

OCTOBER / NOVEMBER 19

## WELCOME TO THE FUTURE...

Welcome to issue 61 of the World's Number One Online Mountain Bike Magazine!

This issue we head to the north of Scotland to check out the trails and we catch up with the new faces of women's downhill racing.

Ewen gets behind the scenes with Merida's new e-bike and he chats to Angel Suarez about why he loves racing bikes. On test, we have fresh bikes from YT, Kona, and Merida whilst we test kit from Hayes, Muc-Off and MRPs new short travel trail fork.

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## - WORLD CUP WOMEN -

POST INDUSTRIAL - E-MTB SCOTLAND BEYOND TORRIDON  
TESTS / TECHNIQUE AND MUCH MORE INSIDE!



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THE ALL-NEW IBIS HD5 HAS BEEN TURNING HEADS EVERYWHERE IT GOES

PHOTO IAN COLLINS





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## ISSUE 61 It's that time of year again...

Summer has been and gone in Europe, here in the UK the leaves are turning a distinct shade of brown, and the dust has rather rapidly turned to mud on the trails. It's the traditional wind-down period of the MTB industry after a hectic summer of launches and racing.

Arguably it's my favourite time of year to be on a bike, the colours, for one, in the woods are beyond compare. Secondly, the slicker riding conditions call on skills honed last winter, now coupled with a full summer of fitness on the bike. This leads to some exciting riding on the trails and inevitably the odd dice with dirt.

This year, in particular, I'm enjoying even more than ever, last year my leg was firmly in a cast, and the thought of riding bikes was a long distant dream. Since the injury every time I sit on the saddle, I count my blessings, and every ride seems sweeter than the last.

Thankfully the ankle has healed to such an extent I barely give it a second thought, and that means I can head into this stage of the season unhindered and full of wonder and the brilliance of our sport. I often struggle to get the same buzz from anything else I do, and no doubt you are all with me on that front. Nothing quite beats riding a mountain bike, but blasting through the woods as the leaves turn, on a trail that's challenging your every input and allowing the wheels to slide at any moment certainly sharpens the senses in a way I doubt anything else can.

Get out there and enjoy it!

*Rou Chater*  
Publishing Editor

RENE WILDHABER ENJOYING THE AUTUMN  
PHOTO ALESSANDRO SIMONE/RED BULL CONTENT POOL



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# EDITORIAL





# ***FIREBIRD 29***

*EWS RACE READY, BIKE PARK CAPABLE... FEARS NO CLIMB*





INTERVIEWS MANUEL DEUTSCHMEYER  
WORDS EWEN TURNER

As the 2019 downhill calendar finishes up in Snowshoe, it's clear that racing has never been so tight or as exciting as it has been this year. One landscape that has seen more change than perhaps ever before is that of the women's field. With Injuries and breakthroughs galore the season has been turbulent and thoroughly engaging. 2020 will see the arrival of Vali Höll into the elite women's category, something that could well upset the apple cart, but given the turmoil of this season, it's going to be hard to predict anything with any degree of accuracy other than that the racing will be tighter and harder fought than ever before.

# WORLD CUP WOMEN



" I JUST ENJOY RIDING MY BIKE, RACING AND ENJOY EVERY MOMENT. "

One could pick any number of riders from this year's field, but three athletes that represent the new wave of riders are Marine Cabirou, Nina Hoffman and Vali Höll. Two of these have had serious breakthroughs this year while Höll has once more swept the junior season to take the overall which was wrapped up back in Lenzerheide. This is, however, her last year as junior and elite beckons for 2020. Hoffman and Cabirou have taken the fight to the establishment and punched in with some impressive results, podiums and wins. Hoffman ended up injured before the end of the season which leaves many questions as yet unanswered, and we'll have to wait to 2020 to see her perform again. Cabirou took Snowshoe by storm, offering up an exhilarating performance that outclassed all the competition to take the win but was pushed out of the overall by the ever-consistent Tracey Hannah.

We caught up with these riders back in August to find out a little more about the riders shaking up the racing landscape.

NINA HOFFMAN

### **What makes you happy, you're always smiling?**

Just the whole season and how everything has gone and my overall. I just enjoy riding my bike, racing and enjoy every moment.

### **How did you get into mountain biking?**

2014 I met (now ex) boyfriend he was riding his bike all the time. I was a javelin thrower in track and field and thought mountain biking would be too dangerous

VALENTINA HÖLL PERFORMS AT THE UCI DH WORLD CUP IN SNOWSHOE, USA  
PHOTO REDBULL BARTEK WOLINSKI







" I LIKE TECHNICAL STUFF, AND I LOVE IT WHEN IT'S WET. WHEN EVERYONE IS WORRIED, I JUST DO IT, AND I'M NOT THINKING ABOUT IT. "

but in 2015 I had a lot of problems with my elbow in javelin and I wanted to take part in a downhill race so I bought a bike and took part in my first race and won it in the open category. At the end of 2015, I decided I didn't want to throw a javelin anymore, I wanted to race downhill.

**What do you enjoy most about riding bikes?**

Being in nature or just being outside, also

the adrenaline going over big jumps and clearing technical sections while the bike working under you, it's awesome and getting into a flow down the track.

**How would you describe your style on the bike?**

One weakness was jumping, and last season I had a lot of problems with doing the big jumps on World Cup tracks, so I worked on that over the winter, and it got better and better. For example, this last step down here (Lenzerheide) I didn't do last year, but this year I haven't thought about not doing it. I also think I'm good at technical sections

when it's steep and technical I'm not scared at all. I still have to work on cornering and position on the bike sometimes though.

I like technical stuff, and I love it when it's wet. When everyone is worried, I just do it, and I'm not thinking about it. I also don't think about what could happen, riders may worry about what happened to other racers, but I don't think about that. I don't look too much at others or anyone else, I just focus on myself.

**Do you have any specific bike set up for racing?**

No specifics I can ride every bike, I just need some time to get used to it. I'm running 29er wheels this year for the first time, and the V10 is very high in the front, and I had problems at the start of the season,





so now I'm running flat bars, but I started with 2cm of rise. I don't change much on my bike. I just leave everything, I need to work more on my suspension skills and what problems were me and what was the suspension. It's good to have Fox here to figure out with them to adjust the suspension.

### What are the challenges you face as a privateer?

One thing is the financial support to get everything paid for, but for this season I got money from my sponsors so I can pay travel and accommodation, but you still have to organise everything yourself, book flights, accommodation etc. To think of everything is a bit of problem and then also focus on racing, I'm used to it because I don't know any other way, but it also takes a lot of time.

PHOTO PIOTR STARON

"TO THINK OF EVERYTHING IS A BIT OF PROBLEM AND THEN ALSO FOCUS ON RACING"



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"IT'S GOOD TO HAVE SUCH RACES AS YOU LEARN MORE FROM THEM THAN THE GOOD ONES, IT'S A MENTAL GAME AS ALL THE GIRLS CAN RIDE SUPER GOOD"

#### **Any specific rituals on race day?**

A very structured warm-up routine, 15mins rolling, some moving stuff then back on the bike and do some sprints, I don't even listen to music. Maybe rituals will come with more races, but one hour before race run I don't want anyone around.

#### **What do you do when not riding?**

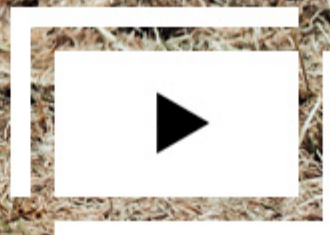
I'm studying psychology as a masters student, but I'm not studying much at the moment, in the winter more than the summer. In between the races, I'm at home. I really enjoy being at home and having rest time and doing some good training.

#### **What have you learnt this season?**

After Fort William and Leogang, I felt I could compete with the best girls, and I'm super good. Then I struggled in Les Gets, and I had the first race where I can't push in finals as I'll crash or something will go wrong. It's good to have such races as you learn more from them than the good ones, it's a mental game as all the girls can ride super good, and I'm learning the whole season.

#### **What are your plans for next year?**

No news, maybe stay as a privateer, that's an option at the moment, but I also have some team options.





