

ISSUE #30

RUST



COMME DES GARÇONS

2017 ISDE REPORT FROM BRIVE, FRANCE

- ★ OTHER FEATURES: **KTM EXTREME EVENT – RIDING WITH JONNY & TADDY** ★
- ★ **DOWN MEMORY LANE – 1986 CIRCUIT DE PYRÉNÉES REVISITED** ★
- ★ **PLUS: CHRIS EVANS COLUMN** ★

www.rustsports.com

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Image: Rick Kemp

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RUST

Reloaded

WELL, IT'S HERE. The new website that is. Same address as before (www.rustsports.com) but now with an all-new look and a whole new serving of words, images, videos even. If you've not checked it out it already, give it a go.

It's taken a while (*months and months of work for the editorial team*) because it's been built new, fresh, from the ground up. This is no off-the-shelf templated design, it's a fully custom-built mean-machine designed to give you the most vivid and reactive RUST experience possible. Not an easy job, as we determined we needed juggernaut impact combined with mountain goat fleet-of-foot, but we worked with the best guys we know to achieve exactly that.

And as we've said before, this is just one more step in the development of RUST. Just as you might imagine (say) KTM starting on their 2019 models the day after the sign-off on the 2018s, so it is here. Already we're working on a whole new online accompaniment to this website that's going to add a whole new dimension to our communications come the new year. We've said it before, RUST never sleeps. And for you, as for ourselves, we want nothing but the best.

In the meantime work on our regular issues hasn't stopped and we've a belter for you here. Our EnduroGP correspondent Georgia Wells spent a whole two weeks at the ISDE and she's brought back a story that's classic RUST – getting under the skin of the event, analyzing the action both on- and off-track so that you get the REAL story of the event, not just a run down of who won which day. Proper journalism the way we remember it. At the other end of the spectrum we have the story of two older dudes reliving their glory days (*cue Bruce Springsteen*

soundtrack) through a road-trip to, and rip-around in the Pyrenees – and relaying what it's like to know your best days are behind you. Meanwhile I've been playing extreme with Jonny Walker and Taddy Blazusiak on KTM EXC TPis. Sounds dangerous, but then I have some of the strongest self-preservation instincts you'll find.

And while all this has been going down we even found the time to head down to our base in Portugal to hammer around in the dust and serious heat. Yeah, it's been nothing less than full gas here at RUST. But hopefully for you, right now, there's a little time to chill out and have a good read. Be it our website or this issue, we hope you enjoy it.

JB



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GOTTA BET ON A BETA

Hawkstone Park, end of September, penultimate round of the EnduroGP season, and here's Boano Racing Beta's Brad Freeman on the charge. The 21-year-old Brit had work to do. After missing the first two races of the season he's been playing catch-up in the Enduro Junior class. The 2016 outright European champion certainly has been pushing his RR300 to the limit; at Hawkstone he recorded his seventh and eighth wins of the year and now with only two races left he's just four points behind class leader Italian Davide Soreca (*who placed 4-2 at Hawkstone Park*). The pressure on these two in Germany come the end of October – it's going to be big.

Image: JB





AN AUSTRIAN DOUBLE

Austrian motorcycles have been all over enduro for years – but never have we seen an Austrian rider win in world enduro. Until Hawkstone Park, that is. And there Austria got its first double, when Pascal Rauchenecker rode his Rockstar Energy Husqvarna FE250 to an Enduro 2 win on the second day. The 24-year-old former MXGP (MX2) rider not only won his class but won the three-hour cross-country race outright in one very classy ride.

Image: JB

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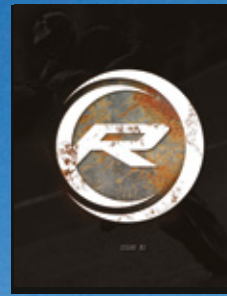
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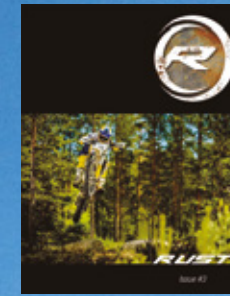
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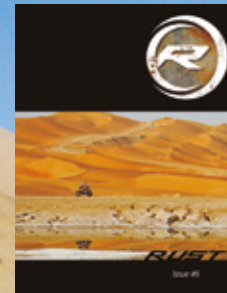
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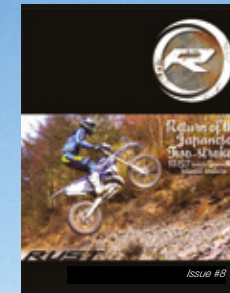
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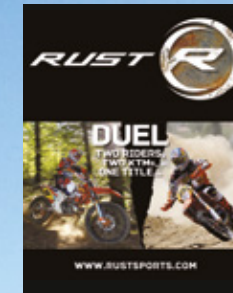
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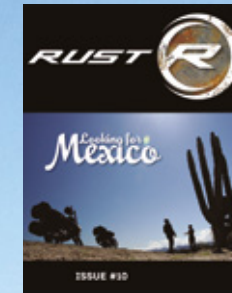
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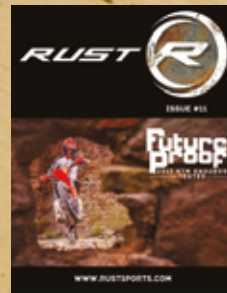
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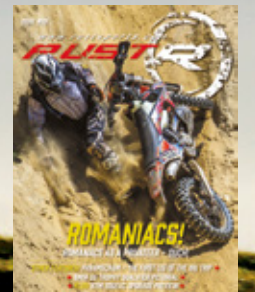
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RUST ENDURO

Thanks to the likes of Red Bull TV and, of course, YouTube millions get to watch hard enduro. But so few ride it. Given an opportunity to learn from two of the sport's finest, Jon Bentman wasn't going to turn down the offer. But would he regret it? After all, it's called extreme enduro for a reason...

Extreme HOW HARD CAN IT BE?

Words: Jon Bentman
Images: Future7Media

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“W

E LOOK FORWARD to welcoming you to the 'Ride KTM EXC TPI with the pros' event in Spain. A special opportunity to enjoy an action-packed riding day putting the world's first serial production off-road competition fuel-injected two-stroke machines to the test with hard enduro pros Taddy Blazusiak and Jonny Walker." Only an idiot would turn down such an invitation (wouldn't he?). Wow, riding extreme enduro with two of the world's best, on the brand new TPI-equipped EXCs – what could possibly go wrong?



ZERO OUT OF FOUR

If you had to pick a starting point for extreme enduro it would have to be fitness. No question, this is hard work both in terms of strength and endurance. So you need muscle and aerobic proficiency, to Olympic standards if you want to reach a professional level. You can then add advanced bike handling skills and finally a fair dollop of bravery. Out of those four requisites I'm not sure I score on any, call me zero out of four.

Anyhow, before we got down to business with Taddy and Jonny on just how to ride extreme we had a warm-up ride around a tricky little single track in the woods above the Bassella Experiences base (*in Lleida, Northern Spain*) where this ride with the pros day was taking place. Dry and dusty, with plenty of

rocks and roots and ups and downs, this trail certainly helped identify any rider deficiencies. For me, the first lap of this ten minute loop went well, at a trials pace I was scoping the obstacles and dealing fairly well with them. A couple of drop offs elicited a gasp or two (*I was worried the front would tuck under*) but actually these were safe. And there were a couple or three technical climbs that while not huge had a sting or two that could trip you up.

Second lap I put on a bit of speed but this wasn't the best idea; at speed I wasn't processing the detail of the trail quick enough and so lost accuracy on the climbs, necessitating some footwork. This then impacted on my fitness (*or lack of*) and so while pushing harder again on the third lap, determined to put in a good time, things got even messier as muscles wearied and the brain – no doubt wanting for more oxygen – failed to keep up. More pushing ensued, this time out of the saddle as well. For the fourth, and last, lap I took it back down to a steady trail pace, took the time to look and plan as I rolled up to the hills, and made my best lap of the set. Slower can be faster.

I'm by no means a novice in enduro, with at least 20 years of experience on and off since I came back to the sport after a good 15 years dabbling in road racing. And two years riding trials as a youth formed a solid bedrock



Know thy enemy

TADDY BLAZUSIAK

Taddy is the familiar of Tadeusz, by the way. Now 34, Taddy retired at the end of 2016 after a near 20-year career in trials and enduro. A highly decorated rider, he won the Erzberg Rodeo five times, the AMA EnduroCross Championship five times and the FIM Indoor Enduro World Cup six times. After a successful career in trials, including winning the European championship, he converted to enduro in 2007, then specialized on indoor/arena enduro over the last half decade, uniquely riding (and dominating) both the FIM and AMA championships each year. 2017 is a year off of everything said Taddy, but unable to sit idle he's keeping busy mentoring Johnny Walker.



of understanding of riding off-road. So I have a running start at this. Something that was evident when I chatted with fellow attendee Jordan, a writer for a national motorcycle newspaper, and a cyclist turned motorcyclist with just a couple years of gentle trail riding under his belt. He explained how the loop started with probably the most daunting challenge of all – riding a narrow trail with a precipitous drop of maybe a hundred feet down a near-cliff into a river below. It didn't help that the trail had rock steps and loose rubble along its path.

My years of riding seem to have taught me to never look down in those instances and it took me to go back and take another look at the section to see what he meant. And no, you wouldn't want to slip. So yes, by comparison to some I've got a running start at this game.

TYRED OUT

With only a few hours to share in the direct tutelage of Taddy and Jonny we were never going to practice every kind of extreme obstacle, and with the group offering up a range of skill levels from an ex world championship trials rider through to trail newbie (Jordan) then the extreme stars had their work cut out. In my instance we chose to look in detail at two kinds of obstacle. For an artificial example – such as you see in indoor or arena enduro – we chose the tractor tyre pit and for a natural challenge a four-foot rock step encountered half way up a hill climb.

With Taddy as my tutor we looked at the tyre pit first. No question this was intimidating and I was not keen (at all) to give it a go. It's fairly obvious what goes wrong here – your front wheel drops into a gap and you pirouette over the handlebars. Sure, the likes of Taddy can simply levitate over tyres but we've all seen enough of YouTube by now to know that mere mortals ALWAYS end up face-down.

Only here's the surprise – there is actually a scientific explanation upon which Taddy's capability to float over the tyres is based.

"It's actually quite a simple technique," started Taddy (although I was hardly convinced at this stage).



