



ISSUE #45



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HUSQVARNA VS KTM

Sorry, which is the
premium brand here?

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KTM

Please make no attempt to imitate the illustrated riding scenes, always wear protective clothing and observe the applicable provisions of the road traffic regulations! The illustrated vehicles may vary in selected details from the production models and some illustrations feature optional equipment available at additional cost.

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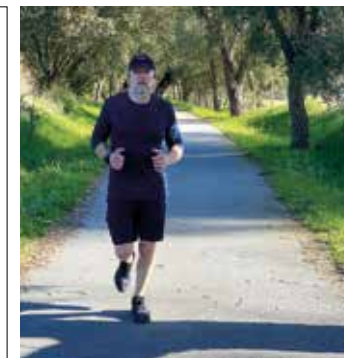
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This sucks. I don't need to tell you – as a dirt rider of some years you're bound to have had your fair share of time on the injury list. I try not to relive the moment last December,

that one split second that changed me from a normal happy-go-lucky dirt riding bi-ped into a limping, hobbling... thing, (I can't think of a polite term). I'm grounded – the doctors won't even allow me to drive (it's my right knee that's wrecked) – and boy do I not like Facebook right now, with all the guys posting cool riding shots, having fun with the new season. So I just have to suck it up, a few more months and hopefully all will be well again.

However, I shouldn't complain. Heck, I still managed to get through another BMW Motorrad International GS Trophy (my sixth) and while I wasn't on a GS for the first time, I had a pretty decent Land Cruiser for transport and the lovely wee Vanessa (a photographer) for company. There have been worse gigs. New Zealand was every bit as beautiful as I recall (I lived there from 1995 to 2003). The country is just stunning (something that I hope comes across in the pictorial feature in this issue). So it was a joy to at least share in the fun and experiences of the riders.

It seemed to be a gentler GS Trophy this year – something I've heard echoed in the comments of fans following the event online. And while yes many of the tests were less dynamic, I couldn't help but feel that this was no bad thing. Adventure of late has come to look a little too much like extreme enduro. And that is not what it's about. Correct me if I'm wrong, but for me it's about travel, connecting with nature, sharing in a community and of course – at its core – taking the road less travelled. It's a state of mind more than a physical challenge. And while that might not have been the intention of BMW for this GS Trophy, it felt right.

Anyway, I hope you enjoy this issue of RUST. We've got some diversity going on. We're so pleased, and relieved, to have Craig back from the Dakar Rally, and in this issue he shares the feelings, emotions that come with that event. We stay in the desert for a great trail ride we took with our awesome friend Ricardo Barbosa, back in the Mojave. And by contrast we spent two days in the rain and chill of winter Wales to try and figure out what's separating the KTM and Husky enduro models in 2020. Oh, and getting back to the GS Trophy, I'll look to share more of those experiences on our website over the coming days, so do keep checking in at www.rustsports.com.

In the meantime ride safe (yeah, like I did...)

JB



Image: Vanessa Blankenagel



CLOUDS

Dust clouds and vapour clouds mingle in the Mackenzie Pass in South Island, New Zealand as the hoarde of BMW F 850 GS riders make their way south in the chill of an early morning in February (a southern hemisphere summer's day – but cool still in the mountains). This year's International GS Trophy certainly had a different feel, less manic, less testosterone-challenging, more nature-engaging. In so many ways more in touch with real-life adventuring: that old game of finding new counties and new places using roads less travelled. Very nice indeed!

Image: Vanessa Blankenagel



ELI

As you know, we're a broad church here in the office at RUST. We can sit on a mountain top and just soak in the nature (well JB does) or we can roost and rark when the mood takes us (most days for Warren). But we also love watching moto-mastery and so this time of year, having had our fill of Dakar, that means supercross. Warren's a staunch Ken Roczen supporter, JB (here) backs Eli Tomac. And it looks like the two are going to take it to the wire for this year's title. Seeing as how Tomac (at the time of writing) leads the championship (and JB is editor – i.e. holding the reins) we get the Eli-love in Gallery. Roczen is riding so well but clearly riding with safety in mind – it's a long game – but Tomac's speed and daring, you've just got to love that...

