaven. I remember once before riding downhill somewhere in Europe, I saw a squirrel on the trail, a beautiful squirrel with golden yellow tail. Because I was doing DH riding, I was approaching to it rapidly. I am very surprised that it didn't care about me at all, just leisurely crossing through the trail. At that moment I recalled the squirrels in Taiwan, gray colored, small and usually fleeing away so fast. We can find this tiny animal on two opposite sides of the earth but they act so differently, It makes me feel the world is small and also big.

On which trail do you train mostly?
Do you have a favorite trail in Taiwan?
Where would be your dream trail?

I try to train on different trails because different trails have different fun and I can train different techniques. My dream trail...steeper, more technical, longer like World Cup trails.

What was the first bike that you rode? How many bikes do you have now? What bike do you ride now?

My first bike was a GIANT kids bike (when I was 5 years old). After some years being sponsored, I've





lost count of my bikes, probably more than 20. Currently, I ride Giant Glory Advanced for DH, Giant Reign Advanced for AM, Giant Anthem Advanced and XTC Advanced for XC, all in 27.5, and Giant STP for 4X, Giant Propel Advanced for route training.

Tell us why to pick up biking, over any other sport?

I am not really sure why, although I move very fast on a bike, it seems very exciting, but I feel relaxed on it, I guess that's why.

Thank you Dan, it was nice to meeting you, and it is always nice to see you on the races and see your back wheel for 1 second, when we start at the same time. The last words are yours!

Ride on, keep it real!

I want to thank all the sponsors for last 2 years, Giant, Xfusion, Novatec, Shimano, Xforce, HT, Spank, Ranger's MTB, EVOC, KMC, Maxxis, Frontier and Lezyne. I can't have these results and experiences without their support. And also great thanks to my parents, they have supported me from the beginning, without them I wouldn't be who I am now. See you guys on the trail.

GIANT

Xfusion

DC

HT

游騎兵基地

KMC

Frontier

N

SHIMANO
SPANK

EVOC

MAXXIS

LEZYNE

The whiter side

"It's when you give yourself to travel, bare, battered; Life reveals herself in all her grandeur, for an enchanted, awakened you."

We had come far. The snow had got heavier and the winds numbing. It was getting dark. Visibility reduced to almost zero. The Ascend had brought us through more than a couple of hairpin turns, through our fears of the unknown. Pushing our bicycles, cutting through the snow, "push, push harder..." was all that kept ringing in our heads. And here I was, some twenty seven hundred meters above sea level, standing grounded, astounded. My shuddered spirit witnessing the mountains' stirring revelation. In a sudden turn of events, the clouds started rolling away, the skies cleared, hues changed, as the mountains



Dhanush K Dev



Dhanush K Dev



started appearing in the great white canvass. Patches of replenished green had survived the long snow. Drenched in the subtle yellow tinge of happiness, it was the reward of contentment. This time I was on the other mountain- the whiter side. Ten minutes of impassioned drama had left me awed beyond comprehension, beyond exclamation. We looked at each other, tucked our high hearts underneath our mirth and said, "Dinkan is great!" (Dinkan is the super rat from Kerala, who had made his way from children's comics to satirical theistic - atheistic debates)

When Alladin buzzed, "Holi Ride!" , it was supposed to be a moderate ride. (Alladin is a whatsapp group of a few bicyclists that was created after our last Leh ride). Three guys, three bicycles, four days - that was all we had in mind as we started. We did not have the faintest idea of what awaited us.

25th of February- Rohit rode from Faridabad to IIT Delhi. His quest to find himself after the problems with his health had taken him through more than forty five solo treks around the Himalayas, to the starting of his group, 'Nature's Call' that takes people on different treks today. We had become friends when he had found him with a broken bicycle on our last ride to Ladakh. This was going to be our second ride together - him, Sanoj and me. Sanoj and I had decided not to have our carriers this time. We were carrying our bags on our backs. All

buckled up, bicycles loaded onto the roof of the bus, we started our journey from Kashmiri gate to Mandi. Rarely sleeping, we reached Mandi bus stop around 5 AM the next day. We stopped at this nice road side dhaba. Awesome parathas rejuvenated our excitement after that tiring bus trip. The morning couldn't be more perfect. And suddenly, Sanoj pointed out that his winter clothes were missing. Excited, I totally forgot about the bag of winter clothes that he had given me to carry. It never came out of my room. But the good part was, we lost a few kilos. When I look back today, it was a lesson we learnt - On a ride like this, towels, toothbrushes, and extra underwear are mostly never needed.

We had packed minimum, and now we were moving with half of that. But as we started riding uphill, we couldn't care less. We were as excited as when we had started, probably more. The weather was pleasant. Occasionally we would pass by milkmen waving at us as they would come down on their bicycles. Close mountains, long tracks, welcoming smiles of the locals - it was euphoria. We were making up songs and singing, "Round - round - round, Oh Tanga-langa-la!".