Know thy enemy

JONNY WALKER

Jonny (26) is riding his seventh season of enduro, but already has amassed three wins at the Erzberg Rodeo, two wins at the Romaniacs plus many wins in other hard enduro events. Like Taddy, Jonny started in trials, reaching international standard before crossing over to hard enduro. Jonny still mixes indoor/arena enduros with the longer outdoor events and says he will continue to do so, he enjoys the variety too much.

"You need to pick a line, approach steady, then accelerate slightly as you go in, keeping your weight at ALL times over the back mudguard.

"By accelerating you keep the front wheel light and it will then float over the gaps, while the rear suspension WILL deal with the holes and the positive thrust of the accelerating rear wheel will keep it up as well."

With this instruction in mind, German journalist Frank and myself had a go at the tyre pit. Frank went first, he didn't just accelerate, he pinned the throttle... Too much of course, so he skittered, slewed sideways then had to chop the throttle at which point the front dropped into a tyre and he pitched over the bars.

"Too fast," said Taddy dryly.

KTM EXTREME EVENT

My turn. I approached steady, then less than a bike length from the tyres gently accelerated and for half the length of the pit floated, only then, losing momentum and with the back wheel noticeably kicking around, I dropped into a tyre and stopped abruptly, ending up under the bike.

"Good start, but you did two things wrong – you stopped accelerating and as you did you moved your weight centre, a natural reaction but wrong, you have to keep accelerating and keep your weight back."

Taddy demonstrated the technique – it's a fine balance. He carries only so much speed and he accelerates in a very gentle fashion, carefully opening the throttle, not pinning it. He didn't want to reach the far side of the pit – where oblique angled concrete beams awaited – with too much speed.

Giving it another go, Taddy's instruction was starting to work. With just a little more confidence and a little more speed going in, followed by a steadily increasing throttle and weight resolutely sat over the back mudguard I was doing it! And added to that, as Taddy reminded me, by using that old nugget of looking up, to the end of the section – not down at the detail – I was projecting my path more positively.



THE TPI EXCS were of course great accomplices in all of this. How these bikes take the hammering they do and keep coming back for more defies belief. I started on the 250EXC and really enjoyed it, light and snappy it makes for a racy ride. But I'm always more at home on the 300EXC; while more powerful it happily accepts smaller throttle openings, making for easy trail manners. I'm always testing its low end pull as I'll ascend technical climbs at a snail pace in second with revs just above stall – the 300 will do this all day. It's an accommodating bike, even more so now that there's no jetting to fiddle with. And with the much-improved fuel consumption that TPI brings you can take it for longer trail rides, matching the four-strokes.

I tried a 300EXC equipped with the upmarket WP Cone Valve forks and Trax shock, too. That's quality suspension, but I could tell it was tuned to suit a faster, better rider than I. It's designed to work optimally at speed – only speeds I rarely attain. I'd say if you were a clubman level rider, riding trail more than racing, then the set-up would have limited value. KTM's off-road product manager Jochi Sauer was in agreement.

KTM EXTREME EVENT



And here's the thing, at the outset I thought the best line would be the one where you hit the sidewalls of the tyres, avoiding the holes. That's not the case, as Taddy explained. Sure that can help as you enter the tyre pit, but to do that the whole way is impossible, you have to accept that you will be riding over the chasms, but by keeping that throttle on and by keeping your weight back and head up you do float over. On the next two runs I managed exactly that. If I was younger, and braver I might have continued until I had the technique completely mastered. Instead, with age and a lack of fitness to bear in mind, and only so much courage to call upon (*I'm a natural born chicken*) I took my two successes as a win and retired 'on top'. I try not to tickle fate.



RUST ENDURO

"For sure the Cone Valve and Trax equipment is there to help the racer and it works so well for them. But we tune the standard suspension to work optimally for the hobby rider, which is the majority of our customers, so it works best at the speeds and on the kind of terrain they'll enjoy. Even for me now (Jochi is a former European enduro champion), I prefer the standard suspension."

Equally while the word is racers are looking for a snappier map on the fuel injection, for the vast majority the existing map, which seems to allow for a decidedly linear rev from bottom to mid, suits just fine.

Jochi Sauer: *"We are working on a new alternative map and it will be a more aggressive one which will for sure suit the racers, but again I think for me the one we have now will remain my pick for my riding and I think this will be the case for most people."*

"It's still early days with the TPI bikes, so we are still building knowledge. And even among our test riders in the R&D department it's not easy to get a consensus, no two riders like the same setting!"



There's an interesting phenomenon with the KTM EXC two-strokes. I've been riding them since the late 1990s and the 300 in particular has always felt the same, year-in year-out. I can compare my experiences riding an extreme event in NZ back in 1999 (*where only 150 from 500 finished – I can count myself as one of the 150 only on account the 300EXC was so brilliant*) with those of riding with Jonny and Taddy on this day. The basic formula has remained the same. But we know the latest bikes are better and for sure I appreciate the benefits of the fuel injection – the greater fuel range, the direct oil injection (*so no more fussing with premix*) and no more need to re-jet according to conditions. I also appreciate that the EXCs can get me to places few other enduros can – or at least for a lot less stress. It was an exceptional bike then and – thanks to TPI overcoming the latest emission regulations – it's an exceptional bike now, and into the future...

KTM EXTREME EVENT

A ROCK IS A HARD PLACE

Next came the rock step on the hill climb. It was a real stopper and clearly an obstacle of worth as Jonny and Taddy took it in turns to hop up it, making little flourishes as they flew above it, the step needing real skills on account the landing area being just a bike length long. With an obvious chicken run to one side there was no way I was going to do it – leave it to the ex-world trials rider, I reasoned.

Only the guys weren't having that. Frank, the German, had four-times more pluck than he had skills, and given Jonny and Taddy had offered to stand either side of the step as catchers he was happy to give it a go. Typical Frank he ran at the slope at some speed and when he got to the step – the crest of which is above your head height as you approach – he gave his KTM full gas. He didn't just clear the step, he cleared the heads of Jonny and Taddy and incredibly his KTM ended up wedged in the branches of the tree a clear three feet off the ground. With the bike gone skyward Jonny and Taddy grabbed Frank instead, stopping him falling back off the step. It took all three to get the KTM back down.



After that display I surely did not want to try it for myself. But of course the group will was against me and there comes a time when having accepted an invitation to *'ride with the pros'* that you have to step up, even if it's wholly against your better judgment.

If I'd had better judgment I would have walked up to the step first, like a trials rider does, and scoped the terrain. But you don't see that happen in extreme enduro, the riders accept a blind run as part of the job. Jonny was offering me an advantage anyway, pointing to the optimum line up the rock step and with a sweep of his arm indicating the best approach.

Jonny shouted first gear was just fine, and doing my best to keep a positive visualization in my head I started my run. First half of the approach was no drama, but all anticipation. Only as the yards counted down it started to dawn on me I was in trouble. The slope before the step was much steeper than it appeared from the bottom of the hill and so I was losing the momentum that I desperately needed.

At this point I should have aborted the attempt, gone back down and come back up at a better pace, but I suspect my brain simply can't process fast enough to make such instantaneous decisions. Instead it waited until my front wheel was practically on the rock before accepting that at this point nothing less than a big helping of throttle would get me



up the step, regardless of trajectory at the top. Sure enough the KTM launched itself up the step, but with the thrust being upwards rather than forwards it kept going up. Not to Frank's near-orbit standards, but a good foot or two more than comfortable, leaving my right foot waving in the air desperately trying to find terra firma.

It was then a three-point landing – rear wheel and two feet – and by some miracle I was able to hold the KTM perpendicular until the engine stalled before lowering it. Half a step behind my heels was the edge of the rock – I'd only just made it over. In the words of an airline pilot, *'any landing you walk away from is a good landing'*. So I took my rock step ascent as a win. And again, rather than take more goes to perfect the technique, I figured one out of one equals a 100% success rate.





EXTREME HELPS

Our day riding with the pros ended with a great hour's trail ride. It was probably longer than that as, like most trail riders, we were keen on pace, slack on the corner-man system of navigation, and so the group split and got lost repeatedly. However, given the extreme instruction we'd had we were picking tougher trails – that little instruction offering a better understanding, allowing us to keep cooler heads to tackle the challenges. Except Frank who stuck to his guns – more throttle everywhere!

So is there a secret to extreme? Well, yes there are some secrets, those top boys are not going to tell all for want of retaining their hard-won position. But for us mortals both Jonny and Taddy were pretty much united in their advice.

"You must get the basics right, first and foremost. Practice throttle and clutch control, braking too. You have to refine your feel and control of those before doing anything tricky. We see lots of guys who turn up at schools just wanting to launch themselves over a fallen tree or up rock steps – but you can't do any of that stuff until you've got the basic controls sorted."

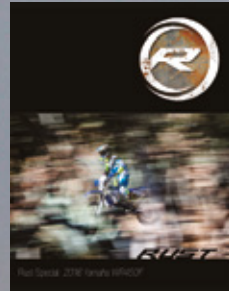
Indeed, there's plenty the extreme enduro riders can teach us about control, a little of what they do will make us better riders. We should learn from them. But as for competing in hard enduros – no, not for me. They have my respect but, you know, I know my limitations...



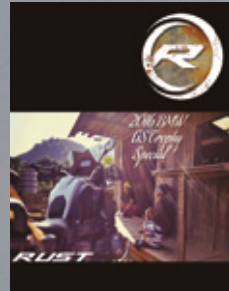
HONDA CRF1000L AFRICA TWIN SPECIAL EDITION
RUST gets the exclusive world's first test of the new Honda CRF1000L Africa Twin!



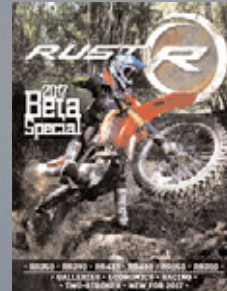
HUSQVARNA 701 ENDURO/SM SPECIAL EDITION
Test of the new Husqvarna 701 Enduro and 701 Supmoto



YAMAHA WR450F SPECIAL EDITION
RUST tests the all-new Yamaha WR450F in the hills of Andalusia, Southern Spain...



2016 BMW GS TROPHY SPECIAL EDITION
RUST joins the GS Trophy riding across Northern Thailand on board the latest BMW R1200GS



2017 BETA RANGE SPECIAL EDITION
JB braved the heat and went to Beta's home town just outside Florence to test ride all the latest 2017 models...