Image: Monster Energy / Octopi Media



RUST TRAVELS

JB's at a standstill – well, almost – while Warren has started the new season with a big push putting in the hours on his Husky. And mate Craig, well, we tip our hat...



Okay it's two months since the last RUST – and the team hasn't been idle that's for sure.

Craig started the year for us, by taking on that wee trail ride thing that's called the Dakar Rally. Legend that he is – in his own workshop – he managed the ride well, finished in style and even found time to supply daily ride reports from the bivouac each evening. Remarkable. Those reports form a series of blogs which we've posted at <https://rustsports.com/rust-blog/>. But as well, Craig's written a personal review of his experience, which you can read

in this issue, starting page 46. By the way, please don't ask him 'what next?'

No sooner was Craig back than **JB** was off – this time to New Zealand for the 2020 BMW International GS Trophy. Only here's the thing, JB couldn't ride. He'd been keeping it quiet but he'd wrecked his knee stepping off the 2020 Yamaha WR250F in our recent test (see: <https://rustsports.com/2020-yamaha-wr250f-first-ride/>).

He's waiting on an operation now (detached MCL/ torn ACL and meniscus damage). So anyway, JB did the Trophy in a Land Cruiser, which was pretty



okay as it goes, able to follow most of the trail. Lots of fun had, still. But he'll tell you – and you may know this already – injury is no fun. No riding, walking with crutches, months of physio and remobilizing. And no launches (important for the magazine). No, stay healthy if you can.



As for **Warren**. He's been having a ball. We'll let him tell you in his own words:

I've had a cracking start to the year. The Husky FE350 is clocking up the hours while the new 2020 KTM 350 EXC-F sits in the garage, waiting for some attention as aftermarket parts stack up around it. I hope to start the build in early March.

Pedro (a good mate from www.horizonadventures.pt) was hosting a road book experience weekend in February and as I'm always keen for a ride he roped me in to do a recon of the track and to test the accuracy of the road book. We spent the day stop-starting, making notes on the road book that need updating, but we also got to enjoy a great day out. The temperature was around 17 degrees and the sun was out – and it was January for Pete's sake. Bliss. All was

sessions without a break for a 200km loop to simulate a race, pushing hard from start to finish. The loop ran from Evora in central Portugal, over the Serra D'Ossa mountains and back again. This area is so beautiful, filled with cork oaks, holm oak, pine trees, olive trees and even orange groves. So far this year I've managed to get out and ride over 800km, which is a bit of a record.

Team RUST is making progress, too, and we will soon launch our new online shop. Thanks to all of you that have supported us and shopped on our www.bell-motorcycle-helmets.co.uk site. We've been having some good deals on helmets and each sale helps us keep the doors open. Cheers.

If you're looking for a cracking few days out riding across central Portugal – come and join me at the 25th Anniversary of the TransAlentejo which runs from the 26-29 March.

<https://www.facebook.com/horizonadventures.pt> 🇵🇹





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KTM and Husqvarna have looked to differentiate their product lines ever since Husky moved to Mattighofen. A suspension linkage and a composite subframe did the trick for a while. But this year Husky has gone further with geometry changes and more. But has it been a step too far? We took the firms' two 250cc two-stroke enduros and put them back to back to find the differences and see which has the advantage in this sibling rivalry

KTM EXC250 EXC TPI VS HUSQVARANA TE250i

BROTHERS IN ARMS?

Words: Warren M. **Images:** JB

Back in June 2019 or thereabouts I attended both the 2020 KTM and 2020 Husqvarna enduro range launches. I came away from the KTM launch thinking these were the best enduro bikes ever. I came away from the Husky launch wondering just what had happened. These ranges are based on the same common platform (in terms of engines and to an extent chassis) and yet they were very

different to each other, with my assessment being the orange bikes were easily the superior.