" I LOVE THE TECHNICAL TRACK LIKE VAL DI SOLE, BUT I JUST LOVE TO RIDE MY BIKE. I LOVE THE TRACK HERE IN LENZERHEIDE WHEN IT'S REALLY DRY, IT MAKES IT REALLY INTERESTING."

MARINE CABIROU

**What effect did your first win have on your performance?**

It was crazy to win my first world cup, I was delighted as I won with a lot of time, I'm not sure why, but it's crazy, and I was happy.

Yeah, I change a little bit my goals I know I can win a World Cup, now I know I can win, but the racing is now really tight as all the girl's race really fast.

**How did you get into mountain bikes?**

I started with my brother, he had a bike, and he always said to come to ride with him, I started when I was about ten years old.

**What do you like most about riding bikes?**

I love the sensation, I love the technical track like Val di Sole, but I just love to ride my bike. I love the track here in Lenzerheide when it's really dry, it makes it really interesting.

**How would you describe your riding style?**

Many people say I'm really aggressive on my bike, yeah, but I love the jumps and everything and just enjoy my bike. I still need to improve myself and stay focused on my riding.

**Highlight in your career so far?**

My first win in the Elite!

MARINE CABIROU  
PHOTO PIOTR STARON







" I HAVE A-LEVELS NEXT YEAR AND THIS IS MY MAIN GOAL UNTIL JUNE THEN I'M DONE AND CAN CONCENTRATE ON RIDING AND LIVE MY LIFE "

#### Any specific bike set up for racing?

The settings change a lot with the track I love to have my bike really smooth to keep the speed.

#### Any race day rituals?

At the top, when I warm up, I do the track in my head with mental visualisation.

#### Next season goals?

Stay top three overall.

VALI HÖLL

#### How did it feel to wrap up the overall in Lenzerheide?

I knew if I won, I'd get the overall, but also I needed to just concentrate on the race run. It was difficult for me to not think about it. After Val di Sol I messed up and I wasn't myself, and I was happy (in Lenzerheide) to show that I was strong and I can smash the field.

#### Next year you're in Elite how do you feel about that?

Super excited but I still have to think about school, I have A-Levels next year and this is my main goal until June then I'm done and can concentrate on riding and live my life.

#### How did you get into riding bikes?

My parents were always riding bikes but more XC riding, and we went to Whistler in 2004, and then my dad decided to build trails in my back yard, and I kinda grew up there.





### What do you love most about riding bikes?

It's so cool that I can share a passion with my friends, especially as I live in Saalbach, so I just need to open my front door, and I can go out and ride.

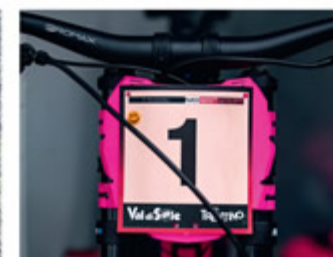
### How would you describe your riding style?

I think I'm a safe rider, and I think about it before I do something, and if I don't like it or my brain says no, then I'm not going to do it. My strengths are jumps for sure and going fast. When you compare the speed trap times, most of the time I win them, so that's really cool, I know the speed is there I just need to be fast from top to bottom. I'm working on my speed in more tricky sections and will continue doing that.

PHOTO PIOTR STARON

"I KNOW THE SPEED IS THERE I JUST NEED TO BE FAST FROM TOP TO BOTTOM"

CONGRATULATIONS TRACEY ON WINNING THE 2019 DOWNHILL WORLD CUP SERIES!



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VALI HÖLL  
PHOTO PIOTR STARON



"ULTIMATELY, RACING IS GETTING MORE AND MORE EXCITING AND EVER MORE CHALLENGING TO PREDICT"

### **Any pre-race rituals you go through?**

I always have a special handshake with my mechanic, and it's my thing, and if I know we did it, then I'm good to go.

### **What do you do when not riding?**

Going to school, it's the only thing I do; otherwise, I'd just ride my bike or go skiing in the winter.

The start line for the 2020 downhill season is going to look stacked with contenders not just for individual races, but for the overall too. The new wave of riders aren't just getting the odd good result, there is a tract of competition that could easily knock the 'old' guard off the podium. That said, with experience on their side, I would not be surprised to see some familiar faces back up on the top step next year. Ultimately, racing is getting more and more exciting and ever more challenging to predict, which is essentially what makes downhill racing so engaging to watch. Roll on 2020!



DAKINE



GRAHAM AGASSIZ    YONAN BARELLI    CASEY BROWN    IAGO GARAY    BRENDAN HOWEY    MARCO OSBORNE    MATTHEW SLAVEN    CARSON STORCH    THOMAS VANDERHAM

IAGO GARAY

IAGO IN THE ARSENAL JACKET  
SLAYER KNEE PAD VECTRA BIKE GLOVE & VECTRA BIKE SHORT

ERICKSON  
& MALAY

DAKINE



A person wearing a blue helmet and orange shorts is riding a mountain bike on a narrow, rocky trail. The trail is composed of dark, jagged rock fragments and is set against a backdrop of a steep, layered rock face. The overall scene is rugged and industrial in appearance.

# POST INDUSTRIAL E-MTB

Pete Archer argues the case for e-bikes in modern mountain biking, do they cause trail erosion, are they motorbikes, is it cheating?

WORDS PETE ARCHER  
PHOTOS TRISTAN TINN







**" WHEN WE LOOK AROUND US AT THE WORLD IN ITS CURRENT STATE, THERE ARE HUGE SCARS GLOBALLY FROM YEARS OF DESTRUCTION TO OUR PLANET. "**

E-Bikes, and more specifically, e-mtbs are controversial. By merely typing that word out on a keyboard is almost guaranteed to cause some sort of commotion in the comments section of any online forum social media post. "E-bikes cause way too much trail erosion", "E-bikes are motorbikes and don't belong on our trails" and my personal favourite - "E-bikes are cheating as you're not even working out!" are all regular phrases that crop up under any e-bike related content.

So why is that? Where do these preconceptions originate? Just looking at the erosion issue for a start is more complicated than it first seems. When we look around us at the world in its current state, there are huge scars globally from years of destruction to our planet. Here in the UK, we have many old, abandoned quarries and mines from centuries gone by and in the Lake District, in particular, these locations are part of the local industrial heritage and are a visual reminder of times of old. Yet now, many of these places are protected and are seen as historical relics that the powers that be need to preserve as part of the World Heritage Status that our National Park now has.

Why are these vast holes in the ground seen as socially acceptable in this current age, yet pedalling around on your e-bike perhaps isn't? In the Lake District where I live, all previous generations have left their mark on the landscape in some form or other.





Whether it's the lack of woodland, due to farming and agriculture, the mines and quarries alluded to previously, or tourism and the walking and biking trails that stretch across the landscape? That's right, tourism is leaving a considerable mark in the countryside and to a certain extent, this needs to be embraced as people, both residents and visitors alike, change their use and their approach to the landscape.

So where do e-bikes come into all this? I feel we need to move forward with the times, we need to embrace change as a bike-riding community. Not only could I wax lyrical about the health benefits that they bring by getting less able people out and about, but they also enable people to explore new territory, to venture to places that previously they would have found so much tougher to get to.

**" WE NEED  
TO EMBRACE  
CHANGE AS  
A BIKE-RIDING  
COMMUNITY "**



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FREEDOM UNCHANGED**



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**"THERE IS A LOT TO BE SAID FOR THOSE RIDES AND TRAILS WHICH YOU CAN NOW JUST PEDAL STRAIGHT UP"**

While initially, the social stigma is there surrounding them, why should it be when surely the benefits hugely outweigh the cons? Just like in the past with different industries, times come and go and leave their mark on the landscape and in culture.

E-bikes are most likely here to stay, and I feel we should all embrace them in some

way, either directly or indirectly. That doesn't mean that we will all be rushing out to swap our 'analogue' bikes for one of these new-fangled electrically powered versions, we all just need to get along and appreciate them for what they are and more specifically, what they enable.