It had been some five- six hours into the merry ride. The road till now had been a continuous uphill. And suddenly there laid in front of us a stretch of the winding road downhill. After the long ride uphill, we were really happy to see this stretch. The sheer joy of downhillling lasted around four kilometres as we



landed onto an almost level stretch going into a wooden bridge. As we rode over the gushing waters of Kamand and past the bridge, we saw three small idols carved out of stone atop a stone pillar by the end of the bridge. Local beliefs had washed the idols red in sindoor, as they stood still atop the pillar. Sounds of the rushing stream behind with the ironic stillness of the red idols had filled the air with certain mysticism that drew your attention and would hold you still. I halted. And for a moment I was bridged across generations of men who had walked these mountains- our pristine nature.

As I left it behind and continued on our ride uphill, we came across this little restaurant by the river. It was past eleven and we were a little hungry. As we went in I noticed that everything, from biscuits to cakes, was branded 'Parashar' now. Our destination felt closer. We had a few omelettes hoping to have lunch at Bagi and finishing the ride by evening. We continued on our ride uphill. The air had started getting heavy. It was afternoon. We were still far away from Bagi. We halted as we reached a small village called Katola. Without food, we were tired by now. We knew we could not ride for long. We had to get supplies for the night – biscuits, cakes and some pakodas. We started riding up to Bagi. It was another six kilometres from here and the rain was getting heavier. We knew we had to stay back at Bagi for the night. We decided to ride slowly revelling in what the mountains had got for us. The rain had washed the place

to spectacularity. The fresh greens of the onion fields far down the valley were spreading up the hills. Scattered, small huts and grazing sheep dotted the hills freely, while earth smelled of life – beautiful, unpredictable, colours blurred into the distant rains. And on mountains with rains like that, salty potato chips get really tasty. We were halting from time to time now, eating, laughing.

We reached Bagi around five in the evening. Rain had ceased for some time. We saw a few locals gathering around a fire they had made by the side of the road. Pulled in by the comfort of fire, we went and joined them. As we started talking, they told us how the streams on the way get violent during this time, how the snow gets heavy and slippery, and why rides like this up to Parashar should be avoided this season. We had come far and we were in no intention of going back now. We gave our luggage to the local people and they showed us an abandoned bus stop where we could tent in for the night. Tucked in the comfort inside the tent, we talked for hours, eating our pakodas. Drawn by the warmth of the tent, three dogs had come and settled down at three corners. Sometimes it amazes me how you meet strangers on journeys and you end up owning them. The dogs guarded us through the night as they would bark telling us whenever something happened in the dark silent night, outside. We gave a share of our pakodas to our new found friends and went off to sleep.

We woke up early morning to get back onto our ride. It was still drizzling. Standing outside the small bus stop that had sheltered us last night, I stared at the two roads that diverged from here. Both led to Parashar. One of them went into a beautiful pine forest and vanished into a thin trail. If you are hiking up to Parashar on feet, this is the trail you take, through the majestic forest. The other road led to a broken stone bridge that was flung across by the torrential stream last season. The stream now knee deep, flowed over the broken trail, still rushing in front of me. This was the cycling track. We had a good breakfast at a shop nearby, tried to capture the morning in a few photos, and left Bagi.

We had found a way to go around the broken bridge without walking through the stream. Back on the road again, we started riding uphill with revived spirits.

A few hours on the road, the rain was getting heavier, and the streams that broke the trail from time to time, bigger, relentless. As the winding road took us higher and higher, the mist that kept blowing in and running away was getting heavier. Another hair pin turn, I looked at the horizon, and it took my breath away. We were now riding as high as the peaks of the mountains, above the clouds that rolled fast in the distance. Sometimes a little wandering cloud would pass by stroking my skin, soaking me in. Pine trees grew animatedly straight from the ground through plains and slopes that were now cliffs. Trees flowed down like waterfalls, while some conifers bloomed in vibrant red



reminding of those flowers back home, I haven't seen in years now. Nostalgia, wonder, delight, had uplifted us, evoking emotions I didn't know of. And probably the cold did its part too. We realized we had cold feet and we needed to stop. It was around one in the afternoon, we came across a closed down dhaba by the side of the road. Hurriedly, we ran towards the porch, removed our shoes, and started pacing up and down the veranda. We tried push ups, and almost anything that could warm us up. We needed fire. Trying to warm up, I started exploring around the dhaba. As I walked behind, I could see an abandoned cowshed a little away. Hoping to find firewood, we went inside. Broke a plank, found some hay, and we had a little fire made. Cold and all washed out outside, the warmth of fire inside this dark broken shed, tucked far away in a distant mountain felt like heaven. The warmth, the delicious cakes, and friends, had carried us away to our old memories of mountains and treks, and we realized, it was three thirty in the afternoon already. We had been basking in the comfort for two hours now. The fire had revived our spirits; enthusiasm beat in our hearts again, as we decided to get back into our ride.

We came out of the shed, and saw it for the first time - It was snowing. The washed out mountains had softened into the romance of misty green-white sceneries. Flakes of snow were falling softly, floating, blanketing the mountains slowly in soft shades of snow white. The road was now covered

in patches of thick snow and slushy ice. Adrenaline rushed through my body. Our grins could hardly contain our enthusiasm - We were thrilled. We started riding slowly over the slushy, slippery ice. Cutting through the thick patches of ice was almost impossible. As we rose uphill through steeper tracks, the pine trees around us were getting denser. Loaded heavily in white snow, the trees made way for a pine forest we were riding through now. Everything around looked animated, calmed by the softness of snow.