Now when I sent JB my review of the 2020 KTMs he published this without question. The review on the Husqvarna range, well, not so much. In fact he promptly refused to publish it! Why? Because as a paid-up member of the Husqvarna fan club I was left not liking the direction that Husqvarna had taken and I was cranky. JB suggested

there could be many reasons why I might have been underwhelmed by the Huskies, not least that of location of the launch. He's ridden launches in Scandinavia before and knows that the tricky forests there – which mix rocks, roots and sand – are not the easiest to like or master, and this can reflect badly on the bikes. I understood where he was coming from but for me I was still of the opinion Husqvarna's new direction wasn't for me, so much so that I cancelled

my yearly standing order for a brand-new Husky and bought a KTM instead.

2020 REVISITED

Fast forward a fair few months and I've allowed myself some time to stop grumbling about my disappointment. JB in the meantime had talked me round me to opt for the smarter option where these concerns arise – make a proper test of the two brands, head-to-head on terrain we



know (and love). So for this I chose the models in each range which I felt were most similar, the 250cc fuel injected two-strokes, while JB chose the location – Wales. Albeit a cold and wintry north Wales, as by the time we got this sorted autumn was moving into winter.

JB and I recruited a local young championship-grade enduro rider Alex Walton to come along for the major part of the test (and to style it up for the photos) while I did most of the riding, with JB behind the camera. An icy rain fell for most of the first day and just as you would expect from mid Wales the terrain was slow, deep single-track ruts littered with slick roots, wet logs and slick gorse bush – the latter I became intimately acquainted with when the TE spat me off on a run towards to the camera. Murphy's, eh!? All this was of course very different terrain from what I'd ridden at their respective launches, which was mostly sand and hard pack.

On the second day we joined Geraint Jones' crew for a day out on their enduro school. Thankfully the sun had come out for that but it was still cold and the ground slick, neither of which dampened the attendance numbers at the enduro school. Martin Lewis, who's another championship-level rider as well as one of the Jones' instructors, joined me on this day, and between us we swapped between the KTM and the Husqvarna all day, taking the opportunity to discuss each bike's performance in the various spots the school uses to help improve their students' technical skills.



▷ GIVING CONTEXT TO THE AUSTRIAN CIVIL WAR

KTM and Husqvarna have thrived over the past few years and although the bikes are based on a shared platform they have slowly but successfully differentiated themselves over the years and have each developed their own loyal fan base and unique style. For this year the shared platform is still there, in parts, but the two brands are polarised more than ever. The 2020 bikes have gone as far as they need to decouple themselves. They are very different.

So before we get into this 250 head-to-head we need to look at how the two brands share a platform. As I see it, while KTM and Husky share engine platforms and WP forks that's about where it starts and ends. Husqvarna's enduro bikes' suspension design has adopted the 2019 MX linkage resulting in their frames being vastly different to

KTM EXC's (which of course are PDS equipped). The two bikes also have different clutch hydraulics, different sub-frames, wheels, tyres, handlebars, seats and rear suspension and more besides.

Despite the differences, at the world launches the respective PR departments spat out the same representative 60% 'changed' figure for both ranges over the previous models. Coincidence, or were most of the changes made in baseline components? For example: major engine mod's, updated and improved exhausts systems, frames that are designed to be stiffer in both torsional and longitudinal planes, revamped settings to WP forks, updated Xplor (KTM) and Xact (Husky) shocks, and of course the all new subframes.

You could assume that the changes across the two brands were identical – only you'd be wrong. The changes on the KTM seem more like a collection of subtle tweaks and refinements whereas the Husqvarna's have taken a big leap in a particular direction.

To me, the 2020 Husqvarna is quite a departure from the 2019 models. Visually, the Husqvarna certainly looks the part of being a new bike – it now resembles its MX and cross-country (TX) counterparts more closely than the EXC seems related to the XC or SX models.