There are certainly many times when I'm out riding my regular 'analogue' bike where my mind starts to wander, and I think "I really wish I was riding one of those e-bikes right now..." Conversely, there are many times

when I'm also out on the bike with it slung above my shoulders as I'm hike-a-biking up some awkward, rocky, sketchy mountain where I think "I'm so glad I'm not on an e-bike right now!"

Horses for courses, as they say, but there is a lot to be said for those rides and trails which you can now just pedal straight up, not having to get off and push because it's too steep or unrelenting. There is something so smugly satisfying on reaching the top of a climb that you know you wouldn't have been able to achieve if it wasn't for that lovely little 250Wh motor between your legs.







**" WE JUST WANT TO BE ABLE TO GET AS MUCH TIME ON THE BIKE AS POSSIBLE AND HIT UP AS MANY CLIMBS AND DESCENTS THAT WE CAN IN A SHORT AMOUNT OF ALLOTTED TIME "**

The other key point I want to address is one that comes up often out on the trails or in the pub - "E-bikes are just motorbikes!" Well, I guess in theory you could say so, as they are a bike with two wheels with an electric motor slung in between said wheels. The key difference though is that you still have to pedal the damn thing! There's no magical throttle on the handlebars which would allow you just to kick back, twist and go (although there are countless times where I really wished that was the case).

Just like your regular analogue bike, you get out what you put in, although with an e-bike you get out a bit more, and who doesn't want a bit more? A bit more time out on the trails? A bit more descending? A bit more speed? Surely that's the main reason we all want to get out on our bikes in the evening or at weekends? We just want to be able to get as much time on the bike as possible and hit up as many climbs and descents that we can in a short amount of allotted time that we all give ourselves in this day and age. Climbing becomes less of a chore, in fact, the opposite as the bikes have you wanting to push yourselves harder and further to see what crazy trail you can conquer going uphill on. This, in turn, helps give you a fresh perspective on riding bikes, and that isn't any better or worse, just different.







**" I'M NOT SAYING THAT E-BIKES ARE THERE FOR EVERYBODY, BUT IF YOU HAVEN'T TRIED ONE, THEN I WOULD HIGHLY ENCOURAGE YOU TO BEG/BORROW/STEAL "**

My advice is that if you're still not convinced then fair enough, I'm not saying that e-bikes are there for everybody, but if you haven't tried one, then I would highly encourage you to beg/borrow/steal, (well, maybe not take) one and I'm sure it will open your eyes as to what is possible and the subsequent benefits that riding an e-bike brings. As technology improves and motors become more efficient, battery technology moves forward, and capacities increase while the physical size and weight decrease, e-bikes are only going to improve continually.

That's enough rambling from me, the cat is out of the proverbial bag, e-bikes have been introduced and are here to stay whether we like them or not.

Long live e-bikes!



Is there more to mountain biking in the Highlands than just Torridon? Armed with an unexpected four days off, to do as we please, myself and fellow compatriot Tristan Tinn decided to look at the UK weather forecast for the following days, see where the weather would be best and head there with the bikes in search of trails... As luck would have it, the weather window was slap bang over the far North West Highlands of Scotland, so a quick plan was hatched, the camper van stocked up, and a long drive north of the border into Scotland ensued.



# TRAIL GUIDE SCOTLAND, BEYOND TORRIDON



Waking up the following morning after parking up just off the road close to Tyndrum, the overnight rain was clearing, and the bacon and sausage breakfasts were calling. Fuelled up for the rest of the day's adventure we carried on heading in one direction - North. After scouring through countless maps and researching online for any existence of trails we had set about aiming to arrive at Lochinver, a quaint fishing village on the North West coast surrounded by a stunning backdrop of mountains rising seemingly from nowhere.

With just a few hours daylight remaining, bikes were unpacked, camera gear organised and we set off in the hope of finding some coastal single track heading straight from the village itself. We weren't to be disappointed. Minutes after leaving the tarmac, we found ourselves riding along some incredible trails, undulating through dips and over crests in the landscape. Stopping every now and then to admire the view we carried on with no real idea of where we were headed.

The single track continued, and we found ourselves cruising down a narrow road to what can only be described as a Caribbean style beach. In Scotland! Yep, crystal clear blue waters with perfect white sand and we were still in the UK! The water temperature was most definitely not the Caribbean however, and with the light starting to fade, a hasty retreat back to the camper was in order.

" WE CARRIED ON WITH NO REAL IDEA  
OF WHERE WE WERE HEADED "







Day two rolled around, and after a bit more research the previous evening, we settled on the idea of riding/hiking our bikes up to the summit of Ben More Assynt. With no prior intel on the trails and what lay ahead, we relied on images from keen mountain walkers on the internet to get an idea of what was in store for us. The trail looked like it should ride, especially the descent from the summit, so again bags packed and sun cream on, it was time to hit the trails. The first climb steadily wound its way along the floor of the Glen, snaking steadily next to the small river and gently gaining our height.

" BAGS  
PACKED AND  
SUN CREAM  
ON, IT WAS  
TIME TO HIT  
THE TRAILS "

 **GRANITE**

  
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"THE CLIMB UP TO THE FIRST PEAK OF CONNIVAL GOT STEEPER. THE VIEWS, HOWEVER, THEY WERE INCREDIBLE."



So far so good, although the first Munro summit of the day loomed over us in such a way to make us continually question ourselves - "are we really taking our bikes up there?"

A ride report in Scotland in the summer surely has to feature the wee beasts that frequent these parts; midges! The evil little insects were out in force down at the bottom as we slogged our way up past the stream in sweltering heat (yes, we're still in

Scotland here!) and that gave us all the more encouragement to gain height and keep on going. The pedalling turned to carrying, the conversation slowly dried up, and the climb up to the first peak of Connival got steeper. The views, however, they were incredible.

Upon reaching the top of Connival, we were treated to incredible vistas far out over the West coast of Scotland, through to the far north coast and

beyond. Our original plan of summiting Ben More Assynt was starting to look less ideal from our current vantage point, with the ridge between Connival and our intended summit dropping away sharply through some huge boulders. The executive decision was made to call it a day there, turn the bikes around and point them back down the hill and to reap the benefits of the last four hours of hiking.









The trail started off reasonably mellow, a little bit of bedrock here and there to keep things interesting, then opening up to some flat-out single track surrounded by some of the most incredible views in the UK. The speed slowed down as both the mountain and the trail steepened quite considerably as we found ourselves almost surfing down the quartzite rock. After a short carry down a brief scramble, the trail carried on, maybe not as loose but just as slow and technical.

" WE FOUND  
OURSELVES  
ALMOST  
SURFING DOWN  
THE QUARTZITE  
ROCK "



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**ROSE**



Multiple line choices were opening up, but the length and physicality of the descent were taking its toll on both bodies and bikes by now, but somehow things held together, and we found ourselves back on the single track at the bottom of the Glen heading West towards the setting sun. Back at the van, what better way to finish a ride like that than to sit down with a cold one, both agreeing that while a good day out, neither of us would be in a hurry to go back up there again for a while!

Our third and final day dawned and feeling slightly less energetic after the previous day's adventure, it was decided that we would do a short out-and-back ride up Quinag, a rather imposing looking mountain in the landscape but one littered with copious amounts of rock slabs, all crying out to be ridden. The defined trail from the road soon petered out, but we found ourselves still riding up the rocks, the traction was incredible on the grippy Torridonian sandstone.

Once again, the riding turned to hiking, and a decision was made to leave the bikes just below the summit, there was no way we would be able to ride through and down the top boulder field. The views however more than made up for the fact we had to leave the bikes behind, I think this is one of the defining features of riding in this landscape this far North - the vistas just seemingly never end wherever you look.

" THERE WAS NO WAY WE WOULD BE  
ABLE TO RIDE THROUGH AND DOWN  
THE TOP BOULDER FIELD "





" IT'S ESSENTIAL TO CARRY A MAP OF THE AREA AS CHANCES ARE, YOU WON'T SEE ANOTHER SOUL OUT IN THE MOUNTAINS ON SOME DAYS "



Heading back down, we got back on the bikes and tried to ride the frustratingly loose, nadgery trail as best we could. The trail was stop/start on the bike, by the time you would seem like you had the flow going, you would encounter an obstacle that would just stop you dead, quite frustrating... However, further on down the hill, we managed to pick up a faint trail that meandered through some incredible rock slabs, these made for great detours on the way back down and ultimately, back to the camper van.