MADAGASCAR SPECIAL EDITION
JB joins the Touratech United People of Adventure expedition to the island of Madagascar...



2017 HUSQVARNA SPECIAL EDITION
Full test of the 2017 Husqvarna model range, with New for 2017, some history and the final conclusions on JB's favourites...



TOURATECH BMW R1200GS RAMBLER
First full test of Touratech's 200kg, 125hp Enduro R1200 GS Rambler in the Azores!



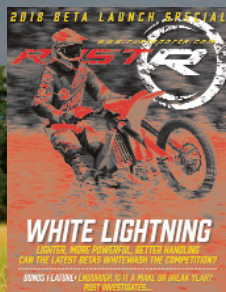
RUST TOURATECH AUSTRALIA SPECIAL
JB embarks on an adventure into The Outback and returns humbled by the experience...



RUST 2017 EnduroGP
RUST guide to the upcoming EnduroGP season... New rules, new riders, new classes, new everything!



RUST 2018 KTM LAUNCH SPECIAL
RUST rides the revolutionary new fuel-injected two-strokes from KTM... at the Erzberg!



RUST 2018 BETA LAUNCH SPECIAL
JB rides and rates the latest hot models from the 2018 Beta model range...



RUST 2017 TREFLE LOZERIEEN SPECIAL
RUST Magazine did the Trefle Lozerien and here's the proof!

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2017 ISDE

LARRIERU

RUST ENDURO

HOMERUN



Another year, another Six Days. The 'Olympics of Enduro' had plenty of surprises in store for the 92nd running. Although at times the event threatened to buckle under its own weight of expectation, this year's edition will enter the history books as the unruly, unpredictable, truly thrilling success it turned out to be. This is the inside story of the ISDE 2017...

Words: Georgia Wells
Images: Rick Wells, Gemma James, Future7Media, KTM, Husqvarna, Yamaha

www.rustsports.com



2017 ISDE



AFTER 16 LONG years the event made its return to, you guessed it, France. The very same town which hosted back in 2001, Brive-la-Gaillarde, had the honour of rolling out the red carpet once again. On arrival, the paddock, on the town's airfield, offered a good range of services from catering to rally simulator rides, but there was little to no information available to the assembling teams, riders, and press.

Though annoying for those trying to prepare for the long week ahead, some members of the paddock saw the lack of info as a deliberate tactic to protect the circus from potential terror attacks. A somewhat unsettling thought, but one that is sadly hard to ignore even in the depths of the French countryside. Some riders were so worried about the threat of attacks that they didn't want to attend the opening ceremony:

"It's really not a great idea to put thousands of people in one space in a town square with no protection, I don't want to be part of that," was the strong statement from one top level rider.



Not an archive shot from the past but a moment from the Classic ISDE racing...



2017 ISDE



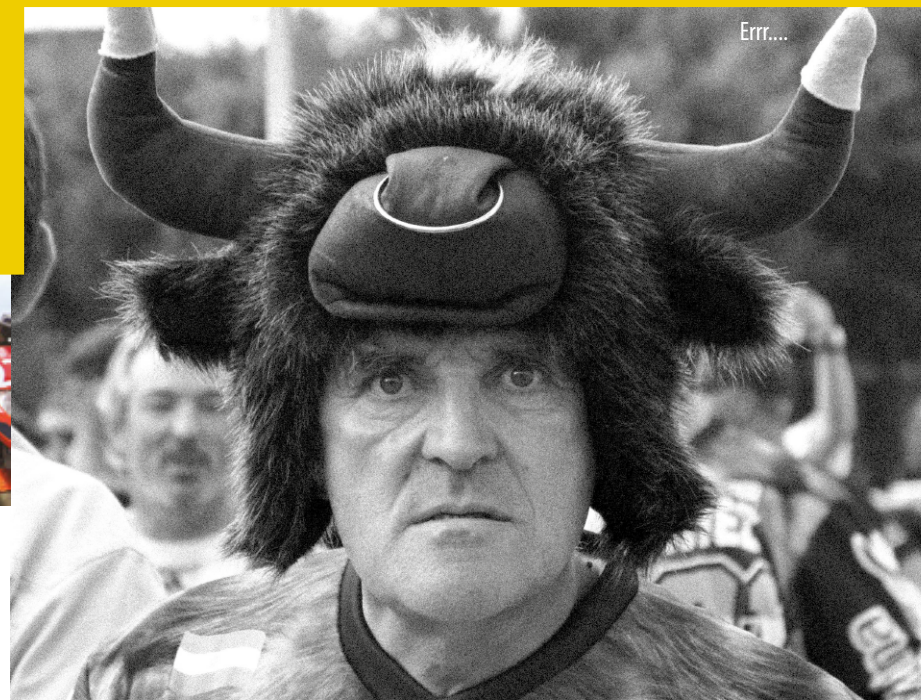
SIPEs

RUST ENDURO

But thankfully the 'do' went off without a hitch and took place under sunny skies in Brive's centre. With such a huge entry it took several hours for all the participating countries to take to the stage, but the atmosphere was a jolly one nevertheless, with bars and restaurants packed long into the night and the town benefitting hugely from the influx of enduro supporters.



Lucas Dolfing and Robin Nijkamp of Team Holland



Security?

As the event neared its beginning the security was stepped up and every vehicle entering and leaving the paddock had to be checked, unfortunately these measures did not prevent disaster from happening. Just days before the scrutineering (*technical inspection*) got underway, several competitors suffered a huge blow to their chances of success. Team West Sweden had an entire van stolen from their hotel car park – including all their tools, their kit, and worst of all, five of their race bikes. For them, the event would be over before it had started unless they could scramble together new gear and bikes. They weren't the only victims of crime, with two more bikes being reported stolen and several vans broken into.

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2017 ISDE

WATSON

RUST ENDURO

One team manager told RUST: *"My minibus was parked at the hotel overnight, I thought it would be pretty safe there, but somebody smashed the windows and it looked like they'd tried to hotwire it. But they must have left in a hurry because, thankfully, they failed to notice the brand new Airoh helmets in the back!"*

Unfortunately, these occurrences seem to be happening more and more frequently in paddocks across Europe. When a big event is in town it will inevitably attract those with bad intentions and unfortunately the traditionally kind-hearted enduro community will have to learn how to be less trusting wherever they go.

Into the heat

Days 1 & 2 of the 2017 ISDE saw tests a frankly ridiculous 90km from the paddock, providing a great lap for the riders to tackle but making the timings and distances virtually unmanageable for the fans and media, although with temperatures rising and dust dispersing far and wide, that might have been a blessing in disguise!

Just as in the demi-deserts of Navarra last year, dust became a real safety issue, riders frightened of pushing too hard as they simply couldn't see what lay ahead of them. British youngster Dan Mundell had a shocking revelation on his return to paddock at the end of Day 1: *"I was going along pretty quickly and someone was down in front of me, I didn't*





MUNDELL

see him at all and ran straight over him and his bike!" But Southern Europe at the end of the August is likely to be dry and there's little the organisers can do to prevent the dangerous conditions, despite calls from the competitors to allow a longer time gap between each rider.

Then, as dawn broke on Day 2 of the event there was far more serious news to deal with. British Club Team rider Michael Alty had sadly passed away after succumbing to heat exhaustion towards the end of the opening day. Despite the obvious risks of the sport, it was news no-one expected to hear and the entire paddock was deeply shocked and left questioning how such a loss could happen. The medical crews and gendarmerie had attended the scene promptly, and were later praised by Michael's family for their excellent work, but the punishing 40°C plus heat had overwhelmed the experienced 50 year old. The FIM wrote a press release and



GARCIA



ROBERT



JAMES

2017 ISDE

SANZ



Above: Laia Sanz making the rocks look easy. Top right: Jemma Wilson, the smile says it all... Right: Albin Elowson. Left: Tom Sagar and crew get some relief from the 40 degree heat... Cheers!

RUST ENDURO



the shaken riders were advised on how to protect themselves in the days ahead. At parc ferme at the end of Day 2 they had a medical truck and staff handing out bottles of cold water, yet even some of the youngest and fittest riders in the world were left barely able to drag themselves into the makeshift paddling pools next to the team trucks. It brought it home to everyone that this event, no matter how much people like to complain that it's "too easy," is still among the toughest off-road races in existence.

System failure?

By the third day of racing the level of unrest in the paddock remained high as the attrition rate across classes had risen. The hottest topic both ahead of the race and during it was the FIM's 'four rider' rule. While it initially seemed a practical solution to make the event more accessible to countries and teams with lower budgets and fewer riders to choose from, opinion has shifted in the last couple of years with most of the major players concerned by the ease at which one moment of bad luck for one rider could ruin the race for the entire team. It was something RUST's editor, JB, covered a year ago in issue #16 and again this year in #28, and in this year's race the problem seemed more relevant than ever.

Last year in Spain, Team Australia had planned to build on the victory they had earned amongst the controversy of the Slovakian saga in 2015 (when France was stripped of the win after the FIM jury belatedly disqualified three of their riders for missing a check). But alas Australia lost two riders in quick succession and were



ruled out early on. This year a similar fate was to befall 2016 winners, the USA. Odds-on favourites to win another title, the squad were left in despair as they lost Thad Duvall on Day 1; the Husqvarna rider crashed on the opening test of the day and broke his wrist. Top USA Trophy team members Taylor Robert and Ryan Sipes were left with just one option – fight for the overall individual win, no easy feat.

It seemed extremely cruel that they had travelled so far and trained so hard just to end up fighting it out at the bottom of the world team standings. But they weren't alone, and many other top contenders also lost riders early on; Spain had an appalling Day 2 when the Trophy team lost Cristobal Guerrero to an engine failure and two out of three of their women's team also went crashing out, plummeting an otherwise strong Spanish Trophy squad out of contention and leaving Laia Sanz to battle on alone for individual EW honours. Trophy team Italy also found themselves struggling after Giacomo Redondi had a mechanical nightmare on Day 1, losing 20 minutes, and with it the chance of fighting for victory. Many people are keen to see the rules changed for future events, especially with the notoriously tough terrains of Chile next on the agenda for the ISDE. This year, despite relatively 'easy' tests there was still more than the fair share of mechanical failures and injuries, putting the four-rider teams in jeopardy and making the whole event seem for them a little, well, pointless. Calls for a return to the six-rider squad, or relaxing the rules on re-starts have been made by some members of the paddock. It's a difficult decision; the ISDE should be a test of man and machine and DNFs are part and parcel of running an infamously tough race. But will the FIM run the risk of losing key players in the future if rules are not changed? Much like in EnduroGP, discussions are needed and those in charge may have to listen and make changes before it's too late.