The place was cast into an ethereal landscape of shades of gray as the trees shaded and snow spread drawing dreamy forms all around. Sporadically, a big chunk of snow would fall from the trees beside me, slushing onto the ground, here and then. We were riding through a dreamy meditative world of our own, halting almost frequently, trying to seize these moments in cameras. It had been around two hours now. We now reached the point in the trail

where there was no trail anymore, just thick white snow blanketing everything we could see. We started pushing through the snow, cutting our way through, making our trail. It was five thirty in the evening, it was getting dark. All of our batteries had died by now. We had eaten up everything we had. The cold was biting as our gloves were all wet. And I saw the vast expanse of white snow covering everything that now laid in front of me- without any trail or life. We looked at each other, panic was settling down. As it

got windier, we decided to walk and push our bicycles through the snow a little further. 'Further' kept on getting further as we clung onto dear hope. We kept saying, "Push... push harder", that now kept repeating in our heads. We thought, maybe we could drop our bikes here, and just walk forward. But the thought of leaving them behind didn't feel comfortable. We had come far on these bikes. Maybe it was just a little more. We decided to push up till the first hairpin turn in the horizon. We reached. The vast expanse of



white snow continued to nothing- one more hairpin turn. We decided to push forward to the next turn. And the next - It had been three hairpin turns now. We could see nothing other than white snow all around. Visibility reduced to zero. The cold was biting, winds numbing, and we were exhausted. We were just three tired men, pushing their bicycles up into the great white mountains, not knowing how far could they go. Pushing slowly through the snow, through the silence, only tired words that were occasionally heard were, "Are you tired?"

The last three kilometres, pushing through snow had almost consumed us, weary to our bones. It was dusk. We had reached one more hairpin turn. We pushed a few more meters, and suddenly out of the heavy mist appeared a yellow board perched atop the mountain top. We had almost reached our destination! Scuffling our way towards the board, we saw the shadow of a firm mountain man against the dusky skies, staring at us from the ridge above the road. He was the first life we had seen in kilometres now. Sanoj started waving at him frantically. The man went back somewhere. As we reached the board, It read Parashar, we saw him running down to receive us. We could see the rest house where this man lived- our saviour. He quickly took our bags and asked us to follow him into the rest house. As I started moving up towards the rest house, something strange happened- Clouds started rolling away, the mist cleared, and laid before me



the grand mountains, white and green, blurring into the horizon. The setting sun shone for the first time, spreading its last rays of warmth, reflecting on the white snow, revealing a world of rugged white mountains and pensive green forests. This was the whiter side-cold but tender. Struggling with words for appreciation, and exclamation, we said, "Dinkan is great!" In ten minutes, like culminating into a climax, the world was washed anew. I walked up to the rest house with contentment, and joy.

The savior was Roop Singh- caretaker

of the rest house. He had been with the forest department for years now, moving from mountain to mountain around the Himalayas. He made a fire, helped us get dry as we got rid of our wet clothes. At dinner, we talked for long. Nibbling the awesome papad, we were arrested in Roop Singh's amazing stories of treks and life on mountains. Some hours later, we went to sleep in one of the big cosy wooden rooms of the rest house. Big chunks of ice and snow kept falling from the roof outside, sometimes making sounds that would scare us - sounds like an avalanche

rolling down. We woke up early the next morning. It was sunny. We had to trek one kilometre to the Parashar lake. Watching the first footprints in the immaculate, pure, white snow, as we walked was reviving that old spirit, to go find new places, that we all had when we were kids. As we reached the place, it was ethereal. Snow had covered everything, other than the lake. Basking in the morning sun, everything laid still, soft and white. The temple was almost dug under the snow. Revealing the roofs of a few other huts, snow had carved out a dreamy landscape. The clear waters of the lake reflected the Parrish blue sky- I had fallen in love with the place. We came back after playing in the snow excitedly for a few hours. Roop Singh had made a nice breakfast for us. We had breakfast, bid bye to our saviour, and left Parashar.

Pushing back was easy. We were moving back fast through the tracks we had cut through the snow while we had come up. We saw the footprints of a small animal, probably a dog or fox who had followed on our tracks too. About an hour later we were riding down on our bicycles. As I tried to live through this surreally beautiful world one last time, I looked back and saw - the place had owned me.





UNDER
every
CHAMPIONS
there are
great
PEDALS



Giulio Bisio



Aaron Gwin



HT COMPONENTS

CLIPLESS X1 - PEDAL



Mesum Verma



In 2014, HT Components from Taiwan, manufactured in Shenzhen / China were testing the clipless „X1“ with Aaron Gwin. Aaron won Pietermaritzburg pedalling the HT-X1.

End of the year 2014, HT was proud to announce that their first DH clipless pedal was going to the market. Meanwhile, when we tested the „X1,“ the brand new HT-X2 is coming to bike stores, lighter and with a slightly different design.



The Pedal:

Out of CNC-machined aluminum body, you can choose it in 9 different colours! On each side of the pedal platform you can use 5 replaceable pins for better grip on the pedal once you are not clipped in. The cleats are HT Components' own design, you can choose between two versions. We got the version with release at 8-10 degrees, they have about 4.5 degrees of float, so that you do not just get unclipped if your foot is not straight on the pedal. The price is 169 USD (about 10,700 INR) for the pair and the weight is 470 grams.