That was it, three days of riding in a place neither of us had considered. Incredibly challenging, technical but rewarding trails, but better than the riding in Torridon? We'll leave that one for you to decide!

#### HOW TO GET THERE / WHEN TO GO:

The Highlands of Scotland are beautiful at all times of the year, but for the best riding conditions we would recommend either heading up there late spring/early summer before the midges are out in force, or head up there in late September/early October when they've all disappeared! Most of the trails aren't way-marked, so it's essential to carry a map of the area as chances are, you won't see another soul out in the mountains on some days.

As for getting there, Inverness is the nearest airport but with public transport being incredibly limited that far north, we'd recommend either hiring a car or a camper van to really make the most of this spectacular corner of the UK.



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# THE LEARNING CURVE

**Discover victory in failure**

We've all done it and in all walks of life, yup... we have gone and fudged up! This is just a fact of life and one of the hardest learning curves to conquer, the process of not making mistakes and the art of recovering from them. Whether you are bouncing back from broken bones or merely trying to get the bike pointing the right way having encountered the infamous 'pine cone mid-corner moment' recovery is everything.





## The psychological element

The focus of our feature and focal point for you is on the recovery made, be it from accident/injury or from just a simple slide out. To avoid getting into what I coined as 'the negative spiral of woe' where we beat ourselves up following a mistake, we have to focus our minds and reward ourselves for the way we handled the situation and recovered from it. We also need to evaluate these scenarios to avoid becoming a repeat offender. A reverse psychology half glass full trick helps to lower heart rate and in turn gives us the mental (and physical) space required to compose and continue, hopefully, mistake-free.

**" YOU FIND YOURSELF IN THE REALM OF THE PINBALL WIZARD RICOCHETING OFF EVERYTHING IN SIGHT "**

There is nothing new to this approach; it is ground well-trodden, from Shaolin monks studying Kung Fu to Gee Atherton preparing to drive Dafydd Davies Ford Fiesta World Rally Car. Calm minds enable us to process the information and move the limbs without thought or hesitation. But when all hell breaks loose and you find yourself in the realm of the pinball wizard ricocheting off everything in sight it is easier said than done.

Brain training and mental skill can be practised both off the bike as well as on the bike, the better prepared we are in life, the better we can glide through the terrain that lays ahead of us. From simple sound pre-ride preparations to adaptations in our day to day way of dealing with what some may consider 'stressful' situations the process of avoiding mistakes in the first place comes from a calm mind (prevention is better than cure) and in multi-faceted complex situations, an informed one.





## " WE NEED TO ENGAGE OUR PRIMORDIAL BRAIN AND RUN ON INSTINCT ALONE, EASIER SAID THAN DONE "

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Decision making is based upon information, on the bike that is sight, sound and the feeling sensations through the grip and contact points, hand - bar, foot - pedal, tyre - terrain. If your mates pre-ride faff has got to you, or someone has cut you up en-route to your favourite riding spot then you are already on the mental back foot as you head off on the

trail, take five to chill and calm the mind, dump that information and the emotions that are attached to it, they are not relevant to the situation in hand. We need to engage our primordial brain and run on instinct alone, easier said than done but just 'get over it'.

Put those small frustrations to bed by putting them into perspective, let these life issues simply dissolve. I faced some pretty big life strife in my teens, and I recall a wise and way out buddy telling me quite flippantly but brilliantly that "things are only a problem if you decide to make them a problem".

With that as a mantra bring only a big dose of PMA (positive mental attitude) to the trail, and you will see for yourself how you simply glide through sections that normally hook you up, this really is a 'can do' sport.

Now before we start sounding a bit too much like a self-help book, let's look at this somewhat closer to our world on the bike.

Let's say your day starts off by spilling breakfast all over the kitchen floor, rather than flipping your lid you compose and carry on by simply starting over, it didn't matter anyhow as your ride buddy rocks up half-hour late, instead of being sarcastic with them you hug them and load up the bikes.





En-route to the trailhead you even let the angry driver go without flipping him off for nearly killing you, bravo.

With life 101 in action we now hit the trail, mistakes in our game are almost inevitable and with that in mind we are halfway there to overcoming them, recognising that all familiar process of what goes on when we lead ourselves into making mistakes we can 'snap out of it' and get back on track, hopefully avoiding the error but at best/worse scenario recovering from them gracefully. In the same way, we look for the grip, not the slip we sight the lines of success, concentration is vital and that 'can do' internal dialogue must be cranked up to 11. Any slight doubt that may creep in can soon amplify, weighting the wrong side of the hesitancy scale and potentially tipping us off down the helter-skelter negative spiral of woe.

" WE CAN 'SNAP  
OUT OF IT'  
AND GET BACK  
ON TRACK "

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The art of efficient, smooth trail riding really is a metaphorical and literal balancing act, polishing the psychological aspects of the sport alongside working on the physical ones we become that Tibetan whole capable of overcoming things that previously phased us and gave us the willies. But it is not just a clear cut A game, PMA, Zen-like state that will see us progress, oh no, imagine if it were only that simple.

We have the conflict between our physical fitness and psychology to battle with, this is where a lack of fitness or better said our fitness goals are not achieved. Consequently, we can become frustrated. It has become clear in sports psychology that goal setting can inhibit performance and in the worst-case degrade your potential ability. If we have a target that we do not hit or an expectation that we do not meet (think standard life scenarios and brush up on your Sigmund Freud knowledge here), then it is easy to head in a less desirable direction and find yourself on my now patented negative spiral of woe.

## " HOW THE HELL DO WE PROGRESS IF WE ARE NOT TO SET MARKERS AND MEASURES? "

### **The Feedback Loop**

We end up back at point zero of mistake/goal not met = frustration = negative feedback = more mistakes = cue the music, yup that deaf dumb and blind kid sure plays a mean pinball. But this oxymoron and conflicting theory might leave you wondering how the hell do we progress if we are not to set markers and measures? How is performance measured, and how can we make this make sense and have relevance to my ride? The easiest I can put this is to take into account that 'performance' is a double-edged sword,







with the physical on one side and the psychological on the other.

Happy riders equal fast riders. If we move our observation/marker away from time, distance, did or did not to instead measure the psychological performance by simply asking ourselves 'how did that feel/how do I feel?' then the rest (physical performance) will follow. If, when reflecting on our ride, we feel or felt things that would be considered as negative emotions, anger, fear, frustration etc. then our performance could be deemed to have been below par.

On the flip side if we have 'progressed' and 'improved' we would be looking for feedback that what would be deemed as positive emotional responses. Something along the lines of, I had fun, I'm happy with the way I rode, I enjoyed that, but I know I can ride better on x, y and z sections. These demonstrate improvement and often statements like these correlate to better stats on the physical performance side of things.

**" EVEN THOUGH A STEADY CLIMB ON THE GRAPH IS IDEAL IT IS NOT ALWAYS POSSIBLE "**

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Those other performance markers of time, distance, max wattage (your power output), sustained max wattage and the did or did not clean a technical section are still measurable but less significant to our emotional side, and honestly less relevant to most trail riders. These measures matter not unless you are a serious racer, they will wax and wane over time. Even though a steady climb on the graph is ideal it is not always possible unless you are a full-time athlete, and even then you would expect to see fluctuations due to seasonal changes (think race season and training/load cycles) and other parameters like travel, infection, peak goals for key events and so on.





## " WHEN IT GOES WRONG IN EASIER SECTIONS IT IS USUALLY FROM BEING TIRED AND NOT CONCENTRATING "

---

Now, this all starts to enter the elite high tech world of sport and performance, for most of you, this is a step too far so let me try and run an example so we can keep things in perspective and palatable.

This 21st century living with its day to day stress, lack of neutral space and all-important ride time can lead to frustration and tension

even if not detected at a surface level, cause and effect result in a state or mood/feeling, we are after all emotional bodies. When presented with challenging sections on the trail, this more deep-seated frustration can lead to more obvious surface anxiety. The mind is not clear, and the daily stuff has already muddled the waters of a fluid passage along the terrain. All the if's, butt's, what's and maybe's come to the front of the brain when entering a technical passage. This is understandably human, we have responsibilities and being broken is a major bummer.