Fight Club

One benefit of the new system though, has been the rise in competitive riders in the Club category. The three-rider teams were, this year, a healthy mix of up-and-coming youngsters and experienced Six Days regulars.





SAGAR



JONES

RUST ENDURO

RUST contributor Tom Sagar decided, after representing Team GB for many years, that it was time to fly the flag for Wales! Along with team-mates Jamie Lewis and Jason Thomas, the trio put in a stellar job all week long, coming out with second place in Club – beaten only by a heavily supported Italian squad of Monni, Facchetti, and Macoritto. The 'Welshies' outrode the likes of USA's Cody Webb, competing in his first ISDE, and SuperEnduro champion Ty Tremaine as well as a raft of strong French Club teams.

By Day 3, the heat had dissipated and the 08:00 starters were shrouded in a chilly mist. This made the brand new tests, all of which were held on grassy fields, slippery and unpredictable.

The assembled crowds were treated to some spectacular sliding from the World's best, and the event finally seemed to be back on its feet following a rough couple of days. Home favourites France extended their lead in Trophy as well as Junior, but the latter had



2017 ISDE

proved to be less than straightforward as Italy, USA, and Sweden all threatened to snatch the Junior crown in the first days of racing. Last year's winners, Team Sweden, came into the event with a formidable line-up including regular EJ frontrunners Albin Elowson and Mikael Persson, but sadly Persson became the second Yamaha DNF on Day 2. The usually upbeat youngster was clearly devastated and although he spent the rest of the week helping his team-mates it was clear to see that he had desperately wanted another ISDE Junior crown. There was drama over in the women's class too as Australia's Jessica Gardiner was forced to ride with a badly broken finger in order to keep the Aussie girls at the top of the ranking. Team USA proved to have some strong new riders in their EW squad but Gardiner's efforts allowed Team Oz, along with the ever-impressive Tayla Jones and Jemma Wilson, to take an outstanding fifth Women's Trophy win.

Crowd fun-ding

By the fourth day things were getting extremely serious as overnight storms and constant rain made the going tricky for everyone. The tests were located around Uzerche, a town famed for its enduro history where the French championship often races. The excitement among the fans was palpable. Hundreds of bikes rode out to the picturesque old town and it was an incredible sight to see the spectators riding along the same road sections as the riders, all safely controlled by the local police, leaving the competitors free to enjoy their surroundings.



RUST ENDURO

WATSON & SANDERS

SEALEY & SORECA

What surprised us at RUST most of all, however, was the way the locals turned out in every tiny village along the route. We had never before seen so many 'casual' spectators so keen to catch a glimpse of enduro's elite. Grannies and tiny children waited, dotted along the pavements, a camera in one hand and a French flag in the other. They had no intention of going to the tests, but for them, like in the Tour de France, it was enough just to see the riders pass through. It added an extremely welcoming atmosphere to this year's ISDE.

But despite the support and the familiarity of Day 4's stunning tests, there was drama in

store for Team France. Christophe Nambotin began to drop down the order rapidly and although he tried to downplay the issue at the end of the day, it was clear he had injured himself. Another of the 'walking wounded' crew was Australia's Daniel Sanders; the laid-back KTM rider ended Day 4 in severe pain following a knock to his shoulder. He was unable to change his tyres and needed help to push his bike into parc ferme. It was huge news for the event; two high-profile riders from the two top teams in the ISDE rankings were down, but crucially, determined not to be out.

"I'm trying not to think about it," said Sanders. "They told me they saw some bone sticking out, but I told them to strap it up; we're not giving up now!"

Young Turks

These stories of heroics crop up frequently in the ISDE, and it's always inspiring to see. But every year the event also unearths new and exciting talent, or simply shows how strong the current crop of youngsters are. In 2017, Josep Garcia built on the phenomenal form he's had all season, and although the Spaniard can now almost be counted as a 'Senior' at 20 years of age, he once again shocked and surprised Six Days fans. On home turf last year Garcia topped the E1 class and finished third overall, and despite having the World Enduro 2 title to consider this year, he 'scratched' two days of racing, snatched first in E1 once again, and went one better to finish second overall.

Other EnduroGP regulars such as Albin Elowson and Davide Soreca also impressed on France's fast tests, the Junior pair mixed it



2017 ISDE

up with the 'big boys' to place in the top 15 overall, as well as ninth and fifth in their capacity classes.

Over at Team GB, two young riders were showing that the British talent pool is far from drying out, Dan Mundell and Joe Wootton were keeping Nathan Watson on his toes as top Brit. Mundell, whose style is often scarily close to the limit, revelled in making his 125 sing on every single test that was thrown at him, finishing the ISDE 13th in class. And Wootton had a spectacular return to form that took even him by surprise! After a spate of extremely nasty injuries, which including breaking his leg on Day 1 of the Slovakian Six Days in 2015, many had forgotten what the quiet 22 year old is capable of, but with ninth in class and 24th overall, this year's race has proven that Wootton has plenty to offer.

One step down and the World Enduro's Youth Cup riders were shining bright too with newly-crowned champion Andrea Verona posting some quick scratch times despite bike issues early in the week. Verona's Youth rival, Ruy Barbosa, carried out an incredible feat under the radar of most media and fans. The Chilean switched from his usual TX 125 Husqvarna to a TE 300 for this year's ISDE, and seemed unfazed by the monumental difference in capacity and horsepower: *"I'm always a bit wild on the bike anyway"* he shrugged. *"Yeah, it's a lot more powerful but I like it and I know I can go faster!"* He did just that, and took an incredible sixth in the E3 class, and 21st overall.

In the past these young stars would have been putting themselves firmly in the shop



GREEN



FLOCKHART

window. After all, Matthew Phillips made his world enduro debut following an impressive ISDE stint. But as EnduroGP appears to be shrinking by the day, fewer teams will mean fewer opportunities for these ambitious and promisingly pacey riders, hailing from every corner of the world. Just a few years ago you could go to the Six Days and pick out a handful of riders you reckoned would go on to enduro stardom and potential world titles; it was the ultimate test – if they could remain on time, on pace, and out of trouble for six whole days, they were likely to have the wherewithal needed for world class racing.

2017 ISDE

This year we're left with a sinking feeling, what does the future hold for these refreshingly keen kids? Will they ever be able to follow in the footsteps of their heroes?

Vive La France!

As the end of the week drew nearer it seemed that France had the better of everyone, but there were still more unexpected shake-ups in the standings. After their bad luck with Redondi earlier in the week, things went from bad to worse for Trophy team Italy as Thomas Oldrati broke his arm and ruled the squad out. As ever, consistency was going to be key and one team were able to prove the point very well indeed: Team GB came into the event with a line-up far removed from the ideal of

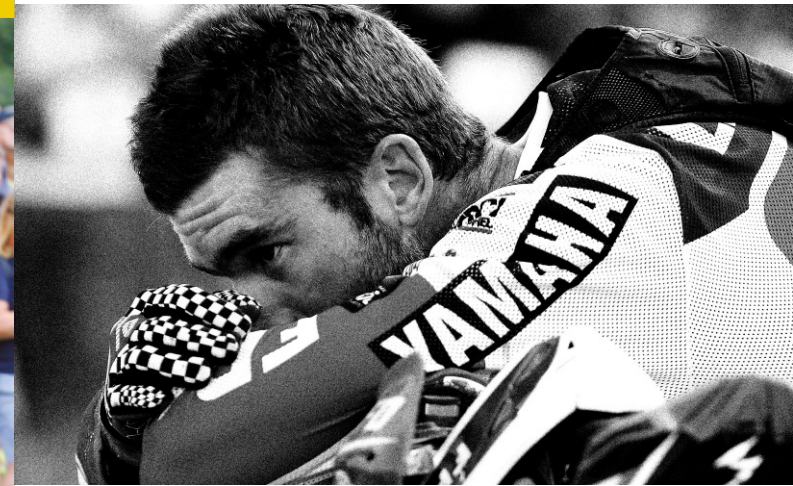


RUST ENDURO

Watson, Holcombe, McCanney, McCanney. The mid-season placing of the event left some riders frightened of damaging their title chances in EnduroGP. It's fair to say that no-one expected the slightly inexperienced squad of largely national-level riders to be able to challenge for the podium (as *Team GB did last year, finishing in second place, just three and a half minutes behind winners USA*). But incredibly, due to their perseverance and consistency the Brit Boys brought home a very respectable fifth place in World and fourth in Junior.



CHARLIER




LARRIERU

Heading into the rain and chilly winds on the penultimate night of the Six Days to check out the 'Final Cross' it was difficult to imagine how they would fit the estimated 15,000 fans into the limited spectator areas but, as is often the case, this last act of the 2017 ISDE was both exciting and enthralling despite France's huge lead in the Trophy category.



A farewell to Michael Alty

Before the final races got underway the legendary Purple Helmets crew paid an emotional tribute to their rider Michael Alty and after a minute's silence the guys started their engines and carried out one of their most daring routines yet, including a NOS powered lap round the motocross track.

Having met Michael at the recent Trefle Lozerien, here at RUST we experienced first hand the humour and the kindness of Michael and so can empathise with the feelings of loss and sadness felt by his family and friends. He will be missed. 



2017 ISDE

Each heat in the final cross produced some close racing, especially among the former motocrossers littered throughout the ISDE field. An E1 class battle between Josep Garcia and Ryan Sipes ended in spectacular fashion as the Spaniard, tired of sitting behind his American rival took a leap of faith; hitting a jump hard and flying right over Sipes' head – this was, rightfully, greeted with rapturous applause from the rapidly building crowd.

In the Junior category there was a score to be settled and the Italian squad of Davide Soreca, Andrea Verona and Matteo Cavallo pushed hard in the final cross test to try and beat the dominant French team comprising Anthony Geslin, Jeremy Miroir and Hugo Blanjoue. This added a bit of spice to proceedings but in the end it was the home favourites who snatched Junior glory, by just 15 seconds. Italian Team Manager Andrea Balboni explained: *"It's hard to lose by such a small margin after 110km of test walking, seven hours a day on the bike, and six days of racing."* But Italy's failure to spoil the party for the French meant an intense and joyous atmosphere was enveloping the ISDE paddock and the town of Brive.

