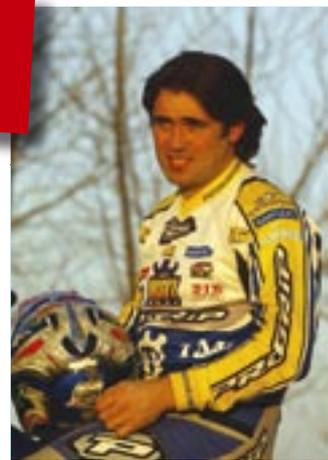


TOP TIPS

YOUR FIRST ENDURO



Last month we had a look at one of the first principles in enduro riding, namely adopting the right standing position for riding. We will in time start going through further techniques, such as log hopping, ditch crossing, probably even special test riding and a lot more. But we sat back this month and figured this early in the series it may be worthwhile to lay down the absolute basics about enduro first, because there'll still be a bunch of you for whom this will be brand new. So before we go flat out in fourth down that firebreak lets first explain how to arrive at the very first check.



THE CONCEPT

Enduros are not like motocross, they're not that much like cross-countries either.

They are traditional events where man and machine are challenged to travel a fair old distance over a fair old mix of terrain – all sight unseen. Originally enduros ran over one huge loop with checks along the way, but with the gathering restrictions on land access the loops have become smaller and these are therefore now repeated, so that now you may enter a club run enduro that will see you riding the same course up to six times.

But unlike other events you are not competing directly against the other riders, but against the clock. You have to leave and arrive at the checks at designated times and there will be occasions, in special tests, when you will have to go as fast as you can, being timed to the second, maybe to the hundredth of a second. The results are determined therefore on your keeping to time in the checks and going as fast as you can in the tests.





TIMES

The timing of enduros is the hardest aspect for the newcomer to figure, there's lots of confusion over times.

So the easiest way to explain it is to follow your procedure when you first arrive at an enduro:

- 1 You will sign on with the secretary of the meeting, who will advise you your race number and start time, and will hand you a blank timecard. We'll say your advised start time will be 10.00.
- 2 Typically on a notice board, or maybe stuck to the side of a van, will be the standard times for completing the checks. There will be a variation in times (and laps) depending on whether you are an expert or clubman. You're probably a clubman so you need to note those times. We'll say these times are:
Check 1: 60 minutes
Check 2: 60 minutes
Check 3: 50 minutes
Check 4: 45 minutes
Final check: 40 minutes



- 3 Now you will take your timecard and transpose these times to your card. You'll fill it out like this:

Start: 10.00
Check 1: + 60mins ETA 11.00
Check 2: +60 mins ETA 12.00
Check 3: + 50 mins ETA 12.50
Check 4: + 45 mins ETA 13.35
Final check: + 40 mins ETA 14.05

You should now carry this timecard on you, ready to give to the timekeepers at the checks, who'll write your actual time of arrival next to your ETA as you go. But essentially you want to arrive at the check at the time you've written. Get a buddy to double-check your arithmetic. And remember anytime you don't understand anything, just ask.

- 4 The recommended thing to do now is to write these times on some duct tape and stick them to your cross bar pad, along with a clock or watch, so you can at a glance see what time you should approach a check – this saves you stopping and ferreting around for the timecard, which will take precious time.



SPECIAL TESTS

Now along the way you'll find there are special tests for you to hurtle around. The organisers will explain, if you ask them, the protocol. Sometimes you get to ride a test on the first lap without the stopwatch running against you. Effectively you are pre-riding the test. Other times you will be expected to race it straight off. Serious dudes always get to the event early and walk the test beforehand. This is permitted and to be honest you'll not be competitive if you don't walk them. That said lots of us slackers ride them blind because walking is a fag and we just don't care enough.

So anyway you'll get flagged down at the start of the test, put individually in the start slot and given a countdown to start, then you'll be away going like billio until you reach the test end.