No matter the praise or criticism I'm applying to either of the two 250s, in this review I must give credit where it's due – if it weren't for the investment by KTM/Husqvarna in advancing two-stroke technology who knows if we would even be able to be doing this test at all – it's likely that the only two-strokes would be old ones. I am very thankful for the resurgence of the two-stroke thanks in no small part to tenacity of KTM/HQV in re-establishing the market.





SPECIFICATION

THE KTM FRAME:

Central double-cradle, 25CrMo4 chromoly steel

SUBFRAME: Aluminium; 40mm longer with improved rear fender stability.

GROUND CLEARANCE: 370mm / 14.6in

SEAT HEIGHT: 960mm / 37.8in

THE HUSQVARNA FRAME:

Central double-cradle, 25CrMo4 chromoly steel

SUBFRAME: Composite carbon fibre subframe; 70% polyamide and 30% carbon fibre, the new 2-piece subframe saves 250g. Increased subframe's length 50mm.

GROUND CLEARANCE: 360mm / 14.1in (Claimed)

SEAT HEIGHT: 950mm / 37.4in (Claimed)



WHAT'S CHANGED AND HOW DOES THIS AFFECT THE FEEL OF EACH BIKE?

1. KTM'S APPROACH TO DESIGN DEVELOPMENT

The primary development aim at both KTM and Husky has been mass centralisation. The 2017 models did this by way of a shifting of the heaviest rotating masses, such as the crank and clutch shafts, to a more centralised position. R&D in Mattighofen has obviously remained focussed on this goal, and for 2020 they have managed to further develop this theme by lowering the radiators and redesigning the exhaust systems.

2. Husqvarna's APPROACH TO DESIGN DEVELOPMENT

According to the Husqvarna, they classify the 2020 models as 'next-generation', the target for Husky according to the launch team was to improve 'rideability' – by refining the motor and chassis.

It's apparent that the team at Husky has for 2020 also been tasked with boldly differentiating their bikes from KTM's. Somehow it now seems more important than ever to quash the 'white KTM' stigma. This has resulted in a greater focus by Husky on their aesthetics. Their strap line 'Pioneering since 1903' seems to have been taken to heart and aside from the mass centralising work that's shared with KTM they have really pushed the boat out on their design.

THE SHARED KTM AND HUSKY 250 ENGINES

The 250 two-strokes have for 2020 had a significant amount of engine work done. They get increased compression via a new cylinder head, they feature a twin valve-controlled power valve system combined with the all new 3D stamped waffle-design exhaust pipe and reshaped silencer. The pipes

look the business and claims are that they radically alter the performance characteristics of the motor. Besides their look the new design is said to also lower noise and increase strength.

The crankshaft retains the counter-balancer shaft to reduce vibration and by incorporating a heavier ignition rotor it improves traction down low. The 250 engines have also been tilted 1° forward in the frame, which is said to improve the front-to-rear balance and provides more precise feedback on the front-end. The motors apparently also feature improved thermodynamics and updated mapping on both bikes. There's a new water pump casing that aides cooling by optimizing the flow of coolant.

Both share the updated DDS (Damped Diaphragm Steel) clutch. The DDS clutch design features a damping system that increases both traction and durability. The clutch uses a single diaphragm spring rather than a coil spring design, and so is lighter in the pull. To top off the new 250s' clutches they feature a new, lighter basket and reworked inner hub that improves oil supply and cooling to the clutch.

The difference between the two clutches is in the hydraulic actuation, the EXC features the Brembo system while TE features the Magura system. I prefer the feel and action of the TE's Magura hydraulics, the clutch is noticeably softer than the EXC's action. Conversely, I like the ratchet adjustment on the Brembo clutch lever on the KTM over the star clickers on the Magura lever.

Now while the engines are ostensibly the same, they behave rather differently, especially down low. This is less to do with the motor mod's themselves but rather to do with the sub-frame (and airbox) design and the consequent variation in airflow through to the cylinder inlet ports.

While the motors felt torquier and

HITS & MISSES

Perfection is a tall order as our lists show!