Yes, they had done it. France had won at home, in both categories, and restored order for those still stinging from the Slovakian disqualification drama. As usual, however, there were whisperings in the paddock and the word *"cheats"* was unfortunately bandied about once again. It has to be admitted that the tests were, indeed, tailored to the French skill-set with the vast majority being flat field cross tests, but who can blame them for that? Harder to swallow was the fact that Loic Larrieu had a one minute penalty which he incurred on Day 1 removed by the jury a couple of days later following an appeal. But he wasn't the only one. And France were able to win by 6 minutes and 14 seconds, so with or without the penalty it would have made little difference.



NAMBOTIN



SEALEY



GARCIA

These sour grapes and lack of sportsmanship thankfully did not extend to the podium and by the time the riders finally made their entrance on stage, after seemingly endless speeches from everyone, from the mayor to the cleaner, they were already slightly merry on free beer. Finland, Australia and France took their places and drank in the incredible atmosphere. The sea of international fans had gone all-out to show their support and the sheer noise as the Marseillaise rang out was truly magical.

2017 ISDE

RUST ENDURO



2017 ISDE

From tragedy to triumph

Former MXGP rider Christophe Charlier was enjoying his first ever ISDE from the top step, alongside Jeremy Tarroux – who was thrilled to return to top level racing following his exit from World Enduro a couple of years ago. And Loic Larrieu had the honour of celebrating not only a team victory but also the much coveted Scratch award – the fastest rider of all. But perhaps the most heroic of all was Christophe Nambotin, the veteran has suffered his fair share of setbacks this season and his Day 4 hand injury could have left him dejected and out of the race. But he fought on for two full days with a broken hand, the stoical champion played down his injury until the very last. As we at RUST went to congratulate him, it became clear just what a mammoth task he had achieved for the sake of his country. Have you ever blown up a rubber glove? That was size of his right hand.

This year's event started with unspeakable tragedy, but ended with an incredible sense of camaraderie. Australia stood next to France on the podium and genuinely celebrated with them, a far cry from the punch-ups and petulance of two years ago. And, if anything, this is the biggest success story of 2017 – France may not have won on the organisational front and the tests may not have been the most varied, but they went above and beyond when it came to succeeding in perhaps the most important thing of all: reestablishing a mutual respect between riders and joyous celebration from thousands of fans, from hundreds of different countries, brought together by a love of this glorious sport. Bravo, France!



RUST ENDURO

INTERNATIONAL SIX DAYS ENDURO 2017 BRIVE, FRANCE

TEAMS

WORLD TROPHY

- 1 France 12:59:38.23
- 2 Australia 13:05:52.26
- 3 Finland 13:08:50.35

WORLD JUNIOR TROPHY

- 1 France 9:55:04.10
- 2 Italy 9:55:19.63
- 3 USA 9:57:07.00

WOMEN'S TROPHY

- 1 Australia 7:08:04.01
- 2 USA 7:14:50.63
- 3 France 7:34:40.74

CLUB TEAM

- 1 Italy 10:00:16.79
- 2 Wales 10:08:30.52
- 3 SRT Offroad (USA) 10:09:59.96

RIDERS

E1

- 1 Josep Garcia Montana (KTM – ESP) 3:12:23.99
- 2 Ryan Sipes (HVA – USA) 3:13:27.64
- 3 Davide Guarnieri (Honda – ITA) 3:13:35.82

E2

- 1 Loic Larrieu (Yamaha – FRA) 3:11:45.68
- 2 Daniel Milner (KTM – AUS) 3:13:17.54
- 3 Alex Salvini (Beta – ITA) 3:14:40.39

E3

- 1 Taylor Robert (KTM – USA) 3:13:05.64
- 2 Jaume Betriu (KTM – ESP) 3:14:52.78
- 3 Daniel Sanders (KTM – AUS) 3:17:15.55

EW

- 1 Laia Sanz (KTM – ESP) 3:28:52.18
- 2 Tayla Jones (HVA – AUS) 3:30:26.50
- 3 Brandy Richards (KTM – USA) 3:35:21.68



RUST

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www.youtube.com/watch?v=KbeuWgzWcyQ

TRAVIS PASTRANA BACKFLIPS BETWEEN TWO THAMES BARGES

Watch Travis backflip over the 75ft gap between two Thames barges to publicise the Nitro Circus and makes it look easy...


www.youtube.com/watch?v=6hXljHH9K58

ACTION FROM THE MOTOCROSS DES NATIONS 2017

Some of the action from the 2017 Motocross des Nations from Matterly Basin in Hampshire...


www.youtube.com/watch?v=sj-5xW_-x-l

RUST TESTER TOM SAGAR RIDES THE 2018 HUSQVARNA TEis

Multiple European and British enduro champion Tom Sagar tests the Husqvarna TE250i and TE300i for RUST Magazine in British Columbia, Canada...


www.youtube.com/watch?v=CXtl8s3xA98

JB RIDES THE LATEST 2018 MODELS FROM BETA

JB finds the latest Betas to be lighter, more powerful and easier to use. Which must makes them better. Shouldn't it? Read the feature to find out...


www.youtube.com/watch?v=z6KdM5w8GWO

2018 KTM 250/300 EXC TPI FUEL-INJECTED TWO STROKES

Jochi Sauer KTM of-road product development manager explains the story behind the development of these revolutionary two-strokes...


www.youtube.com/watch?v=4v6loSJl4jM

2018 KTM 250/300 EXC TPI FUEL-INJECTED TWO STROKES

Ride along with JB on the latest KTM TPI machines and hear his verdict on these Euro Stage 4 compliant motorcycles...


www.youtube.com/watch?v=8516kr_og58

NEW FOR 2018 GAS GAS EC300 RIDDEN AND RATED IN GIRONA

JB rides the latest offering from the recently resurrected Gas Gas company with new frame and suspension and many more upgrades...


www.youtube.com/watch?v=SEjSqECe6sA

FIRST RIDE OF THE BRAND NEW FANTIC 250 CASA

JB takes a spin aboard the new 250 Casa from Fantic and speaks to Dean Clements the UK Fantic importer about future plans and other new models...


www.youtube.com/watch?v=uL7_ebar560

WE GET TO RIDE THE 2017 SHERCO 300 SEF-R

Join JB for a ride on board the Sherco 300 SEF-R to find out if the EnduroGP winning model is actually clubman friendly or a bit of a handful...


www.youtube.com/watch?v=xH0E2Ra1TL4

2016 WELSH TWO-DAY ENDURO THE MOVIE

JB rides the Welsh and lived to tell the tale... just. The trials and the tribulations all here, in glorious colour. Enjoy...


www.youtube.com/watch?v=7_EGuentg3s

2017 HUSQVARNA LAUNCH

The 2017 Husqvarna enduro bikes, ridden and rated by RUST's Jon Bentman... Check out the full review in the 2017 Husqvarna Special Edition at rustsports.com.


www.youtube.com/watch?v=RwK49cZ4yys

2017 BETA LAUNCH

The 2017 Beta enduro bikes, ridden and rated by RUST's Jon Bentman... Check out the full review in the 2017 Beta Special Edition at rustsports.com.


www.youtube.com/watch?v=aOK02x9rel0

2017 KTM LAUNCH

Warren Malschinger and Josh Snowden go to Portugal to ride the extensively redesigned 2017 KTM enduro range...


www.youtube.com/watch?v=HQBn2qbfopY

THE TRAIL RIDERS FELLOWSHIP

Read the story behind the ethos of the Trail Riders Fellowship in RUST Magazine Issue 5 available FREE on the website www.rustsports.com


www.youtube.com/watch?v=_L8ePyl2E4M

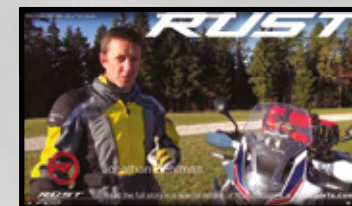
2016 V-STROM 650XT

Seve Hackett explains the revisions to the Suzuki 650 V-Strom in order to make it more suitable for all-out adventure riding...


www.youtube.com/watch?v=yriJw_FU910

2016 YAMAHA WR450F

JB tests the new Yamaha WR450F in the hills of Andalusia and finds that it's packing some heat and demands a good deal of respect...


www.youtube.com/watch?v=9oHMTpB0RNw

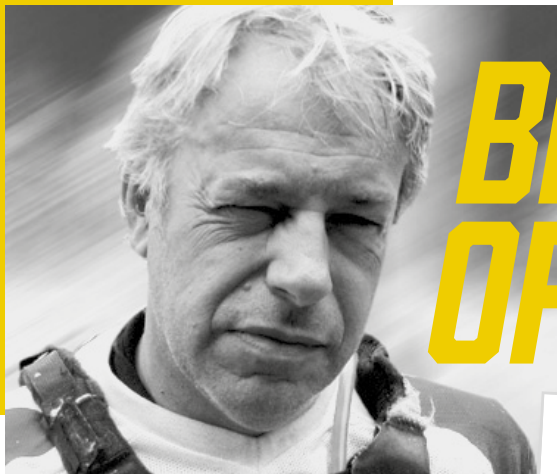
2016 HONDA AFRICA TWIN

Exclusive first test of the new Honda CRF1000L Africa Twin... Read the story in the RUST Magazine Special Edition at www.rustsports.com


www.youtube.com/watch?v=ntK07l63tUa

HONDA CB500X ADVENTURE

Jon gets an exclusive ride on the Rally Raid Products latest adaptation of the CB500X for the adventure riders out there...



BLUE OVER ORANGE?

Our trail guru loves his Yamaha WR250F, but a recent ride on his KTM 350EXC-F made him question its virtues...
by Chris Evans



KTM and French tree - as seen on Facebook

THE OTHER DAY I posted a photo on Facebook of my KTM 350 perched precariously on a fallen tree with a caption along the lines of, 'not always easy being out on your own making new routes'. Naturally I was expecting an avalanche of sympathy and solidarity. Rather to my surprise, instead I got comments roughly divided into two camps. Those that had assumed that I'd got fed up with my Yamaha, seen the light and returned to the orange fold and those that saw me riding an EXC again as a betrayal of everything they held dear. Sadly it was all a bit more prosaic than that...