On the Trail:

I was really curious how the pedal performs while riding. I use Shimano's clipless system, which I've ridden now for years, though for a short time I tried Crank Brothers, but felt not really good on it. Riding different clipless systems is mostly about your

personal taste, how you like to be clipped in, and how the comfort is while riding. But important for all systems is, how you get in and get out, out even more important. Sometimes you want to put your foot down in a difficult passage or sliding around a corner. I got in easily, was very soft, and I did not have to search for the cleats, all felt normal. While riding, I felt very secure, I even pushed the bike through some curves, and the foot will be not straight then. Also over big jumps, getting a bit sideways, i never felt like I would get unclipped. The run is over, and the job of a clipless pedal is, to get you in touch with your bike from top to the bottom of the hill. Well, I was the first time still clipped in, I twisted my foot almost 90 degrees, but I did not come out.

Then I tried to make the spring tension harder. The range of the spring tension adjustment is huge compared to other clipless pedal systems. I was thinking, if the spring tension is harder, maybe I can get unclipped faster. If you really think about it, and



concentrate to unclip, then it's no problem, so I think it needs time, to adapt the procedure. But I believe they could improve the system. We will then test the other cleat once we have it.

Luckily where we were, we had rainy days too, so I could test them in the mud. First push the bike up on a muddy trail, so the shoes get really dirty. It was no problem at all to get in to the pedals! So that is a big plus for them, since I always have a problem with the Shimano clipless system getting in, if it's really muddy.

We think that HT-Components first clipless pedal for DH came out very good, and, working together with Aaron Gwin, we believe they will come out with an even better cleat, which could solve the problem of getting unclipped more smoothly.

MEET MARTIN MAES

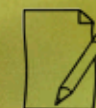
GT Factory Racing's Schoolboy Superstar

In July 2012 an unknown young rider raced at Sauze d'Oulx Superenduro. He finished fifth. The only riders faster than him that weekend were Jerome Clementz, Nico Vouilloz, Nicolas Lau and Dan Atherton. That rider was 15 year old Martin Maes racing Enduro for the first time outside of Belgium it was just the first indication of what is now acknowledged to be a prodigious young talent.

In less than 3 years since that race Martin has established himself as an as an all-round riding talent in the image of his team-mate and mentor Dan Atherton. This will be Martin's third season riding with GT Factory Racing, in which time he has become Enduro World Series Overall Junior Champion 2013, twice taken the Junior victory at the Downhill World Cup (Fort William) 2014 and 2015 and the 2015 victory at the iconic Sea Otter Dual Slalom against a stacked field of older and more experienced riders.



Sven Martin



Mesum Verma



Martin Maes

Martin said "It all started at Sauze d'Oulx, I was so excited, I was 15 and I got two stage wins, sometimes going faster than Clementz, Lau, Vouilloz, Atherton... I just couldn't believe it, they were my heroes. It was so much fun.

I remember Athy after the race, he said "Good job man". Once again I couldn't believe it. He was my hero, Gee and Rachel as well, I was always flat out behind my computer as soon as a new episode of Atherton Project was out!" I never dreamt that one day they'd ask me to be on the team.

When my dad told me that they'd been in

touch, we were in our car driving back to school. I started to breathe really fast and ask about a thousand questions.... Then a few months later they flew me to England for a meeting and the rest is history!"

One of the phenomenal things about Martin is his maturity. It's not just about physical maturity, although that's obvious and saw him place



10th in the Enduro World Series General Classification last season (despite the fact that he still qualifies as a Junior through 2015.) but there is also his maturity of outlook, Martin hates to lose but he acknowledges that he's "still growing and learning" and is one of the nicest and most polite riders on the circuit.

One of the things that makes Martin great to be around is his obvious love for the sport and the fact that almost three years in he's still hyper excited to be part of the GT Factory Racing team. As he prepared for the Dual Slalom in Sea Otter Martin said "I'm excited to be with my amazing team again, hanging out and having a good time together, that's another thing I never get used to, after 2 seasons I still feel immensely lucky to be part of it. I can't wait to race with/against Athy this season. It's going to make me even more motivated to have him along and to spend the hardest and best moments together for the races. It's great to have someone I can trust 100%. He is not only my teammate but also a friend."

Racing is in Martin's blood, his father Patric Maes was 23 times Belgian Champion but even so riding with GT Factory Racing has changed Martin's experience and the resources and expertise that he has access to beyond recognition.

Martin said " I started riding just for fun. Having fun and riding with my brother and friends around my village.

It's always been something I've loved to do... Then racing came along pretty early, I was 6 when I won my first race. But it was still for fun because I love spending time on my bike! It was a huge bonus for me that Athy was signed to GT, this brand is in my heart. When my dad was racing, he was also riding for GT! I still can't believe how much I've learned since I'm with them...it's crazy.

I remember the first time that mechanic Matteo asked what pressure I put in my tyres I didn't know what to say... it's from that day that I started to realize how many details were important for racing at the top level.

Training has also changed out of all recognition. The first year I got some advice from Coach Alan Milway and more the second. Now I'm on my third year with the team and I'm constantly talking with Alan. We work very closely and it's amazing for me to have a coach as good as him. Things have come step by step since I joined the team and I can't thank them half enough for everything they've been doing. My mechanic this year is Mark Maurissen which is a massive privilege, he lives 45 minutes away from my house and as well as him being one of the best mechanics in the world he's an amazing person who used to race with my dad!"