KTM – Hits

- Overall the handling is fantastic
- Sleek narrow looks and minimalist plastics. Sorry, which bike is supposed to have the Scandinavian minimalist heritage?
- Ergo's – this bike is a proper racing snake.
- The 12mm lower radiator shrouds. Way more room around the tank and steering head for lifting your legs while cornering.
- New sleek exhaust system narrows the bodywork on the side and the deeper boxed muffler makes it easier to shift your weight back over the rear fender under heavy braking or on steep descents.
- Frame guards; Grippy and textured and extended to cover the rear master brake cylinder – better protection and improves boot grip over the frame.
- The extended and hardened rear fender. Improves strength and stops it flapping about when laden with mud, which Wales has plenty of.
- The airbox design – improves airflow (in contrast to the Husky) and although redesigned it still fits the previous models' air filters.

KTM – misses

- The 2020 seat has got more depth and padding, and is noticeably more comfortable than its predecessor but it's still not very attractive. We would be replacing at least the seat cover.
- No skid-plate.
- Maxxis Tyres – what the hell KTM! When are you going to take onboard the negative feedback you've had for years and get rid of these awful tyres. Almost everyone we know bins these straight off the bat and replaces them with something decent. What a waste and not very environmentally friendly.
- Neken handlebars – not the nicer ones.





- ▷ more refined than the previous model 250s, the power was still very linear and both lacked mid-range punch. The EXC delivered more down low over the TE which was torquey but in a more mellow way than the KTM. This is great in the tight slow stuff but it leaves the entire power delivery of the TE so linear that if you got into trouble I doubt there would be enough punch to get you out of it. The KTM is the same, other than down low where it hints at a little more snap. At this stage I can't comment on whether this is ECU and/or EMS related or is a power valve adjustment matter – or all the above!

I have my suspicions that replacing or remapping the ECUs would do the trick in livening up these motors considerably. I have read mixed reviews on playing with the power valve settings, but for me I would start with remapping the ECU or fitting say a Vortex X10 ECU (that is when they come available for the 2020 250s) before I start fiddling with the power valve. That said, if cash is tight then the power valve makes a sensible place to start.

My reasoning for starting with the ECU is that fuel injected two-strokes are in their infancy and engine mapping still seems to have a way to go before its



optimised. My goal would be to remap the mid-range for a bigger hit. The EXC and TE are both fitted with the Dell 'Orto 39mm throttle body that has a new idle system and ambient pressure sensor combined with an updated air intake funnel, apparently making it more responsive but, in my mind, it's hampered by the conservative mapping. Switching between the two maps on the TE, which come as standard, made no noticeable difference.

While I preferred the power delivery on the KTM over the Husky, for novices and weekend trail riders I suspect that the docile power delivery on the TE

would be ideal. Faster top-level riders would find both motors too tame for competitive racing and I wonder how many riders now opt for the 300s over the 250s rather than exploring the 250s power upgrade potential because it's in the 'too hard' box. Pricing between the 250s and 300s is also not a stretch, so why bother?

The claimed ground clearance and seat height of the Husqvarna TE250i is complete bollocks! On the TE250i we tested, it was nowhere near these numbers. We measured the KTM and Husky side by side and this is where we landed: the KTM had over 40mm

additional ground clearance compared to the Husky. For seat height the Husky was 30mm lower. In mitigation, the Husky was fitted with a skid plate whereas the KTM wasn't. As for the seat height, well, I could go with sag settings as another mitigating factor but in this case the bike was within standard settings and was not riding low.

I'll get to the reasons why the Husky is lower than the KTM a little further into the review but these differences do seem to be the crux of the matter. It's my opinion that this will be the defining factor (in a buyer's mind) when it comes to choosing which of the two brands





to buy. The Husky is the significantly lower bike, there is no getting around it.

And while the Husky may be great for shorter riders, and be pitched as being great in extreme conditions for that reason, my concern is that the lack of ground clearance heightens the chances of getting the footpegs dragging in deep ruts or the linkage catching on logs and bigger rocks, even if the bike's size is to your liking.