Problem passages, technically demanding sections and features are typically where it goes pear-shaped, when it goes wrong in more manageable sections, it is usually from being tired and not concentrating. To add more subconscious weighty pressure on us is the machismo naming of sections and nonsense (internet banter etc.) that goes with these tricky trails. It may be that during those daydreamy moments we have in our lives that we visualised the section that gives us problems further muddying the waters. We may have had an accident or near-miss at that point in the trail to further add to the anxiety. It may be that we recall riding at level 'A' through a section in the past and we now feel like we are riding at a lower level in the present,



neglecting to take into account the massive amount of variables and changes in the environment and surrounding parameters. This all adds up to pre-ride tension and we are mentally beat before the going gets tough, my point being is that the section of trail has already won before we have left the house!

### **Breaking the chain**

It can be easy to neglect to use some basic and easy practices to clear the mind, ready for the ride and grab some cheeky mental training on the more manageable sections of trail. There are tricks we can use to get into the groove and mentally prepare ourselves for the challenges ahead.

**" JUST A FEW SIMPLE THINGS CAN HELP GET YOU INTO THAT ZEN-LIKE STATE OF MIND "**

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Now the process doesn't have to look like a scene from Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon, just a few simple things can help get you into that Zen-like state of mind. The car park warm-up and equipment double-check is an excellent way to ease into the job at hand, by focusing the mind on the overall package of mountain biking we help clear away the grime of the day to day stuff that has built up. Some car park skills can further improve the connection between man-machine before we set off.

Once on the bike and rolling proper, that sneaky practice and deeper meditative state can be reached by interacting with the subtleties of the ride, from threading the bike between stones on the trail to timing crank position perfectly to line up the smoothest shift of gears through the cassette.







Stay focused on these small elements and use your internal dialogue to reward you for good work. If you get it a little wrong, look for the positive aspects of what you did and unstitch things to conclude what elements were done not so well. This is why tutors stick to key lingo and look at vision, speed control, body position and footwork, they form a reference to work from.

**" RECOGNISE THE BITS DONE NOT SO WELL AND COOLY CALMLY COMPOSE AND CONTINUE "**

Looking at these elements is easy and good starting point when it comes to evaluating your own riding. Typically if you have three of those four ticked off, then you can get away with the odd slip, slide, rolling pinecone etc. When you have two elements missing or poorly executed, then it can result in a more significant mistake or possibly a dismount. The positive internal dialogue has to focus on the bits done well, recognise the bits done not so well and coolly, calmly compose and continue. In Shaolin martial arts they talk about extinguishing the mind, you have to let these processes/techniques on the bike happen naturally and only bring cognitive thought into the equation post-event (near miss or off) to evaluate, learn and progress.

In life and on the bike we have to make mistakes, it forces us into a state known as 'deep concentration'. Myelin is created when there is a new connection between neurons in the brain, this helps to consolidate the connections made, this chemical process of creating myelin between connecting neurons is a bit like building the insulating layer around a cable. The more times we trigger that connection, the more myelin is created, forming a sheath type coating to the connection for it to then become hard-wired in the neural network.





" IT TAKES THOUSANDS OF HOURS OF PRACTICE FOR TASKS TO BECOME HARD-WIRED AND FOR A PERSON TO BECOME A 'MASTER CRAFTSMAN' "

Deep concentration takes us into a state where we create that electrical connection and make it more robust. Now as the tasks performed while razzing down trails are a little out of the ordinary requirements of homo sapiens, so we do not regularly make these connections, if we leave the task for

too long the connection becomes weak and breaks down. It takes thousands of hours of practice for tasks to become hard-wired and for a person to become a 'master craftsman', leave it alone for too long, and we get rusty.

With a bit of practice, we can polish up that skill and clean that section. That said, if we let other connections take president then the job is much harder, so forget about the last time you hurt yourself and a life in plaster, don't bother to think if you locked the house or fed the cat just focus on what matters in

the now and flow through the section ahead.

At this exact moment in time, I recall reading a book titled 'Blink' that goes through the decision-making process and how we as humans are incredibly good at making split-second decisions based on limited information. Too much information clouds our judgment, and with too much info, we are likely to make 'less good' decisions. For mountain bikers hooning down the trail that translates to staying focused on fewer key 'significant' points/markers in the terrain and choosing that up trail view 'where do I want to be?' Targeting the desired line before switching vision to the close up 'am I on target' view.





Vision tells us everything but if we have failed to put the bike where we need (and in the right gear) forcing us to recover from a poor line or being bumped elsewhere on the trail then the feeling through the bike and body should enable us to trigger muscles to put the bike back in line where we want.

**" MIX UP YOUR RIDING AND TRAIN MUSCLES YOU DIDN'T REALLY KNEW EXISTED, THAT INCLUDES YOUR BRAIN! "**

This is why it is imperative to learn those core skills and be able to manoeuvre the bike about in an instant, riding the bike rather than just being a passenger plonked on top of it. There lies the rub, in order to do so and be a happy bunny on the trail, you have to be physically fit and engage with that other edge to the sword. The long and the short of it is you need to work on all aspects, mix up your riding and train muscles you didn't really know existed, and that includes your brain!

Stay mental and keep chipping away at the block. Ride safe, and I'll see you on the flip side.

Clive Forth



ALL WORDS AND PHOTOS THE IMB TEST TEAM  
PHOTO THIS PAGE ISAC PADDOCK

More bikes and components put through their paces this issue, two new e-bikes from YT and Merida and Ewen gives us the lowdown on his long term Marin Alpine Trail. Plus we swing a leg over the new Kona Process 134!

### BIKES

Kona Process 134

Marin Alpine Trail

Merida eONE-FORTY

YT Decoy CF

### BITS

Hayes Dominion A4 Brakes

MRP Ribbon SL Forks

Muc Off Pressure Washer

# TRIED AND TESTED



BRAND KONA MODEL PROCESS 134 YEAR 2020

"CLIMBS UP  
STEEP AND  
TECHNICAL  
TERRAIN WITH  
TENACIOUS  
ENTHUSIASM"

TO VISIT THEIR  
WEBSITE, CLICK HERE



## AT A GLANCE

There are very few bikes I wish I had bought, but the Process 111 from about 4 years ago has to be one of them. A bike way ahead of its time, it combined short travel with big bike numbers to create a unique and amazing ride. The 111 was forgotten about and Kona continued with the long travel Process to good effect, also offering the 134 as a shorter travel sibling. 2020 sees a new version of the 134, and before it was launched I was still hoping it would be a 111, however, I was told this new version still owes plenty to the original 111, so I was certainly keen to spend some time with it.

The Process 134 gives 134mm of rear travel and is matched with a 140mm Pike upfront. Those numbers give the groundwork for a competent trail bike but the geometry also suggests a fun-loving bike. 510mm reach, a 66 head angle and short 427mm chainstays are modern, without being an enormous sled. Kona's sizing has been great for years and many brands are still playing catch up, the reach is long and seat tubes are short, a great combination for getting a good fit.

[CLICK OR TAP TO READ MORE](#)







"KEPT ITS LIVELY  
AND FUN  
CHARACTER  
WHILE STICKING  
TO THE  
GROUND"

TO VISIT THEIR  
WEBSITE, CLICK HERE



## AT A GLANCE

It's with great sadness that my Alpine Trail is returning to Marin, having provided me with a fantastic bike for the year and a sturdy testbed for numerous parts. The Alpine Trail 8 sits one above the 7 and is the top model but still relatively amenable on the wallet. Although it was tested initially as spec, it has been through multiple iterations over the past 9 months and taken it all in its stride.

## GEOMETRY

I'm now firmly a 500mm and above reach guy. Anyone who tells me that their latest XXL is under 500mm has not got their sizing right. The Alpine comes in just shy of that, but that's as big as they go, unfortunately. However, a brief look at the 2020 Rift Zone shows Marin moving in the right direction and the new sizing should hopefully make it's way into future versions on the Alpine Trail as it needs a proper XL in the size range. IF you're not super tall, the sizing is simple, with short seat tubes and plenty of scope to measure up on reach and go longer or shorter depending on your preference.