Clocking up the sort of kilometrage I do in the year it is absolutely essential to run two bikes, as I can't

afford to be bikeless and need a solution if one needs urgent attention. Down in the Dordogne, running through a new route prior to its October inauguration I was on a tight schedule, so that when the WR was side-lined with

collapsing front wheel bearings, rather than fix it, I simply dragged the KTM out of the van. So no betrayal, and no volte-face. But nevertheless the perfect opportunity to compare two different brands back-to-back over around 500 kilometres of mixed going.

Not the usual measure...

Now before I get into my impressions I should explain that riding on your own, checking and modifying a route, is a very different exercise to racing a hare and hounds back in the UK. What you're looking for is comfort, reliability and ease of use. And I have to admit that in these departments the KTM came out looking rather good. Firstly the engine

is much more user friendly for this kind of thing. Unsurprisingly, with 100 extra cc it has a lot more torque than its smaller rival and so is more relaxing to ride at poodle-about-speeds. It is also more comfy. Because of my slightly smaller than average inside leg measurement I've fitted the EXC with a low seat, straight out of the Austrian brand's extensive Hard Parts catalogue, and although I never thought I'd say this about a KTM seat, it is a considerably more welcoming perch than the WR's standard unit. This would appear





Road-book Enduro Tours in France

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13/14/15 June	Dordogne
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counter intuitive given that the lower seat is achieved by the simple expedient of using less foam. It does however make the seat wider at the contact area and therefore more comfortable.

It also highlights another area where the KTM brand is stronger. As standard the WR is very tall and after much reflection I have lowered it by shortening the shock. It is still taller than the standard KTM with a low seat and I'd like to lower it a little more – except that unlike KTM, Yamaha don't actually sell a lower seat for their bike.

The other area where the KTM scores highly is in terms of track side maintenance. With no assistance van handy I'm obviously forced to take a minimum of spares with me and that minimum is considerably smaller when you are riding a KTM. Virtually everything you'd attempt to fix in the middle of the woods can be done with the standard KTM tool kit and sadly the same can't be said for its Japanese rival. And while we're running the Yamaha down, the cable clutch is starting to do my head in and was indirectly responsible for me frying a clutch. Plus it is much less easy to haul over fallen trees. Partly because it is a tad heavier and partly because it doesn't have any handy hand grabs.

The ace card

So you're thinking I'll be selling the Yamaha shortly and buying yet another 350. Well no, and for one very good reason. I simply love the way the WR handles. Now this is a personal thing and I suspect depends very much on how and where you ride, but as France is quite a lot drier than the UK and I tend to ride quite a lot in the south, where its stonier, the Yamaha just wins out every time. Accomplished package though it is, every 30 minutes or so the KTM will deflect off a root or rock and for a nano-second or two my heart will be in my mouth. Maybe if I was a more accomplished rider this wouldn't happen, or it wouldn't bother me, but as I'm just a very mere mortal it does and means that despite its shortcomings I vanned away from the Dordogne with the firm intention of buying a second WR when the season has ended and it is time to move one of my bikes along.

The question is which WR, cos of all the positives I miss about the KTM, the engine is almost certainly the biggest. It just seems inappropriate to be revving the nuts off your bike when you're out trail riding, so I prefer to ride in the torque and the little WR doesn't have much of that. I've messed around with the Power Commander, trying different maps off the net and from a very helpful reader by the name of Chris Hall but I haven't found the low down grunt I've been looking for.

When aftermarket goes great...

So I was thinking a WR450 might be the solution. It wouldn't be great for the more technical routes I run but for the easier trips it could be just the ticket. As an added bonus, most of the consumables are the same as the 250, which would simplify managing the spares stock.

Then, the very weekend I got home a local trail rider stopped by my place for a coffee with his latest acquisition – a WR250. Now I like to keep things as standard as possible, whereas this bloke loves a bit of bling, but he nevertheless persuaded me to have a go on his bike and I was absolutely staggered by how much better it was and by how much he'd managed to rectify the standard bike's shortcomings. The thing you noticed straight off was how much grunt the bike had with an Akrapovic pipe on it. Now I absolutely loath aftermarket exhausts – they are a nightmare for anyone trying to run responsible trail bike holidays – but this one wasn't any louder than the standard pipe and in addition to making the bike much more torquey, actually reduced the rather tiresome induction noise coming from the high mounted air filter.

The second thing that really blew me away was the Rekluse clutch. I've tried a few of these before but they never appear to be working properly and the owners of the bikes in question always seemed to be messing around with them. This one worked perfectly and neatly sidestepped the clutch cable problem. But what swung it for me was the suspension. I thought my standard set up was pretty unbeatable but he'd had his seen to by a Kayaba technician and it was the stuff of magic carpets.

In a perfect world you shouldn't have to spend 2000 quid/euros/dollars extra on an already expensive bike to get it how you want it and what my mate had done didn't address all the issues, but it was without doubt the best bike I'd ever ridden. He's thinking his next investment will be a 300 kit developed by French outfit Les 2 Roues. It entails boring and stroking the motor and is unsurprisingly not cheap. I've told him to go elsewhere if he ever goes ahead with the conversion. His coffee stops are just working out too expensive for my tastes...

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We could have named this feature 'we were kings', or 'once were warriors' for this is a story of Rick and Charlie – both now the upside of 60 – revisiting the scene of Charlie's past glories. Taking a couple of old dirt bikes and asking whether the old adage is true – 'the older I get, the faster I was...'

Words: Rick Kemp Pictures: JB & Rick Kemp

CIRCUIT DES PYRÉNÉES

Revisited



THE CIRCUIT DES PYRÉNÉES was last held on the weekend of 21–22 June 1986. On that occasion the event was brought to a premature halt by members of ETA (*Euskadi Ta Askatasuna*), the Basque separatist movement, firing on the competitors. On 8 April this year, ETA disclosed to the French Police the whereabouts of its remaining weapons and explosives, said to be 190 firearms, several thousand rounds of ammunition and three tonnes of high explosives. So we figured it was safe to return.

ETA was, perhaps inadvertently, responsible for the restoration of democracy and the Spanish monarchy. In 1973, the separatists targeted Franco's appointed successor, Luis Carrero Blanco. They dug a tunnel

under the road that he used daily to drive to church and packed it with explosives. Apparently Blanco's car cleared a five-storey building. His death left the way open for the exiled Prince Juan Carlos to return.

ETA's first victim was the head of internal security in San Sebastian in 1968 and its last claimed victim was another French policeman, shot in 2010. Safe to say, then, that ETA didn't hold the police in high regard. That the Circuit des Pyrénées was organised jointly by the Motorcycle Union of Pau and the National Police Motorcycle Club probably didn't help its cause. The (*British*) Metropolitan Police had been invited to field a team over several years, so many UK-based teams and individual riders became associated with the event.

CIRCUIT DE PYRÉNÉES

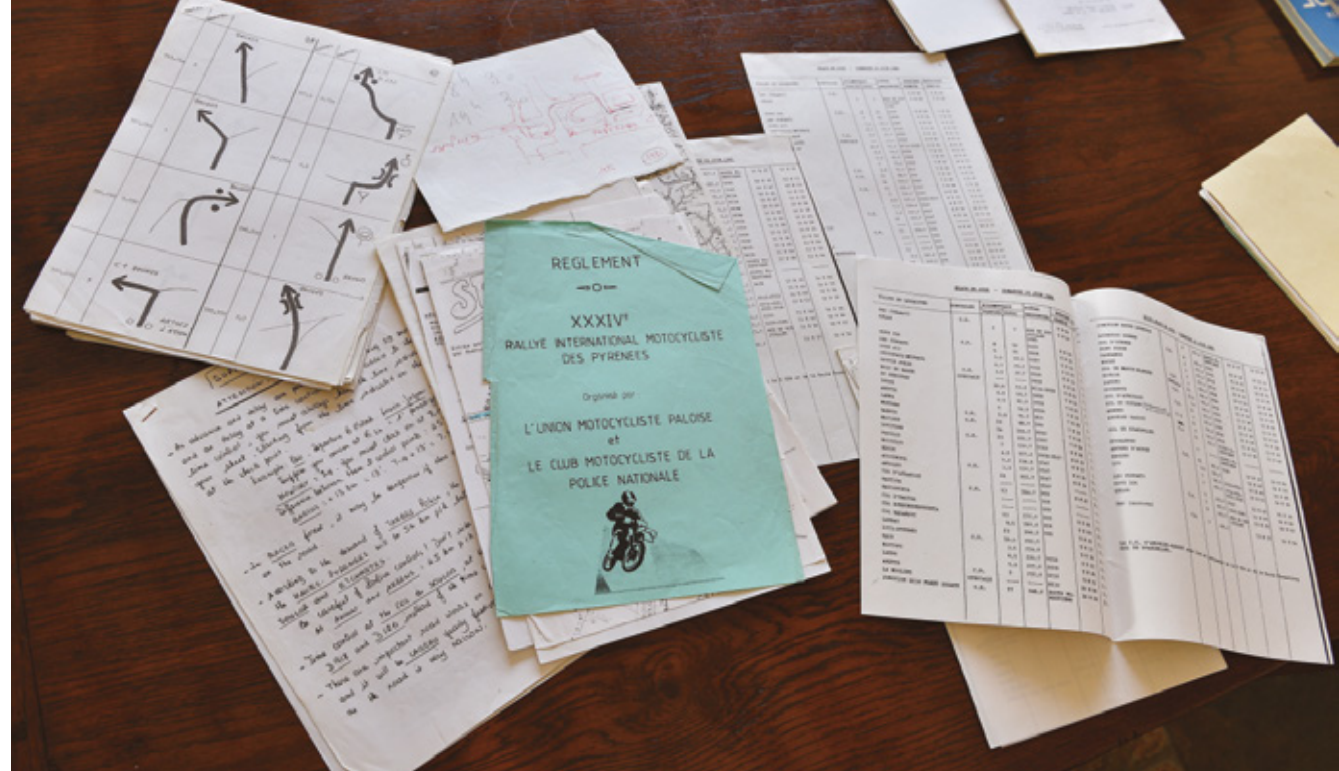
One of those riders was Charlie Harris, an old mate – we worked and played together in the days of Which Bike? magazine's Enduro Team. In fact, as my off-road riding mentor, he was responsible for me being known as 'The Gimp'. Some time last year (2016), we were sitting around talking rubbish, as one does, when Charlie pointed out that it was 30 years since the Circuit des Pyrénées had last been run – he knew this because he'd come across a folder at home with all the original maps and course notes. Cue 'lightbulb' moment. We had all the basic information with which to retrace the route, so why don't we? Back in the old days, you'd just chuck the bike in the back of your van, or preferably someone else's, and off you'd go. Braver folk competing on bigger bikes were known to have ridden them down to Pau in France where the event was based.