Meanwhile the KTM's frame doesn't appear much different to previous models, other than the cool looking

black paint. The KTM's subframe is now 40mm longer and approximately 50% of the chromoly tubing making up the new frame design is revised over the previous model but it retains its previous geometry. Both bikes' (KTM and Husky) frames have been significantly revised to increase torsional and longitudinal rigidity.

My impression is that the KTM is more versatile in stock form over the Husky. I loved the KTM's handling in Spain and in Wales, while the Husky performed in Wales but not in Finland.



SUSPENSION

THE KTM 250TPI SUSPENSION:

Suspension balance on KTM's 250s has always been an issue, the forks and shock picking up chatter in the small stuff and unbalancing the chassis. The effect of this has been heightened by the PDS and for the most part the suspension needed to be revalved and sprung correctly to balance out the suspension.

The 48mm WP Xplor fork for 2020 sees firmer compression dampening settings combined with a softer spring than previous models. According to WP the mid-valve piston helps take the burden off the fork springs to prevent diving under braking. KTM has left the PDS spring rate untouched but has apparently made changes to the internal components, improving the second piston and piston cup that controls the last part of the stroke as they attempt to improve bottoming resistance.

The softer suspension settings on the KTM's Xplor fork in combination with the PDS Xplor shock work well and complement the stiffer frame, making this the best handling stock 250 that KTM has ever produced. The front-end feel was crisp, precise and more responsive than the Husky, as was straight line stability.

I have been critical about WP in the past but for the first time I am able to say that I could and would race the 250EXC TPI on stock suspension. I felt it steered more precisely, sat up in the stroke at corner entry which gave me confidence to put the front wheel where I wanted, especially coming into deep ruts. It was just as happy being laid over into a fast bermed corner and seemed more resistant to diving than previous models. That irksome harshness on the early part of the stroke that picked up the small chatter was replaced with a



▷ plush and sure-footed feel and on the big descents the progression and stiffer dampening kept it from bottoming out.

As well the set up seems to give the KTM a more ground hugging feel. The back-end seems more compliant and the overall suspension balance is excellent. The steering is precise while the backend finds traction and 'comes around' helping steer from the rear. This is great in the slalom style riding needed in tight woody terrain, like in Wales. The PDS is efficient and even though we had a good few logs to hop and some slick hard pack with reasonably sized rolling bumps, the PDS coped well enough with all of them. I'd only be wary in the case of high-speed big rough stuff with the PDS, where I would prefer the XC linkage on the back.

The KTM feels high, and it is, particularly in slow going, until the forks are coming under load. The firmer damping makes them sit up a bit and makes the bike feel more aggressive and athletic. I loved it.



THE HUSQVARNA TE 250I SUSPENSION:

The 2020 TE250i has a significantly reworked linkage that extends the steering head rake by almost 1°. That impacts the geometry of the bike drastically and changes the entire ergonomics on the Husky. How? Well, the new linkage results in a reduced swingarm angle that reduces the seat height.

It seems that the design team at Husky was determined to lower the seat. The intention being to give riders greater accessibility to the ground, improve rideability in technical terrain.

That's all well and good but as we measured it, the seat height and ground

KTM EXC250 TPI vs HUSQVARANA TE250i



clearance was way lower in the front and back than what Husqvarna claimed. Of course, you can address this as a taller rider by putting on a taller seat or altering the linkage pull-rod, or both.

But what about the handling? How does the new seat height and rolling chassis feel as a rider? Well first off, I'm confused; On the KTM I can feel the effect of the stiffer frame working together with the improved suspension balance, but I can't on the Husky. Apparently the Husky frame is stiffer but the new two-part lighter subframe has more flex 'to help the shock' – do these two things cancel each other out?

In Finland I found it hard to get to grips with the Husky's rear end, it was jittery and felt unstable under braking. The rebound was way too quick and kicked up in the chop, also the rear-end wanted to stand up in tight corners rather than settle comfortably into turns.