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" A STYLISH BIKE  
WITH WELL  
THOUGHT OUT  
FEATURES "

TO VISIT THEIR  
WEBSITE, CLICK HERE



AT A GLANCE

It's fair to say Merida's eONE-SIXTY was a massive success for the brand when it was launched. E-bikes were still finding their way in the world and the bike managed to provide riders with a brilliant ride that rode like a normal bike. Fast-forward to the present day and Merida has introduced both a new eONE-SIXTY and an eONE-FORTY.

Based around the previous frame, and using the same rear end, the two bikes have a different shock and fork which creates the travel difference and they're specced to reflect their intended use. The eONE-FORTY has 140mm of travel and is firmly in the trail bike category whilst the longer travel version is certainly more enduro.

So, 140mm travel, a 66.5-degree head angle and 440mm chainstays give the ingredients for an all-round trail bike. Sizing is best measured in reach numbers, which range from 410mm to 490mm and combined with short seat tubes give plenty of flexibility with the fit.

CLICK OR TAP TO READ MORE





BRAND YT MODEL DECOY CF PRO RACE YEAR 2020

" E-BIKES LIKE THIS ARE NO LONGER QUIRKY EXPERIMENTS, THEY ARE PROPER BIKES FOR HARD RIDING "

TO VISIT THEIR WEBSITE, CLICK HERE



## AT A GLANCE

YT have entered the e-bike game this year with their take on the ultimate powered mountain bike. Named the Decoy it has to be assumed they wanted to make the motor elements of the bike as subtle as possible and as such they've created a rather sleek looking machine.

The fundamentals of the bike are a little different from what could be considered 'normal'. Firstly they're running a mixed wheel size, so a 29er wheel up front and 650b outback. This, in theory, gives good precision and 'roll-over' from the front but allows a stronger and bigger traction patch on the back. Although 650b outback, it is 2.8" tyre so the actual diameters are similar.

The Decoy is based around Shimano's e8000 motor but rather than using Shimano's 500Wh battery they've got their own 540Wh battery which is quirky, but you do get nearly 10% more power.

With three models the Decoy comes as the CF Base, CF Pro and finally the CF Pro Race (4,599.00€, 5,599.00€, 6,599.00€ respectively). Prices reflect their direct selling model and are highly competitive.

[CLICK OR TAP TO READ MORE](#)





"THERE IS NO  
FAULTING THEIR  
POWER,  
PERFORMANCE  
AND RELIABILITY"

TO VISIT THEIR  
WEBSITE, CLICK HERE



#### AT A GLANCE

I'll be honest, the last time I rode a bike with Hayes brakes was probably back in the early 2000s on the original Hayes HFX9's (remember those?) and while famous for being incredibly reliable, their braking performance and feel could be best described as, well, wooden. Fast forward the years and Hayes have started from the ground up with the Dominion line of hydraulic disc brakes, with the Dominion A4 here on test aimed at the enduro end of the market. Priced at \$229 for each end, they definitely come in at the more premium price point, but do they have premium performance to back that up?

#### KEY FEATURES

What self-respecting brake for Enduro use would only feature 2 pistons? That's why Hayes has gone with a 4-pot design to help increase modulation as well as power. Hayes claims that the Dominion's master cylinder is factory tuned for the shortest dead stroke possible and a crisp bite point. This, in turn, means that incredible stopping power is never more than a slight pull on the sculpted lever blades that work so well for consistent one-finger braking.

[CLICK OR TAP TO READ MORE](#)





"THE ONLY  
CHALLENGE IS  
FINDING A BIKE  
THAT CAN KEEP  
UP WITH IT!"

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TO VISIT THEIR  
WEBSITE, CLICK HERE



## AT A GLANCE

Described by MRP as an Endurance XC/Trail fork, the Ribbon SL expands on their successful Ribbon fork and takes the fight to the world of short travel trail bikes. MRP's lighter weight short travel fork, up till now, has been the Loop which offers suspension in a weight-conscious package.

The Ribbon, by contrast with its 35mm stanchions, was previously reserved for more burly riding and longer travel bikes but was still internally adjustable to lower travel. Much like Fox and their Step-Cast 34 fork, for the SL model they've dropped the travel on their more burly fork and shed a bunch of weight to offer a modern XC/Trail fork.

Weight saving is achieved simply through shorter stanchions and damper/air rods combined with a lower oil volume and a bolt through rather than quick-release axle. A simple but effective process to get the weight down but then limits the travel to a maximum of 130mm.

The Ribbon (standard version) claimed weight is 1.90kg whilst the Ribbon SL weighed in with us at 1.835kg (uncut steerer) and the MRP website claims 1.79kg.

[CLICK OR TAP TO READ MORE](#)

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BRAND MUC-OFF MODEL PRESSURE WASHER KIT

"A QUICK, EASY  
WAY TO KEEP ON  
TOP OF YOUR  
BIKE CLEANING"

TO VISIT THEIR  
WEBSITE, CLICK HERE



## AT A GLANCE

For those of us in the northern hemisphere, it's getting to that time of year where inevitably most rides out seem to result in coming back home to a bike that's doubled in weight through the sheer amount of mud you've picked up along the way. That's where this new bike-specific pressure washer from Muc Off comes in, a quick, easy way to keep on top of your bike cleaning and to help keep your steed looking as clean as possible.

## KEY FEATURES

We tested the full Muc Off Pressure Washer kit, which includes the following; the Pressure Washer itself, a handy waterproof storage bag, a snow foam lance plus 2 bottles of Muc Off, 1 ready to go and 1 bottle of concentrate. With a retail price in the UK of £119.99 for the full kit, the price is competitive for what's included.

The pressure washer itself is specifically designed for use on bikes, the idea being that the power isn't going to be so much that you end up jet washing your frame and hub bearings into the next century.

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INTERVIEW BY EWEN TURNER PHOTOS ISAC PADDOCK

# GETTING TO KNOW ÁNGEL SUÁREZ

Coming out of the 2018 season with a 9th at Mont-Sainte-Anne, 13th at Vallnord and 14th at La Bresse, it looked like Ángel Suárez was poised to take the 2019 World Cup to the next level. Unfortunately, things rarely go to plan, and a crash in Maribor and a dislocated shoulder put Ángel out for the majority of the season. While unable to race, Ángel and YT have been on the hunt for the next Young Talent and inspiring the next generation of riders and racers. We caught up with Ángel to find out a little more about him.







' I LIKE TO HAVE MY BIKE BALANCED AND REALLY HIGH ON THE TRAVEL, THAT MEANS THE SUSPENSION SET UP IS QUITE HARD '

**Tell us about yourself. Where are you from, and how did you get into mountain bikes?**

I'm from Spain, Vigo, where it was a World Cup a few years ago. I have raced motocross since a little kid, and when I was 16, I started to ride a bit of mountain bike.

**Who do you ride for and which bikes do you ride?**

I ride for The YT MOB team, and of course, I ride YT Industries bikes.

I ride the Tues 29 in size extra long, and then I switch between the Jeffsy and the Capra for trail rides, I also have a Dirt Love for the pump track sessions. I don't have the Decoy for now, but I cannot wait to have the new e-bike.

**You've been injured this year, how did that happen and how have you recovered?**

Yes I have been injured this year, after I had surgery on my left shoulder I was fine for two years, but a small crash made it dislocated again. I tried to race the season like that, but it didn't work, the injury was too bad, and I had to have more surgery. This time I had different surgeries from a doctor who works with the MotoGP racers, it was a more aggressive surgery, but I'm feeling so much better for it now.

**How do you like your bikes set up?**

I like to have my bike balanced and really high on the travel, that means the suspension set up is quite hard. Then I'm super exacting with the brakes, and I drive my mechanic crazy with that. Apart from that, I like big frames and 29er wheels.







**How would you describe your riding style?**

I like my riding style, I think I was more stylish in the past, but now I'm way more efficient and that what's more important for racing on the World Cup. On the fast tracks, I always feel really comfy and at ease, but when things get wet and slower, it is harder for me.