Martin is unusual in that he chose to start out as an Enduro rider – he isn't a Downhiller who has remodelled himself. His trademark style has paid dividends with some exceptionally





quick times and his focus for the 2015 season definitely remains the Enduro World Series where team-mate Dan is convinced that he is overdue a GC win. Martin says that he just wants to replicate his amazing run of results in 2013 Junior category in the GC “ I just want to make that happen again or even better. I think it's fair to say that the level is one step higher now and way more professional since the first year of the EWS. For me, right now it's even harder to be at that level as I'm quite young and don't have so much experience. To win, it's all about being able to put it all together again and again and not many riders are able to make it happen.”

Given the raw speeds Martin produces perhaps it's no surprise that he's also good at Downhill. In 2014 he caused a sensation at Fort William when he took the win in his first ever World Cup, in fact his first international downhill race!

Martin was up by 4 seconds at the first split, lost some time in the forest to be 0.5 seconds down at split 2, but his superior pedalling skills were on display as he tore down the bottom section to take the win. An emotional Martin told me after the race “ I was in the hotseat and I could hear them talking about Luca (Shaw's) run and he was up on me at split 1 and I didn't mind, 2nd would have been fine but to win here is a dream!”

This year Martin raced Fort William

again as a Junior, once again he hadn't touched his downhill bike for 6 months and once again he took the win – despite a crash barely 5 seconds after the start-gate! Martin said “ I was so nervous, and straight away I went over the bars but it made me think I had nothing to lose – I got back on the bike and just threw myself down the hill! And it worked!!”

Martin will race Downhill World Champs 2015 in September in Andorra and he has recently added a 3rd discipline win to his repertoire with his win at the Dual Slalom at Sea Otter.

So what's next? Martin said “I'll be looking for an EWS race win this season but more particularly to be consistent. Top 5 all the way or not so far from there would be good I guess... A win in Whistler would be extra awesome. But first I have to go back to school!”





S L O W D O W N

MOVIE FROM GARY THOMAS



Ang Thsering



Tangi Rebours

Fast food, fast cars, fast tracked, fast bikes....

Everything and everybody nowadays has to be fast. I still wonder why in our society we always apologize for our lack of speed?

I don't consider myself a lazy man but I like to take my time. When I am in a rush I usually make a lot of mistakes, in life and on my bike...

To escape the pressures of modern life I like to take my bike to the mountains, alone or with friends, and enjoy time without keeping any record, without a watch, back to basic needs, and simple pleasures...

My playground for my adventures is the Himalaya, east Nepal: Solukhumbu to be more precise. An ancient land still untouched by mass tourism and definitely the best place that I've ridden. When you ride the trails you can't help thinking that the people who built them thought that mountain bikers would come here one day, they are so much fun to ride.

The ultimate place on this trip is Pikey peak, 4050 meters high. Here you can enjoy the view of 8 summits over 8000m high : Sagarmatha (Mt. Everest), Makalu, Kanchenjunga, Annapurna, Lhotse.... they are all here and just for you.





Standing there in front of these giants, admiring the sunrise gives you a priceless feeling of immensity, a simple pleasure that cannot be measured by time.

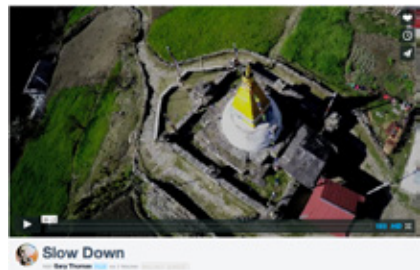
To reach this summit takes 3 days, pedaling 3 days for a downhill!! I've already heard many riders used to lifts protesting about the practice of this kind of torture. Quantity and quality are two very different and separate things.

On this journey we pass through local villages where you can see that the use and value of time is very different than the one people experience in our modern societies.

The rhythm of the day is still dictated by the sun, by the season, and a watch is a very small insignificant object. Here time is flexible.

These trips to the mountains really make me realize we need to slow down.

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Rakesh Oswal



Rakesh Oswal

ਸਿੰਧੂਧਰ

ਚਰਿਤ੍ਰ



What do you do for a living?

I ride my bike for a living. I actually 'live' and enjoy what I do and that's living for me.

How would you describe what you do?

Well breaking the lethal routine and attempting what is termed as risky is what my lifestyle is. I believe that the day that challenges you is a better day.

What does your work entail?

My work/passion entails early morning workout/run to DH laps in the afternoon. Weekends especially Sundays I teach mountain biking at my own coaching camp called the Indian Shredder.

What's a typical work week like?

A typical work week involves a lot of riding, building trails or just going out on a road trip to search for new places to ride and film.

How did you get started?

I used to be in a football team and was aiming for inter-school. I didn't get selected for some reason.. I had a mountain bike and rode it often just for fun, until i realized what I was looking for was right in front of me. So I pedaled to the trails each day after that and haven't looked back since.

What do you like about what you do?

We'll need to sit down for a coffee for me to describe this one.

What do you dislike?

The lack of visibility this sport gets. This is one of the most beautiful and spectacular among extreme sports and yet mainstream sports are given more importance over it and also flooded with money.





