

INSIDERS TIPS / SURVIVAL GUIDE....Terra Australis 09

Consider/Research such as: Nutrition Advice
Training Schedules/ Tips
Equipment Advice
My experience in the TransRockies and Wildside.

Well I suppose we all generally know in our own odd way what to do, eat, take care etc. So this being a seven day stage MTB race, there might just be something new, then again?

Terra Australis, with a blend of the best parts of two World class MTB events, being the same seven day stages, pairs and categories as TransRockies (without, sleep over in tent city, showering on the back of a truck, lining up for one of the twenty two porta- loo's on offer, no access to recovery meal or a support crew) and with Wildside's, where you provide your own stage accommodation, (for that needed good night's sleep) your recovery food when you need it most, clean dry clothing and gear that's been carried by your support crew.

First off, the need to get yourself and partner, support crew, mtb bike, gear, clothing, recovery/running food and hydration prepared and hope to hell it will sustain you for a seven day event. Think about your last 100k Eduro, it is now seven of those, back to back, talking about being sustainable, one of the most overlooked, out of sight and not talked about, is your bum, with all the training and preparation in the world without looking after your bum you will fail, that means do not ride the next day with a used pair of nicks, ride with a clean pair each day, or at least have four pair of clean nicks and wash them the days in between. TransRockies had a bum doctor, at your first visit he applies this bum potion, sends you off with a small jar of potion and an ice cream stick, yes the ice cream stick is for your team mate to get down and apply it to your bum, and now you are **"bum buddies"**. The potion turns out to be an antiseptic as well as a numbing agent. Perfect for long days of riding.

When partnering in a MTB race, let's say you and your partner have been on one of your six hour training rides, ask yourself did we stay with in talking/ shouting distance of each other, **if yes**, and then you are in good shape, **if no** then difficulties can arise. When the stronger rider pushes on and you are out of sight, then your partner can push themselves into the red zone, by just trying to keep up, (you have just **killed** your partner). If the back rider punctures, breaks a chain, they are left on their own while the other sails off into the sun set, (by the way, in the TransRockies, if one rider gets into a check point two minutes before his partner, they get a one hour penalty to their overall time). There could also be a time when the trail is not clearly marked; this could be costly, take a second to find the correct way, a good reason to be together.

Another little mishap which can happen at this point, a group of riders in front of you could just ride straight on through and you assume they know where they are going and you follow, just like sheep, make your own observation don't rely on others. This happened to us on the second day of the TransRockies, we followed a small group into an old marked cross country course, and then turned around to back track to where we should have been. We had a bad, bad day, apart from losing a time, the

overall lead, we had two punctures, a broken chain, and that night, you guessed it in one, a two man tent and the rain from hell.

So stay close and tell each other how you are travelling, keep an eye on each others food and water intake, on open fire trails ride as a team with roll overs, (drafting with each other and those **not** in your category), let the better technical rider lead the way through single tracks and rock gardens, at the end of the day its all **about the team** finishing together and being there for each other.

That all important support crew, (my wife), they also need to fully understand where the check points are and the seven stages to be travelled, where is each stage accommodation is located as they are always the last to leave and the first to arrive at a stage. Other issues the support team need to be aware of what the rider might need, food etc, have the bike tools, pump, spare tyres all laid out when their rider comes through, where the best spot to stand at feed station is, let the riders know how they are going time wise, how far in front/behind the competition is, tell them how great they are doing, basically kiss their butts, at the accommodation, where the laundry, clothes line, dryer and where to wash the bikes, (and the small change to operate the washer/dryer), where you can get a meal at night and the location of the medical centre. One of the other important skills of a support crew is to know how to beg, borrow or steal whatever you don't have that you **"want now"**. Given that your support is doing every thing for the team but peddle for you, the little things the team can do are important, say please, thank you and do not shout at them, **especially do not shout**. This is a big big one, Stage Time Trial at Wildside, I finished and needed something out of the truck, then set off on the twenty km section to the next stage race, waiting and still waiting for my crew at the start of the stage when Jenny from TORQ sidled up along side me, looked me straight in the eye and asked, "where are the truck keys KERRY", so naturally being a bloke, I came out with, I don't have the bloody keys, at same putting my hand into my back pocket, well some body must have put them there. Jenny drove the keys back to my crew who were still faithfully waiting at the finish of the **previous** stage, having refused a lift with the lady driving the porta- loo, starving, (Jenny bought some food) having to make her own porta-loo on the 18th hole of the Zeehan golf course and still got to the finish line before I did. I had to race that stage with what I had on me, lucky the day was fine and had no punctures, did have a great stack though!

Be nice to your support crew, they go through their own private kind of hell, while you are out pedalling in our country side.