' WHEN THINGS  
GET WET AND  
SLOWER, IT  
IS HARDER  
FOR ME.'

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' FOR ME RIDING WITH MY FRIENDS IS ONE OF THE BEST PARTS OF IT BUT I LOVE RACING '

**What do you do when you are not riding a bike?**

I still love to ride my motocross bike and to spend time with my family and friends. Apart from that, there is a lot of biking in my life, and if I'm not riding, then I'm talking about riding with my best friend (and mechanic).

**What do you love most about**

**mountain biking?**

For me riding with my friends is one of the best parts of it but I love racing, it is hard to choose. I really love everything involved, well I don't like road biking a lot hahaha!

**What annoys you most about mountain biking?**

If I have to choose something, it will be injuries, but I understand it is part of mountain biking and I will deal with it.

**Which riders have most influenced you over the years, and how?**

Of course, Aaron Gwin, sharing a team with him was amazing for the last few years, and he was super involved in my training, which was super cool.





I don't think we have a similar style, but for sure, after being with him, I certainly picked up a few things.

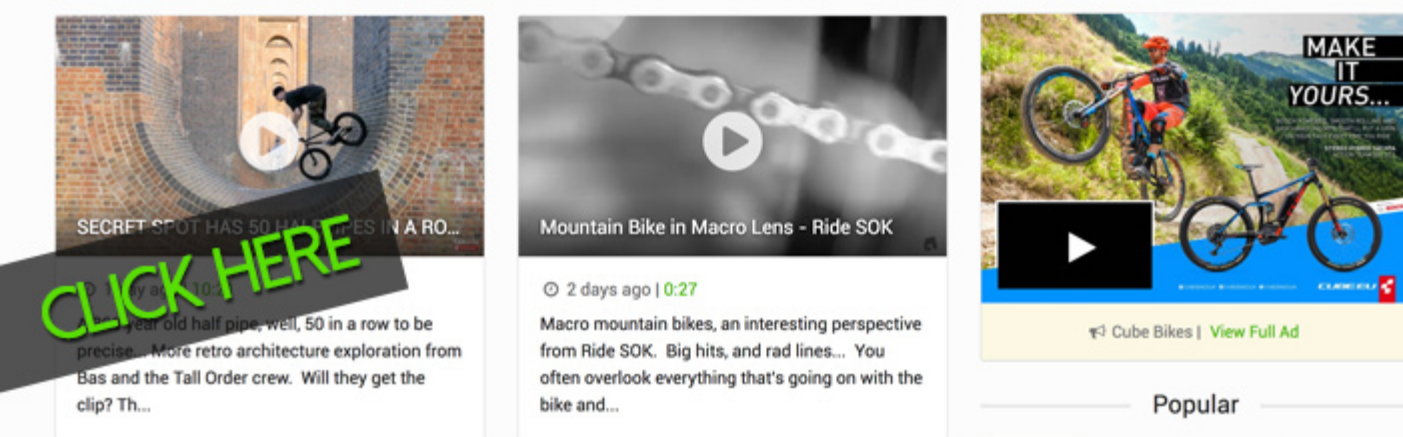
### Best race results on a bike?

I usually say my top ten in Mont Sainte Anne last year (2018) in the World Cup, but last year in World Champs I was 5th until I crashed two corners before the finish. Even though I crashed for me, that was my best race ever.

'EVEN THOUGH I CRASHED FOR ME, THAT WAS MY BEST RACE EVER'



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**What's your favourite place to ride in the world and why?**

I have a few tracks that I love, but after travelling and riding around the world, I'm always super stoked to ride at home. It's nothing crazy, but they are a few tracks that I love.

**What's your favourite event or race?**

World Champs is definitely my favourite, I have been so lucky to get custom frames and representing my country is super cool. I'm always super excited and for that race.

**What is the best piece of advice you've been given in your mountain bike career?**

I think trusting in myself. It is always super important, and I feel like once I started to do that, everything went much better.

**What are your plans for 2020?**

We are going to be a big team next year, and that is something I really like, I think that this will help to have a good vibe and get some good results. I want to be in the top 10 consistently!



' AFTER TRAVELLING AND RIDING AROUND THE WORLD, I'M ALWAYS SUPER STOKED TO RIDE AT HOME '





# TECH FOCUS

## Merida e-bikes

L2019 sees the Merida eONE-FORTY and eONE-SIXTY overhauled and relaunched to compete in the ever-growing e-MTB segment. Battery and motor technology is moving on at an ever-increasing pace, and the battle to create the ultimate e-MTB is undoubtedly hotting up.

I was fortunate enough to spend three days racing the new eONE-FORTY at the Merida Ex Enduro in September and spend some time with the man behind the bike Reynaldo Ilagan. A key member of the R&D team at Merida he has overseen the previous eONE-SIXTY and the non-powered ONE-SIXTY. In between racing e-bikes through the forests of Exmoor, we chatted about bringing the new bike to market and the challenges of designing e-bikes.





SO THE NEW eONE-SIXTY AND eONE-FORTY, IT'S NEW BUT NOT ENTIRELY NEW YEAH?

The rear triangle is from the old eONE-SIXTY, and we had an excellent experience there, our testing in Taiwan is super stringent, and the rear triangle was the best one we have ever tested. The chassis and the feedback from it was great, so why should we make everything completely new?

The bottom bracket is lower, it's slacker, and the seat angle is steeper so typical stuff. On the previous model, we were more conservative with the geometry as back then e-bikes were for more casual riding and not for trails and we were worried if it were too aggressive people would not like it. As it turned out, people wanted the opposite, and the new one has these things.

We use the same rear triangle, but we have added a much better chainstay protector and new fenders. Also, rear triangles are the most critical thing for testing, you can see that when something is breaking its chainstays, so if we had a good product, why change it?

ARE THERE MORE STRESSES ON THE CHAINSTAYS OF AN e-BIKE?

I wouldn't say there is more stress, the difference between an e-bike and a regular bike is not the maximum load, which is probably very similar but it happens much more often than on a regular bike. The system weight is also higher, so there is more load, not like 100% more, just a bit more, so we have to over-engineer a bit for durability. For Merida testing is super important, this is the reason we are not one of the lightest ones, it's more important that the bike is durable.

' THIS IS THE REASON WE ARE NOT ONE OF THE LIGHTEST ONES, IT'S MORE IMPORTANT THAT THE BIKE IS DURABLE '



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WHAT ARE THE MAIN CHALLENGES WHEN DESIGNING AN E-BIKE OVER A REGULAR BIKE? IS IT FITTING IN THE MOTORS AND BATTERIES?

Yeah for sure, clearance is super tight, tyres, battery and motor for examples. Now there is a bigger battery, and they're longer, so making sure you have enough clearance and passing tests is always critical. Our internal tests, even if a few cycles (repeated stress cycles) are missing, we have to



' THE REASON WE INTRODUCED THE CARBON TO THE 140 AND 160 IS THE OPENING FOR THE BATTERY CAUSES A LOSS OF ABOUT 70% OF STIFFNESS '

increase wall thickness or even reconsider the design. Merida produces over a million bikes so we have lots of experience here, with this many bikes if something is not lasting and there are problems well... Merida Taiwan is super strict on this!

DOES CARBON HELP WITH THE DESIGN AND FITTING IT ALL IN IN FRAME?

Yeah definitely, the reason we introduced the carbon to the 140 and 160 is the opening for the battery causes a loss of about 70%

of stiffness. We tested competitors, and some of them were terrible, and when in a right-hand turn, the bike went left as it was so flexy. When you have flex in your rear triangle, it can be useful, but if you have flex in the front triangle, it's not good.

With carbon you don't lose so much stiffness if you have the opening in the frame as it's made in the mould, so carbon is much better. It's also the reason we went for 500Wh, with 630Wh the opening is bigger, and you have to increase the weight of the bike.



THE PREVIOUS BIKE HAD THE EXTERNAL BATTERY, IS THERE A SIGNIFICANT ADVANTAGE TO THE NEW INTEGRATED BATTERY OTHER THAN AESTHETICS?