How do you make money / or how are you compensated?

I make money from my Indian Shredder camps. I love sharing what I know and keep learning to new enthusiasts and its a great experience for me to watch how they progress and relate. This helps me pay for my training and fuel to travel outskirts and push my self on new locations. If you're keen on learning the PRO way to ride, log onto my website - www.indianshredder.com

How much money do Bike Racer's make?

Well I've spoken to a few racers and they claim to earn about 50,000 pounds a year. That is if you're sponsored by a factory world cup team. Other incomes may include prize money, advertisements, various other sponsorship opportunities or brand endorsements.

How much money did / do you make starting out?

Frankly I barely made any until now. I only made some money through a few competitions that I won and they had prize money or by being featured in short films.

What education, schooling, or skills are needed to do this?

You just need to balance the bike right, that's how easy as it gets. Although in other terms I find education important so I am pursuing BBA (business administration) and I am currently in the second year.

What is most challenging about what you do?

It is challenging to stay fit, I'm a laid back person and struggle to get timely workouts but since I've seen a huge competition ahead of me I have been trying to push myself and improve. Also managing my finances has been a huge task always, racing on your own is expensive but this year has been a little rewarding in terms of support.

What is most rewarding?

Everyday is rewarding as taking risks and facing your fears is a humbling experience. The rush you feel is insane. To be able to accomplish what you always thought you could but for some reason failed is the best feeling ever.

I would say the ride itself is the reward.

What advice would you offer someone considering this career?

In a country like this it will take time but you shouldn't be bothered as long as you're having fun riding your bike. Maybe if it doesn't work out, the most important aspect of you riding your bike should be alive, no effort goes waste!

How much time off do you get / take?

The funny thing is in my work I don't need to specifically take time off although if I do, it does feel odd.

What is a common misconception people have about what you do?

People call me foolish when I say I want to be a World cup racer. The risk and sport itself feels unnecessary to them. But those same people have admit that I was good at it and most of them have encouraged me even if they didn't understand the sport.

What are your goals / dreams for the future?

Until now my goal was to be an ideal sponsored athlete as it has a lot more perks than just receiving support. Being under the SCOTT Future stars program has been a dream come true, it's an assurance that this career is worth chasing. My goals this year include being among the top Elites in Asia. My ultimate dream is be among the top World cup racer. It's distant but I'm looking forward to it.

What else would you like people to know about your job / career?

It's thrilling, it's different and you wouldn't feel more alive doing anything else.





The IMPOSSIBLE Race



Abhishek Purohit



Abhishek Purohit

"The name sure is catchy", that's the thought which came to mind when I first saw the post on my Facebook wall. Interest was invoked when I came to know that Prateek was the Asst. Race Director for the event.

Prateek promised gnarly and interesting trails.

Set amidst the Polo forest in Gujarat, it was difficult to let it pass by, after all exploring new trails gets the blood pumping and how often does one get to ride in a restricted forest with heritage. I registered.

Bags packed, I reached the pick up point in Ahmedabad. Polo forest is 130 Kms from Ahmedabad and the road trip became more interesting as we neared our destination. Concrete slowly gave way to green fields and eventually gave way to the terrain we would be riding.

The base camp was set out at a sprawling location with luxury tents for the participants and had been used by the Gujarat Tourism (one of the sponsors for the race) for the Polo festival.

Day 0: Registrations & Race briefing

The MTB category participants were introduced to the terrain and the race route by Gaël Couturier, Race Director and Prateek. The surprise in store - the race route was guided by GPS. We had to follow the course as depicted by the GPS units which would be mounted on each of our bikes. Gaël clarified that the format of the Race was not typically an XC race or an Enduro event but a mixed bag of everything, "an Adventure Race", where it's not just speed and strength but precision.

The Race totalled 150 kms, 50 Kms each day, starting and ending at the camp.

Surprise no. 2 – a 85 degree hike section up a rocky hill. Sounds exciting I thought.

One disappointment – the forest officials had, at the last moment, revoked their permission for the original race route on account of few sections being too remote to be accessed in case of medical emergency. Therefore, the race officials had to chalk out new routes, consequently, more flats for connecting the trails.

Race Day 1: The torture of Bike Hike

Before the race was flagged off each participant was briefed about the GPS and how to follow the coordinates.

Immediately after the flag off we were met with our first hurdle, a stream crossing. The stream which was dry during the race route recce had now turned deep water, thanks to the overnight shower. Crossing it was a tedious task as

round shaped rocks were slippery and my clipless shoes kept slipping. Thereafter, the route went through fields and villages to the forest section, towards the bike-hike climb. The entry to the forest area was dramatic as we raced through an overflowing low bridge splashing waters onto onlookers.

The trail snaked beside a dry stream, we followed the GPS coordinates and ended up at a foothill of a steep hill. The GPS showed we had to climb. So we did, only to realize, at the top, that we had climbed the wrong hill!! The climb was a gruelling one, with loose rocks and dead leaves we kept slipping and falling. The actual climb was even more treacherous as it was steeper, rockier and slipperier. For a moment I cursed myself.

The fun started after the hike as we reached the rideable trail which was gnarly and rocky. The reward of getting my long travel bike finally paid off. Being a restricted forest there were no





used trails hence, choice of lines were out of the question and steep descents and rocky sections made it a scary experience at times, pure adrenaline rush.