Allez, au Citroën

Talking of travel, what were we going to use and how were we going to get there? In true Top Gear fashion, the producer says you have a budget of £2000 each to buy something suitable. We would be facing mountain roads and trails, so to make it easy on ourselves, perhaps something light, nimble and powerful enough to drive out of sharp bends enthusiastically and squirt along the straight bits to the next turn, yet would not be a handful on the loose stuff. The perfect description of an enduro bike, wouldn't you say? In the end we managed to come up with a Honda XR250R 2000 vintage and a Kawasaki KDX220 from 2003.

Pre-event preparation consisted of an oil and filter change for the Honda and chains, sprockets, brake pads and tyres all round. Many thanks to BikeTyreStore and to Bike-Seal, whose puncture prevention solution was applied to all the tubes. The transport of choice was Charlie's Citroën Dispatch van – being a Francophile (*absolutely nothing to do with under-age French girls*), having ridden in France on and off for most of his competitive life and having lived there for some years, he'd got the transport thing nailed. Remove the rear seats and there's enough room for two dirt bikes, tools, spares, riding gear as well as evening attire. Counting heavily in the Dispatch's favour is that its dimensions qualify it for car rates on Euro Tunnel.

Having split the journey with an overnight stop in Poitiers, we arrived in Pau in time to try and persuade the Office du Tourisme that as we were going to encourage more visitors to the town by our activities, we should be extended the courtesy of five-star accommodation



CIRCUIT DE PYRÉNÉES

with secure parking for our vehicle. We failed. However, the nice mademoiselle did make helpful suggestions and book us in at the Hôtel Central, which has its own secure parking.

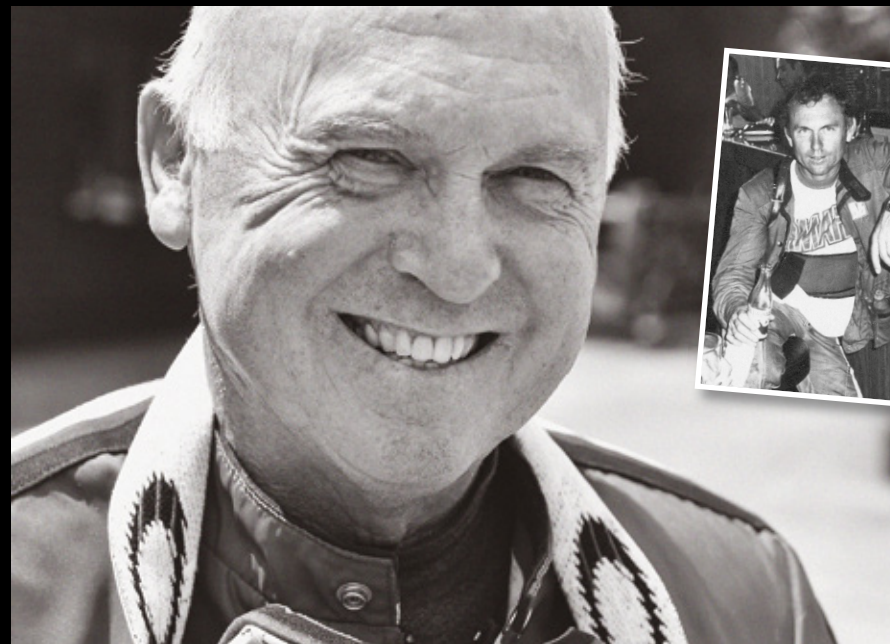
Les trois itinéraires

The Rally in 1986 had three routes, all beginning and ending in Pau. On the Saturday there was a night loop of 70 miles with the first machines away at 23.00. Then, on the Sunday the main event kicked off at 6.00, covering 264 miles including three special tests, and then back to Pau in time for lunch at 13.17. At the same time, for pre-'65 machines there was a shortened 'Vieilles Motos' route of 140 miles.

The times were based on an average speed of 60kph (37.2mph) including the pre-'65s. The regulations also warned that there would be *'unexpected time controls ... to verify that competitors don't exceed the average speed by more than 33%'*! The classes comprised 125cc, 175cc, 250cc, 500cc, over 500cc and sidecars. The cups awarded were many and various, more than 30 in a field of 150 competitors, and included one for the first French competitor – civilian or Police – in the overall classification. You almost expected there to be a cup for the first Velosolex with rider wearing a beret and a string of onions round his neck. You can also see why it was targeted by ETA, as in every class there is a separate cup for Police or Army. Incidentally, Charlie must have been on the pace as he only suffered gunshot damage to his rear mudguard and number plate.

So there we were in Pau, with two fettled bikes and a load of maps, some with handwritten course notes. For instance, on the night route: *'between Lasseure and Belair 2km GRAVEL on 2 sharp corners, leaving Ribenacq GRAVEL for approx. 4 km'*. This was in pitch black, there was no rural street lighting back then, and the lights on enduro bikes aren't exactly ideal for seeing with on a straight road, let alone mountain twisties. Fact: thanks to age-related macular degeneration (AMD), in the dark a 60-year-old needs twice as much light (*lumens value*) to be able to see what a 16-year-old can. As both Charlie and myself have had a bus pass for several years, we carried out a risk assessment on this particular section and thought we'd give it a miss due to the high probability of death. In case you're wondering, unlike most events today, competitors had the opportunity to ride the course the day before, hence the course notes.





A COMPETITIVE LIFE

Charlie "Boy" Harris

HIS FIRST BIKE was £15 worth of 197cc, 3-speed, clapped-out rigid James circa 1950, Charlie was 15 years old. This was followed by a very second-hand BSA C15T which Charlie's father, an ex car trials competitor and car repair business proprietor, spent most of his spare time trying to keep running. However, Harris collected his first novice award on this bike and was beginning to master the discipline.

The BSA was traded in for a Greeves 250cc 24TE and by this time Harris was a messenger boy on the London Evening Standard based in the City offices. In order to make the HP payments on the Greeves he couldn't afford to commute by train so the Greeves was pressed into service. Harris recalls, "I rode the Greeves to work every day and at the weekends in trials. I parked it outside the Bank of England, never locked it or washed it off and it was never stolen."





As far as we were concerned, of the two daylight options left, and given that our machines were no longer state of the art and nor were their pilots, the pre-65 route seemed the most appropriate. In fact, the Vieilles Motos route includes the same special tests of Bois du Bager, La Mouline and Col de Marie Blanche as well as all the forestry roads but less road work.

6.00 grand départe – not quite

Not for us the roaring crowds of mainly up-all-nighters of 30 years ago, as we pulled out of the Place de Verdun at 7.40 and down Rue Marca to the Pont du 14 Juillet. Instead, it was a motley collection of probably half-asleepers waiting for buses to get in to work and young women in hi-viz overalls with brooms, trying to tidy the streets that paved our way out of Pau and up towards the mountains.

The Greeves served Harris very well for more than two years. He was fourth in the Southern Experts and the following weekend was the Archer Trophy Trial, a major event of the trials season. Gordon Jackson was taking part having just returned from winning the Scottish Six Days famously with just a single mark lost (a feat repeated this year by Dougie Lampkin). Harris was determined to give it his all and in the final count, though Jackson had the fewest marks lost, the young Harris came a close second. The difference was Harris had to ride his bike home.

The following day he had a phone call from Bert Thorn of Comerfords the nation's top off-road dealer in its day and who had let him have the bike at a good price in the first place. Would he like to help out with a Greeves promotion over the weekend seeing as how he was doing pretty well on the 24 TE. One thing led to another and by the end of the weekend he'd accepted a job in the Motorcycle News advertising department. *"How could I refuse? I had a mortgage, two small children, a beautiful wife and no job."*

Harris also had some good wins on the Greeves including riding in the Scottish Six Days Team and getting a special first-class mention and award.

After Greeves, Harris started a 12-year relationship with Montesa as a development rider for what eventually became the Montesa Cota range. During this time Harris rode all over the continent and even had a ride in a round of the Australian National Championship to show off the Montesa. He ended up fifth in the European Trials Championship the equivalent of the World Champs today.

He rode many different makes of bike to success in both trials and motocross, the latter included an MDS 250 Greeves and a Challenger as well as twin-port CZ 250. He had some great results for Brian Leask riding a Yamaha TY175. But perhaps the sweetest wins were onboard a Kawasaki KT250 which Harris was helping develop for Bob Gollner. He won the Southern Experts from Sammy Miller and next came the Selborne Solo Inter-Centre Trial, the venue was home to Miller and the Honda works team and they were using it to showcase the new Honda TL360. Unfortunately their fireworks were well and truly pissed on by a Kawasaki KT250 ridden by one C. Harris.

Incidentally, the Circuit des Pyrenees isn't the only time that Harris has been shot at, it also happened once in the former East Germany – they were trying to scare him off. It didn't work.





We had printed off and loaded the turn-by-turn road book from 1986, which was positioned on the Kawasaki as it mounted on the handlebar brace – the Honda had a fat bar with no brace. We soon abandoned the road map in favour of '*Villes ou Localities*', which provided us with the names of the towns and the road numbers to get there, and also included such road book info as total and interim mileages, time checks and check points.

We decided to make our first stop after 30km at Seignacq-Meyracq on the D934, where a handy trig-point told us we were 577 metres above sea level. Over a cup of coffee Charlie said that the place names and events were beginning to come back to him – after all, he had ridden the event five times and spent numerous additional days on two wheels and four scouting the route. Cue wobbly fade flashback to a younger, fitter Charlie Harris who, with his trials and motocross



experience, was a very competent enduro rider. Back then all the two-day national championship enduros featured teams from both the armed forces and police.

"The Metropolitan Police contacted me because their team performance was, frankly, pretty pathetic. I was asked to give them a bit of training. It felt a bit odd telling a load of coppers what to do. It felt even stranger when I was co-opted into the team for that year, and had to stand on a box for the official team photograph."

Taking stock of the first 30km we concluded that, apart from the architecture, the morning rush hour could've been Croydon with extra garlic and better air quality. With the benefit of hindsight Charlie pointed out that the roads were better surfaced, but there was a lot more traffic and the biggest difference of all was that there were no police at every junction, stopping the traffic and waiving you through. Actually, doing even one time-check clean would be virtually impossible. But we would see how things panned out.