Actually not, the disadvantage is the big opening, but part of our concept is to change the battery fast, so the top model, the 10k is delivered with a second backpack and battery because if you want to go really far the extra 20% (in a 600Wh battery) doesn't really help, and if the battery is so big you can't put it in a backpack then that's no good.

WHAT DO YOU LIKE ABOUT SHIMANO AS A DRIVE SYSTEM?

Shimano is famous for making products that are durable after 3, 4, 5 years... After 500 charges the battery still has 80% capacity. This is superior to competitors, and over time it will have more capacity than a 630Wh. 500Wh is the best size as you can just carry another. The motor is also such a compact system, one of the best things is the shifter and the display, it's really MTB dedicated, which is what we really appreciate about it.

THE AIR INTAKE AT THE FRONT, IS TEMPERATURE A DIFFICULT THING TO MANAGE?

You don't have to do it, but if you go full gas you will feel the battery is warm, or if you leave the bike in the sun on a hot day can be an issue. Carbon is a poor conductor of heat, so it insulates the battery, so it makes more sense to have additional openings. It would work without, but it definitely helps. They work better if they're cooler.

DID YOU CONSIDER MAKING THESE E-BIKES PARTICULARLY GOOD AT CLIMBING?

For us these bikes are made for having fun on the downhills, I think if you do technical climbs,

' CARBON IS A POOR CONDUCTOR OF HEAT, SO IT INSULATES THE BATTERY, SO IT MAKES MORE SENSE TO HAVE ADDITIONAL OPENINGS '



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you have to be a really good rider and it's more difficult than the downhill. The eONE-SIXTY is more a bike for which you don't need a shuttle. Uphill riding, of course, you can do it, and a bike with 2cm longer chainstays may climb better, but the concept was not to produce the best hill climbing bike. This is a bike to have super fun on the trails and an agile bike that feels like a regular bike and is super supple.

ARE WE GOING TO SEE AN eONE-TWENTY?

No, I don't see any reason to use less travel on the e-bike, with the eONE-FORTY and eONE-SIXTY it's the same frame, only different sizing, we're saying the 140 is the more playful and agile bike. The 140 small frame is 160 medium frame. With the shorter fork, the reach gets bigger and doesn't make sense, in my opinion, to have a bike with less travel to have a longer reach as it's not that playful anymore. Seat tube length is not relevant anymore because of dropper seat posts it doesn't matter anymore even if you're a tall rider. Our XXL frame back in the day would be considered a medium in terms of the seat tube. What I would love to see in the future all seat tube lengths are the same, it's just a question of how durable and strong the seat posts are.

DO YOU THINK THE NEXT ADVANCE WILL BE BATTERY TECH?

Yeah definitely. I want a lighter bike for sure, but I don't want a 12kg bike, I think the perfect weight would be 18kg something like that, maybe 17kg. There will be better cells, of course, I think there must also be in the mind of the customers how heavy they are. Customers may also have to accept in the future if you're tall/heavy you'll need a bigger battery and the bike will be more expensive, more cells just make it more expensive.

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Lightbox

SENDING IT THROUGH THE TURNS, THE DAYS OF  
DUST HAVE LONG GONE FOR US HERE AT IMB  
PHOTO ANDY LLOYD/MARIN

*Lightbox* More shots with no particular place  
to go this issue, feast your eyes!



LIGHTBOX

IT SEEMS INCREDIBLE BUT DANNY MACASKILL HAS BEEN CONSISTENTLY  
BLOWING OUR MINDS FOR TEN YEARS AND STILL KILLING IT!  
PHOTO DAVE MACKISON / RED BULL CONTENT POOL



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JAMES DOERFLING SHOWS OFF HIS CONSISTENT, LAID BACK STYLE IN CHILCOTIN BC  
PHOTO SUNTOUR/ HOSHI YOSHIDA



LIGHTBOX



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BACK WHEEL FUN ABOARD NUKEPROOF'S NEW REACTOR TRAIL BIKE  
PHOTO LAURENCE CROSSMAN-EMMS/NUKEPROOF



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THE TROPHY OF NATIONS SHOWED HOW A TEAM FORMAT ENDURO RACE  
COULD WORK AND WAS THE PERFECT END TO THE SEASON  
PHOTO MET/BORIS BEYER



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*Lightbox*

SQUAMISH RIPPER SHERRY STAPLES RIDES THE NEW KONA  
REMOTE THROUGH THE AUTUMN WOODLANDS  
PHOTO KONA



LIGHTBOX



*Lightbox*

BEX BARAONA AND LEWIS BUCHANAN HAVE BOTH HAD GOOD SEASONS  
AND TAKE A MOMENT TO SHRED THE DUST AWAY FROM THE RACE TRACK  
PHOTO IBIS/IAN COLLINS



LIGHTBOX



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YT HAS BEEN HUNTING ALL OVER THE WORLD FOR NEW YOUNG TALENT  
IN 2019 BUT WHO WILL JOIN THE TEAM FOR 2020? HERE'S ONE HOPEFUL  
LOOKING PINNED AT FORT WILLIAM EARLIER THIS YEAR  
PHOTO ISAC PADDOCK





*Lightbox*

WEEKEND WARRIORS JOINED A LEGEND IN EPIC BIKEPARK LEOGANG TO SHRED  
THE TRAILS AND TO WORK ON THEIR SKILLS AT THE AARON GWIN RACE CAMP  
PHOTO SEBASTIAN STERNEMANN



The IMB website is crammed with news and videos every day, we only show the best videos, so to make it onto the site is an achievement in itself.

These are the 4 most popular videos that have been viewed on the site as voted for by you with your thumbs up likes in the last 2 months! Check out the full list [HERE](#), and if you see a video you like on the site, give it the thumbs up, it might just help to push it onto this page!

## #1 DANNY HART'S WINNING RUN-SNOWSHOE DH WORLD CUP

He did it! What a run that was, the track at Snowshoe was awesome and put on a terrific race that will go down in the history books. It's been a while but Danny is back on the top step after a flawless run down a track made mostly of rocks and gaps.



[CLICK HERE FOR VIDEO](#)

## #2 SPECIALIZED- INTRODUCING THE ALL-NEW ENDURO

What do we do with obstacles? We go through them. It certainly isn't your usual bike launch video, but specialized have certainly been getting creative lately and the new Enduro film is no exception. We're still puzzled but it's worth a watch.



[CLICK HERE FOR VIDEO](#)

## #3 #WIPEOUT WEDNESDAY- MORE BRUTAL CRASHES FOR YOUR ENJOYMENT

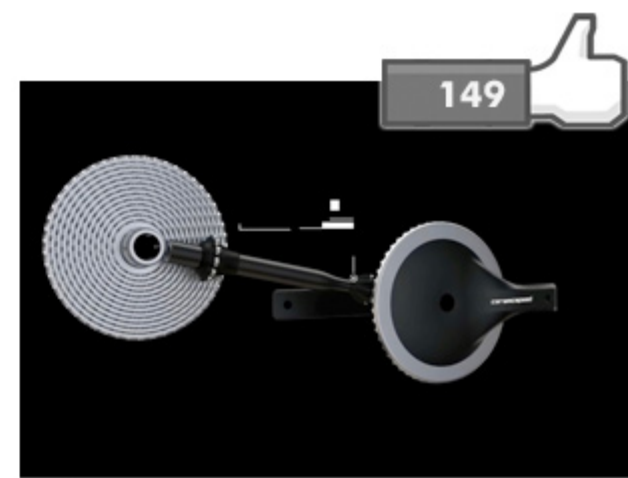
AS usual, a compilation of crashed makes it into Movie Night, this time its a throwback on the best/worst crashes of 2018, a vintage year if ever there was one. Thrills, spills and can't watch moments fill this edit up to the brim.



[CLICK HERE FOR VIDEO](#)

## #4 14 GEARS... NEW CERAMIC SPEED 'DRIVEN' DRIVETRAIN

And now for something completely different. Just when you thought that drivetrains had been refined to near perfection, something drops in to shake things up. Not wireless shifting or internal gearboxes, but a crazy 14-speed system with no chain.



[CLICK HERE FOR VIDEO](#)

# MOVIE NIGHT



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PHOTO SR SUNTOUR

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