Exiting the forest area we made our way towards the damn. Premchand and Sri Ram being in the lead, followed by Ajay, me and Jayanta.

The route till the damn were the singletrack would start was tarmac. The singletrack lined the circumference of the reservoir and was any wider than my 740 bars at place. To add to our woes we had to tackle right sided camber through the track.

After the singletrack we made our way to a plantation section of the forest where there were very few markings for the route and we were completely dependent on the gps to keep us on track. The dead leaves covered pits that were dug up for plantation and I ended up over the bars a few times.

Last leg of the race saw us winding through villages, fields, number of river crossings, dry river beds and adjacent to

the famous 19th century Shiva temple.

Later, during the post race briefing Gael and Prateek informed us that the goof up of the wrong hill was due to an error in the GPS which fortunately was addressed for the second day.

The top two favorites were clear – the manipuri boys Premchand and Jayanta

Race day 2 – Hike returns:

We followed the same first leg of the race and hiking up the hill, wounding up the singletrack and the plantations area. While riding through an 'S' turn in village I was chased by two dogs resulting in me tasting the dirt and breaking my saddle. All the efforts to cover up lost time of day 1 ended up in getting the saddle back in place to complete the stage.

Day 2 ended in seeing Jayanta with overall lead followed by Premchand, Ajay, me and Sriram in top 5.



Race Day 3 – the Fast one:

The last day of the race was much more flatter in comparison to the earlier days. However, we rode through gnarlier sections coming down from high banks to dry river beds, racing upstream and following back. The singletrack on this day were actually banks on fields to trap rain water.

The arduous day was fast because of no hike sections.

Overall leader board:
Jayanta (1)
Premchand (2)
Ajay (3)

The Race was fun, the setting was scenic and relaxing after each day's toil. However, the concept of GPS guided race in a completely unknown territory makes things bit tricky. We all had our fair share of missing sections leading increased time. An Adventure Race format has its own set of complications. At the end of the day the experience is what matters and I had one which surpassed my expectation. Definitely signing up for the next one.

Weight
approx. 78 gram

Dimensions
120 x 65 x 65 mm

Color
black

Capacity
530 ml

Material
420 Honey Comp Rip Stop
/ 210D Polyester



Syncros - Preview



Rakesh Oswal

The Versatile Syncros Bidon hardcase frame bag offers with 0.53 liter enough space for tool a small items like wallets and keys. With water-repellent, rubberized zipper and inside elastic loops for tools. This bag can be mounted directly to the down tube or to the bottle cage. Made of waterproof and dirt repellent fabric to protect the bag content.



Weight
approx. 136 gram

Dimensions
200 x 210 x 55 mm

Color
black

Capacity
2.31L

Material
420 Honey Comp Rip Stop
/ 210D Polyester

Features
Two zipper Compartments,
Padded shoulder carrying
system



Syncros frame bags feature water and dustproof materials to help protect your valuables. The fixing system offers a universal fit to any frame configuration to make sure you don't leave home without your bag.



The Syncros Corporate Water Bottle has been engineered with a specific conical shape, this allows you to stow the bottle in its cage with ease. The shape allows a wider angle of insertion in the bottle cage and it provides 360 degrees of contact to ensure a perfect fit. This bottle has a low profile cap so the bottle can still be used with bikes that have smaller frames.

Weight
75 gram Color
Size grey/red
0.7 L



Weight
70 gram Color
Size grey/black
0.55 L

A wide opening of the water bottle makes it easy for you to fill up your bottle and it will prevent any mess if you're using sports mix. The opening also makes it easier to clean the bottle as well after you've used it. Constructed from a lightweight polyethylene and available in two colours, the bottle features a soft rubber bite valve will comfortably deliver your drink when you're thirsty.

Weight
84 gram Color
Size green/black
0.65 L



Convenient bottle made from bacteriostatic Polypropylene with screw-on lid and removable bite valve. Syncros Corporate Plus water bottles are designed with a large diameter top for easier filling and cleaning. The low profile cap allows the bottle to fit smaller frames and its automatic soft rubber bite valve comfortably delivers your drink when you're thirsty and keeps you away from the dust and mud. After that quenching gulp, the conical shape allows you to stow the bottle back in its cage with ease.

Syncros frame bags feature water and dustproof materials to help protect your valuables. The fixing system Syncros Ergo Optimised. The design and engineering team at Syncros has created a line of products that is both performance driven and comfort focused. Stiff, lightweight components can greatly improve the handling of a bicycle, but even elite athletes cannot sacrifice comfort for performance. That is why Syncros centres much of its design on the ergonomic needs of the rider to better balance fit, form, and function. Comfort is performance a universal fit to any frame configuration to make sure you don't leave home without your bag.



Dan Atherton's Dyfi Enduro

A cross-country novice's perspective!

This weekend Dan Atherton, older sibling of the Atherton family and famous for his world -class bike handling skills across loads of different disciplines rode the grass-roots Dyfi Enduro. And it hurt him bad! Dan talks to Gill Harris about his redoubled respect for cross-country riders and "The most hellish thing he's ever ridden."