What can I say about your selection of mountain bike for this style of event, where you will see the full range, from the weight weeny cross country carbon fibre hard tail, full suspension and the all mountain terrain bikes; they will all do the job. At the end of the day it's what suit you, just be mindful of the weight factor, you're the one who has to ride the hills. So the type of bike is one thing but what type of running gear you fit to be Enduro race reliable, is the most important decision you can make. So for me, they are your **type of gear set and tyre selection**.

In 2003 I upgraded to my first Cannonade Scalpel, within six months it was rebuilt with Sram XO derailleur / twist grips and bits, up until 2006 it went every where, training, racing in World Masters, TransRockies, Wildside, then from 2006 it has been my long distance training bike. I can hear you say **but**, yes it has been rebuilt time and time again, but still running with the same Sram gear, can't read the numbers anymore and the grips are as smooth as a babies bum, replaced jockey wheels **four**

times, now that's my kind of Enduro reliability. It goes with out saying my two current race bikes (Cannonade Scalpel and Taurine Hard Tail) are both fitted with Sram XO gear.

What tyres to run, tubeless or tube, low profile or Nobby. You need to consider what type of terrain is ahead in the next stage and if it is a smooth fast single tack with open fire trails, I would use Schwalbe Racing Ralph (tube) front and back, this type of tyre has a low profile which allows for faster running, if its rocky climbs I would run a Ralph to the front and Nobby Nick on the rear, hopefully it won't be wet but if it is Nobby Nicks to both wheels. As for Tubeless (with a internal sealant) only if it is very rocky descents then there is a need for a lower tyre pressure or if there is a possibility of a pinch flat, then Tubeless are the go. Tube tyres are lighter than tubeless, for me tubeless take for ever to get on and off the wheel rim, when on the side of the track...

Something to think about, if you can run both bikes with the same type of tyres and you are sharing the gear between you then there will be room to carry a spare folding tyre, or repair a sliced tyre the old way.

Eating and hydration for performance or survival on race day, I like to have finished breakfast at between two to three hours before the start time, so lets base it around the fact that we will be out there between five to seven hours, **this is what generally works for me**. About fifteen minutes in I will start to eat small boiled potatoes (golf ball size) and only dinking water and thereafter for the first hour. Next two and half hours it will be the likes of Torq bars and energy drinks, by this time I should have been through at least one or two check points for water to which I add a small sachet of energy power (which I carry with me) to the drink bottle. The last hour or so I will rely on Torq gels and water until I finish. During training rides prior to the event try different things and see what suits you best, if by chance you find you are both suited to similar replenishment, this allows you to share your food and drink which is a bonus.

At the completion of each day, it is all about preparing for the next day which starts with the recovery routine. I have a fifteen minute window in which to start with the likes of TORQ recovery drink, then clean my bike and myself, within the next thirty minutes or so I will eat lots of small portions of carbohydrates / protein and drink plenty of water. I would generally have my final meal within the next ninety minutes and make sure I have at least two hours before going to bed.

Is it hydration backpack, which means you could be carrying more water than you need from the very start and have enough space to carry the kitchen sink **or two bottles** and over fill your back pockets. Either way you will have one or two water and food check points each day, so access to back up water and food is not a big problem. I opt for the **two bottles** and over fill; this allows the team to carry a minimum of food and water, beside there are two of you now to carry what you need for that stage. When undertaking long six-hour training rides it is important to plan your training rides around the availability of water and food, there are no feed stations during training. Failing to plan ensures planing to fail.

Well now it comes down to what is the minimum bike repair gear you need to carry between you for that stage, this will be another good reason to stay close. As a single rider we will generally carry tubes, tools, chain breaker, air bottles/ pump, power link, food etc. Riding as a team allows you to carry one loot of gear between

you without increasing the weight to each rider, so what else can you carry? second tube, fold up tube tyre, a good long-handled pump and additional clothing. The weather can always change and ascending or descending at altitude may require rain jackets, arm and knee warmers, long finger gloves etc. This situation is one of the times a hydration backpack (without the water) can be filled with other essentials and carried by the stronger rider. We experienced such a day in the TransRockies, we climbed a single track up to and through an alpine pass at 2,000 metres with cloud, rain and wet snow, while climbing you can keep warmish, but what goes up must come down, a long fast fire trail, now add in wind chill factor, freezing, we quickly shared what warm gear we had. We came into the second check point of that day, yes, just a little cold, wet and hungry. The race organisers, as well as giving out food and water, were also giving out to those teams, with no warm or wet weather gear, big black plastic garbage bags to be used as a wind/rain jackets. This allowed most of the teams to finish the last of that stage, approximately 20 kilometres up, in and out of a waterless, very sticky muddy creek which finally dropped into a fast running river, with a head height support rope traversing each river bank. Of course the finish line and that two-man tent waiting on the other side.

I know it's all about the race, but this type of event allows you to take time to appreciate some of the most amazing alpine scenery you will find in Australia. Just as I have, during the TransRockies and Wildside events.