THE BIKES

2003 Kawasaki KDX220SR and
2000 Honda XR250R

DESPITE THEIR AGES both of these bikes are more than up to the job and way better than the enduro bikes available 30 years ago when the Circuit des Pyrenees was last run (*discuss*). Their similar specifications on paper belie the fact that they are chalk and cheese when it comes to riding. There are the usual two-stroke v four-stroke differences when it comes to power delivery and in the case of our KDX it wasn't standard, from new it had been treated to an aftermarket exhaust and a heavier flywheel. What overall effect this had on the power we'd be hard pushed to tell without a dyno but one might assume that they could be self cancelling depending on what else might have been done to the motor. Standard power is weighted in the KDX's favour, 36.8hp to the XR's 30hp. The KDX gets it with in the dry weight category too but surprisingly only by three kilos.



Trente ans est une longue période

From Seignacq-Meyracq it was on to Louvie-Juzon and the first time-check, then west on the D918 to the Bois du Bager, the site of the first special test. The Old Boy reached deep into his memory bank and we were looking for a woodland track, which ran roughly parallel to the road. Thirty years is obviously a long time in forest management – it's a long time full stop – and despite several excursions into the undergrowth (*intentional*) nothing looked quite right. The original track had been more of a forestry road used for timber hauling, and maybe those activities had ceased due to lack of sustainability and the 'bois' had reclaimed it.

This would have been one of the places where an enduro bike obviously would have been an advantage, allowing some time to be made up against the more powerful road bikes on that stage. As Charlie recalls: *"The only places the bigger bikes would really overhaul you were on the longer straights, and there weren't many of them. Of the bikes I rode, the Suzuki PE250 was quick and the Yamaha IT250 in particular was bloody fast. Obviously in this kind of event good brakes were an advantage that enduro bikes didn't really have, so you had to work that*

RUST HERITAGE



Whatever, the KDX is a bloody fast enduro racer with a chassis package well matched to the power. As is often the case, what feels a bit skittish and unsure at lower speeds gets ironed out the faster you go. On the tarmac the Kawasaki can be a handful if you're not paying attention.

The Honda, on the other hand, does everything a bit more sedately; there's only a power band if you ring its neck, the suspension soaks up most obstacles without complaining and, here again, there's not much between the bikes' ground clearances, 25mm more on the KDX at 340mm. The bikes are evenly matched under braking, the KDX's front disc is 10mm larger in diameter.

The biggest difference is in the fuel consumption. The Kawasaki's motor does like a drink while the four-stroke with its Radial Four Valve Combustion (RFVC) head with twin exhaust ports barely sips the stuff. The nine-litre tank will take the Honda much further than the 11 litres of pre-mix provided for on the KDX. Also the KDX has very little in reserve, but we didn't check to see if the fuel tap filter was clear (*which might explain that!*).

Both bikes have a seat height of 920mm and no electric start so if, like Harris, you're vertically challenged, getting started requires some ingenuity particularly with the KDX as the prop stand is attached to the swingarm which rules out that option. In many ways you have to learn how to ride the Kawasaki whereas the Honda is less focused and more forgiving – just right for veteran riders.





much harder. For the French Police honour was at stake – one year they rode Kawasaki GPZ 500s and were very quick but as it's a timed event, everyone's racing the clock and not each other – theoretically."

From the Bois du Bager we pressed on to Arette, then swung south on the D132. Just out of interest, there was a time check at Arette and then another one 17km later, where you leave the D132 on the forestry road in the Forêt d'Issaux. In between is the La Mouline special test of very tight zig-zags, which climb about 1000 metres overall. To average 60kph means that the 17km obviously has to take no longer than 17 minutes. Taking into account sloppy manual timing, we managed times in the mid-20s. Mitigating circumstances included the fact that the special test would have been a closed road, allowing you to make up time on all the corners of which there were many. In all an interesting though ultimately futile exercise, which left me slightly breathless and experiencing some body leakage, even at the cool, higher altitude with all the vents in my Acerbis Adventure suit open.

The forestry road was, by comparison, a joy to take in at a more leisurely pace before joining the D241 at Lourdios-Ichère. Then we rode over the Col d'Ichère, followed by the somewhat rude appearance of the N134, which we left at Escot, about the halfway mark, before taking the D294 en route for the famous Col de Marie-Blanque – at 1035 metres, this is a mere pimple compared with what comes later. The D294 is, today, a hazard. Motorhomes struggle on the ascents with the diesel

variety pumping out particulates as they attempt to overtake aged, wheezing, cyclists trying to emulate their Tour de France heroes. Not to mention old boys on motorcycles trying to...

The best thing about the Col de Marie-Blanque is the sign that prohibits motor cars and bikes from following the track to the very top – it had been shot at and had snapped in half when we got there. The special test was marked off on the road on the steepest part, just to the west of the summit. From here it's a gentle descent to Bielle on the D934 and a straight run to Laruns, where you take the D918 east and climb to Gourette at 1400 metres. At this point came a major disappointment. The 1891-metre Col d'Aubisque was closed and there was no way round that. The promised spectacular climb and views were denied us, so we headed back to Pau to change, shower and sample the delights of the Rue de Pyrénées and small streets full of bars, restaurants and young people enjoying themselves. A hot chocolate can be very comforting at these times, so I'm told.

Une promenade gentil

The next day we drove the Citroën back to Lys, as the Pau morning rush hour had lost its appeal, and unloaded the bikes so as to ride round the other side of the Col d'Aubisque. We had a gentle ride until we got to the enchanting village of Etchartres, where Charlie suggested we turn off to the Col de Spandelles on a forestry road that was part of the main circuit.

CIRCUIT DE PYRÉNÉES

RUST HERITAGE

This was excellent fun, through the trees and the type of terrain these bikes were really built for. We retraced our steps to Etchartres and then headed on up to the other side of the Col d'Aubisque as far as the Col du Soulor, which was reached through lots of tunnels and switchbacks, going from bright sun to black in literally the blink of an eye, which could cause a few problems under competition conditions. And that was pretty much that, so we headed back to the van.

Apart from being shot at, which Charlie only discovered after the event, there were other local hazards to contend with namely the removal of road signs. *"After a while,"* said Charlie, *"you could see the tell-tale signs – lots of tyre skid marks in the road where riders were unsure of the route."* Charlie reckoned that if he used our time as a sighting lap, he could probably still be on the pace – yeah, right mate.

We had a great time in the Pyrénées. The roads are amazing, and even if you're not trying to retrace some old event, just go to Pau, head south and pick up the signs for Espagne – you can't go far wrong.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Bike-Seal

When you're planning any trip, holiday or adventure on two wheels there's one thing that will stop you dead in your tracks and that's a puncture. Granted, there plenty of products on the market designed to rescue this situation, some work better than others. If you've got the time and the money you can call your friendly breakdown service and get a new tyre fitted depending where you are at the time, only Sod's Law dictates that these things usually happen in the middle of nowhere. The best idea is to not have a puncture in the first place which is where Bike-Seal comes in. Again, not a unique product area but Bike-Seal is a mechanical process not a chemical one, it's a solution containing aramid fibres and filler particles.



In the event of a puncture, tyre pressure and centrifugal force combine to plug the hole with the fibres and filler and it works on holes up to 15mm diameter. The solution is inert so it doesn't affect any wheel materials, it's eco-friendly and it lasts the life of the tube. The plug is permanent and there are no speed restrictions as with a mousse. It works with tyres or tubes so it's fine for any off-road activity. Comes in 500ml squeeze bottles for £27.50. We were convinced by watching a live product demonstration at Motorcycle Trade Expo, but you can see one at www.bikeseal.com. Oh, and it was originally formulated by NASA for use in space suits, just in case you were wondering.

Contact: 01278671900, enquiry@bikeseal.com

Mitas Tyres

We put the Bike-Seal in the tubes supplied to us for the Mitas tyres by the good folk at BikeTyrestore. We opted for the FIM Enduro tyres Green stripe C-19 90/90-21, EF-07 120/90-18 these are for stones and hard going, with lightweight carcasses. The mileage covered wasn't high but it was all hard acceleration and heavy braking and quite high road speeds in some instances. They turned out to be a good blend of on and off road grip and looked hardly scrubbed in by the end of play.

BikeTyrestore: 0800 281413 for sales and customer service

CIRCUIT DE PYRÉNÉES

Looking back

They say that hindsight is 20/20 and this is particularly true in Charlie's case. He had an eye test in his youth and was told he had perfect visual acuity and would pass the visual test for being a fighter pilot. This obviously stood him in good stead when it came riding off-road motorcycles quickly and precisely. He has ridden against the best in the world at trials and motocross and has, at some stage beaten most of them. *"I had a wife, two kids and a crap job so I was riding every weekend with just the will to win and unlike other top-ten riders, with very little factory support."* In those days the trials bikes had road bike engines and suspension and the old Dunlop four-ply trials tyres were virtually run-flat tyres because of their very stiff sidewalls. Any 'factory' modifications made a considerable difference.

All that experience made him a very quick enduro rider. *"I can only remember having one off in all my years of enduro riding, because of my motocross riding I was used to everything hanging out. In the Circuit des Pyrenees the quickest bike I rode was probably the Yamaha IT250, it was geared up for road use and I can honestly say that I rode that bike as fast as it would go everywhere – you had to, just to stay with the French police who were mainly riding Kawasaki 500 fours. I obviously had the edge on the trails and they would come past me on the road."*

In later years Charlie carried on riding the older bikes in classic events mainly in France where he won the Classic Motocross Championship aged 69 on a 360 Husqvarna. The following year, on a CZ, he had a big accident, not his fault, and during his recovery period he had time to reflect and decided that the will to win had to be reined-in, which effectively meant an end to competitive riding. Now with prescription specs and no longer as fit and agile as he once was, he can look back and conclude that he's been there, done that, got the T-shirt and had a bloody good time in the process, and the record books will stand testament to his success. Perhaps his fondest memories, and this goes for many of the Brit riders of that era, are of riding in France where the crowds and the enthusiasm for the sport was much greater than in the UK. During our drive through France to Pau and back Charlie would point to a place names on signposts and say, *"Won there, beat so and so there, had a fantastic after-race party there..."*





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RUST never sleeps – taken literally in Portugal...

Image: JB