First up, let's get it out there, the Dyfi Enduro isn't Enduro as I know it! A timed, gravity Enduro is an entirely different beast. This one's been running since way back in the day, about 14 years I think and when it started the new, EWS style Enduro wasn't a thing even. So I guess the organisers are right to stick with the name, it's an endurance event and people know what to expect. Well, in theory anyway, whatever they'd called it I don't think it would have prepared me!

I really wanted to be part of this event because Dyfi's where I live now, it's become a real community focus with



all the shops putting bikes with number plates on them in the windows and thousands of people flooding in. But it's also cool to ride with the guys I see riding in the forest every day, the trails go right past my door! I guess a big part of me also wanted to do it as part of my training, it's hard to replicate the intensity you need for racing when you're not in a race situation, you always go harder and faster when you are in a race.

Here's another thing. It's not a race. The event is billed as a non-competitive, mass-start event. Not a race. Definitely NOT a race. But when you cross the start line, the clock starts too so of course I had to try and race it! And trying to race it meant it was the most hellish 3 hours 14 minutes and 33 seconds of my life!

The thing is, in an EWS Enduro you could expect to ride about 55km and ascend 1900m, same distance and climb as this one, but the transitions in EWS aren't timed so not only are you riding the climbs at approx. 25% of the speed of the Dyfi climbs but you also have a 5-10 minute rest and chill before each downhill section. Five minutes to let your heartbeat settle makes a big difference.

I've never raced Cross-country before so I really didn't know what to expect. Of course I knew that Cross-country riders were super-fit, but I knew it in an abstract, theoretical kind of way, until we hit the first climb! Thing is if you took any one of those climbs individually it'd be OK, it's the mental challenge of knowing that you've got another 3



hours ahead of you with your heart at 170 bpm. I just wasn't convinced I'd be able to do it. The downhill sections felt a bit more natural and I'd overtake loads of riders but soon as we started the climbs they'd overtake me back, every single time! Actually, not every time, on some of the technical climbs I was OK, where the speeds were lower and it was more about power than consistent cadence, but all of the fire-roads had just been re-graded after the Welsh rally so they were soft, it was really hard for me to stay on top of my cadence.

Just watching those XC guys ride gave me a whole new respect for them. Moving from Downhill to Enduro was a whole leap in fitness for me but this was ten times that again! These guys were machines, not only super-fit but consider how hard it is riding these tracks on a hardtail, there's no give in the bike and everything happens in a split second. This was a local event too, I can't even begin to imagine how a World Cup would be. I had put cut down downhill tyres on my bike (Continental Mud Kings) they were quite heavy but it's so rocky out there I didn't want to risk a puncture.

So it strikes me that I've painted a pretty dark picture so far, and that's exactly why the organisers are so right to stress that this isn't a race. You don't even get a finishing position, just your own time. I know with absolute certainty that if I hadn't been pushing it so hard I would have had a great time! Our GT Factory Racing Team Director, Dan Brown rode it and loved it. All the



boys loved it! There were beer tents and food stops and a school brass band, live music all the way round and all of the local people coming out of their houses to cheer and wave. Because I'm a racer I made sure that I was there early enough to get a good starting position and I came off that start line racing, but after 40 minutes, maybe an hour, it becomes irrelevant whether there's two riders ahead of you or twenty two. Every ounce of me wanted to catch the guy in front, every fibre wanted to do better, but at that level of exertion that kind of motivation slips away; pretty soon it was all about setting a rhythm that I could cope with to get round to the end.

You might kid yourself on the start-line that you're going to race, like I did. Even as the rain pours down, the tracks getting muddier and tougher by the minute and the enormity of the task that lies ahead starts to take hold in your mind, the urge to race will be fighting with the realization of what a gnarly thing it is you have to do. You might be as naïve as I was. I talked myself into believing it wasn't going to be that hard.

I won't make that mistake again but I will ride again, definitely. I'd like to think I'd ride it pretty chilled next year...



David Evans



Gill Harris



Dan Atherton

Gueno Dubost



Carmen Rey



Cedric Tassan



Tangi Rebours



Ang Thsering



Abhishek Purohit



Dhanush K Dev



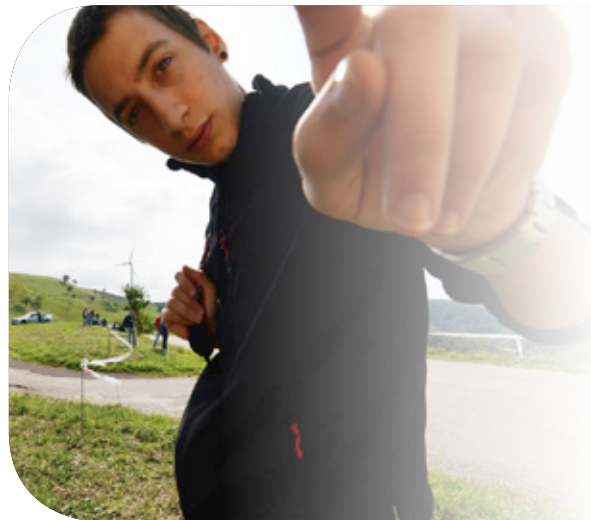
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special thanks to:

Jaymin Shah, Bryan Bell, Anuja Agrawal, Gill Harris, Giulio Bisio, Gueno Debost, Ian Chu

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