The test can take many forms. There's what's called motocross tests, which are rarely anything like a motocross, more a flattish paddock with a few miles of bunting which will have you zigzagging, at top speed, this way and that. Then there's the cross-country or enduro test, where you'll hack into the trees, ride over god-knows-what until you make the test finish. And in WEC there's the extreme test, where the riders need to possess what are virtually trials skills as they'll be asked to ride hellishly steep ascents and descents and such.

The number of tests depends on the organisers' resources. For a club enduro you'll probably simply ride a measured length of the course, probably twice, and that'll be it. At national level you'll have maybe two tests each repeated twice. At world level maybe five tests repeated three times.



TIMECARD

Now you need to look after this, as it's vital to you getting a result. Some people keep them in pockets, some tape them to the front mudguard. Some, the really cluey sort, will have them kept under a rubber strap on their front brake master cylinder. The idea here is firstly that it's mega secure and secondly that the timekeeper can reach it in mega fast time – that'll save you time.



ENERGY

The fact is enduros take energy. You will get tired, you will curse and cuss like a sailor from the third lap on, and have it in your mind that never again will you ride an enduro. This is normal.

So the idea is to keep your pace as measured as you can, keeping energy in reserve. For this you will need to carry some hydration with you. Do this with a Camelback type unit. You can carry up to two-litres in these which you'll be able to suck from as you ride – saving you time and restoring energy. You can put water in these, but it's better to have some legal additives in it, like isotonic or sugary stuff – stuff that will revive your energies.

Also have some nice easy digestible energy foods with you, typically at the refuel station. Bananas are good, as are those expensive energy bars. Chocolate isn't so good. For extreme situations there are things called glucose strips. They taste like a gorilla's armpit, you'll practically throw up, but they restore energy like nothing else. Keep them as a last resort.



REFUELING

When you arrive at the event find out where the refuelling stations are. Club events typically have the only the one and it's immediately before the start-finish check. Throw your jerry can in there, suitably marked so you can recognise it later. You can also deposit tools, food and such other rubbish, like spare goggles and gloves. And maybe leave your wife/girlfriend/kid as pit manager.

Make a guesstimate of when you think you'll need to refuel, typically half way through the event and plan it with your pit manager. If you don't have a pit manager (Jubba never does) just keep it in your head.



YOUR MINUTE

Okay, hopefully you'll approach each check with a few minutes in hand. The idea then is stop before the check, that is to say you stop outside of the yellow flags that mark the check area. You only enter the check when you see the display clock in the check turn over to your (ETA) minute. Go in hand over your time card, take it back and get going again.

If you are late just bowl on in and see how many minutes you lost. The thing to remember then will be that you will have to recalculate your times for the rest of the event based on the fact you lost time. Like this:

Check 1 ETA 11.00 Actual 11.00
 Check 2 ETA 12.00 Actual 12.00
 Check 3 ETA 12.50 Actual 12.55
 Check 4 ETA was 13.35 now 13.40

And so on.

For every minute you are late you'll be penalised 60 points. You are penalised by the minute, not the second.

Now one thing to remember is the curious rule that the first minute of lateness isn't penalised. So for hypothetical Check 3, say, you can come in on 12.51 and not be penalised. So if you're hurrying to refuel before entering the check, remember you can 'use the minute'. But remember at the next check you need to arrive at 13.36, although again you can arrive at 13.37 without penalty. Got that? Thought so. It's a bit advanced that.



ENJOY IT

This is the difficult bit. But essentially you'll want to have a fun time. So try and get in the mindset of riding like a super-brainy, super-skilled enduro hound. One thing you'll want to do at some point is to find out how long the checks are, then check this distance against the time allowed to see just how fast you'll need to ride. Typically the early checks are 'slack', the last checks 'tight'. In other words your speed needs to increase during the day. So start steady and as your course knowledge builds so up your speed. Drink lots and keep the energy levels topped up. Learn to evaluate hazards as you arrive, don't just blindly swarm up banks or hills, use some savvy.

You'll still hate it. But if you're going to have a future in this sport you should find that 24 to 48 hours after the event, no matter how bad you did, you'll suddenly find the urge to enter another. And you will have become an enduro nut. Welcome.

Okay, that's it, next month we're back to the riding. Enjoy!

Kiwi