In Wales, I had no such issues, other than the suspension being too soft overall, it did work well in the technical slow going. Once I dialled in the compression and slowed the rebound somewhat I found the Husky's Xact shock worked well and was more stable in a straight line at speed. The slacker head angle seemed to help with the stability but I felt it hindered the bike in tight slalom conditions and was less precise than the KTM.





▷ **HAVE THE 2020 KTM AND HUSQVARANA FUEL INJECTED 250 TWO-STROKES IMPROVED OVER PREVIOUS YEARS?**

The biggest challenge for KTM/Husky has been to try and make the EFI bikes' power delivery replicate the feel of a carb fuelled bike. Although these bikes have sold very well it has taken some time for riders to get used to the character of the modern EFI two-strokes. Even now the EFI bike is still a long way from feeling like a carb fuelled bike, but I have no doubt that the dedicated R&D department at Mattighofen will get there and be able to produce maps to suit what both pro racers and trail-riders demand.

But do the 2020 fuel injected two-strokes show any improvement? I think they do. Here's why. The fuel injection feels crisper and more refined than previous models. Starting both bikes was a cinch and neither showed any signs of bogging. The throttle response was clean and immediate throughout the rev range, and the EMS was so precise that I wished it wasn't – the fuel-air delivery makes these fuel injected 250s so predictable. I would like both brands (especially Husqvarna) to make the engine mapping a little more aggressive, they would sell more 250s I think.

Don't misunderstand me, there is nothing wrong with the 250s as is and 80% of riders are going to be more than happy with them stock, but if you want to race these bikes competitively they could do with more power, akin to the power of a carb 250.



HITS & MISSES

Perfection is a tall order as our lists show!

Husqvarna – Hits

- Husky wins on levers and clutch feel – loads lighter than the KTM – brakes similar.
- Pro Taper handlebars.
- Colourways are great excluding the yellow headlight mask.
- The two-tone white-grey side panels.
- Black muffler and black rear sprocket – trick.
- New handguards which are sleeker and have a recess in the plastic to house the brake and clutch master cylinders.
- Navy blue frames – super cool.
- The tyres – Metzeler 6-day extremes. Yes please.
- The seat, much better shape and more comfort than the KTM.

Husqvarna - Misses

- Unlike the KTM, the Husky seems to be slimmer at the rear only, its looks and feels chunkier at the tank than the KTM.
- Headlight mask in bright yellow – wow – a little too try-hard to like.
- The low ride height
- The lack of ground clearance
- The constricted airbox and muted power as a result.





▷ FOR BETTER OR FOR WORSE? EXC OR TE?

Firstly, is one bike inherently better than the other? The answer is, no. However, out of the crate is one of the 250s better than the other for racing? Hell, yes. Are they both expensive?, Good god yes. So to recap...

HUSKY TE250I

I'm disappointed, this bike is too small for me, it's like riding an 85cc as grown-up. I don't like it. I land up being way too forward over the front wheel when I'm standing. When seated I'm struggling to find where to put my legs, which pushes me off my centre position on the bike and too far back on the seat – so much for centralising mass.

It doesn't end there; the rake, steering head angle and swingarm angle have changed along with the new linkage design, and I don't like the changes. Their new setup just doesn't suit me. I've thought long and hard about the changes Husky has made and I suspect that I don't like them because I've lost the feeling of familiarity with my beloved Husky brand, this bike is that different to previous years.

That said, the changes seem to have balanced the suspension out and improved the overall collaboration between the forks and the shock. This bike is going to suit smaller riders. I can't assess how hard it is for smaller riders to cope with tall bikes but now I have a better idea having ridden a bike that's too small for me. The Husky for these riders is likely to fit like a glove and for the right size pilot this is going to be a cracking machine. The lower seat height is going to make technical riding loads easier and that combined with a more balanced suspension set-up makes the Husky more stable and nimbler in equal measure. These are all to the good but somehow it seems like the Husky is more suited in stock form to weekend trail riding.

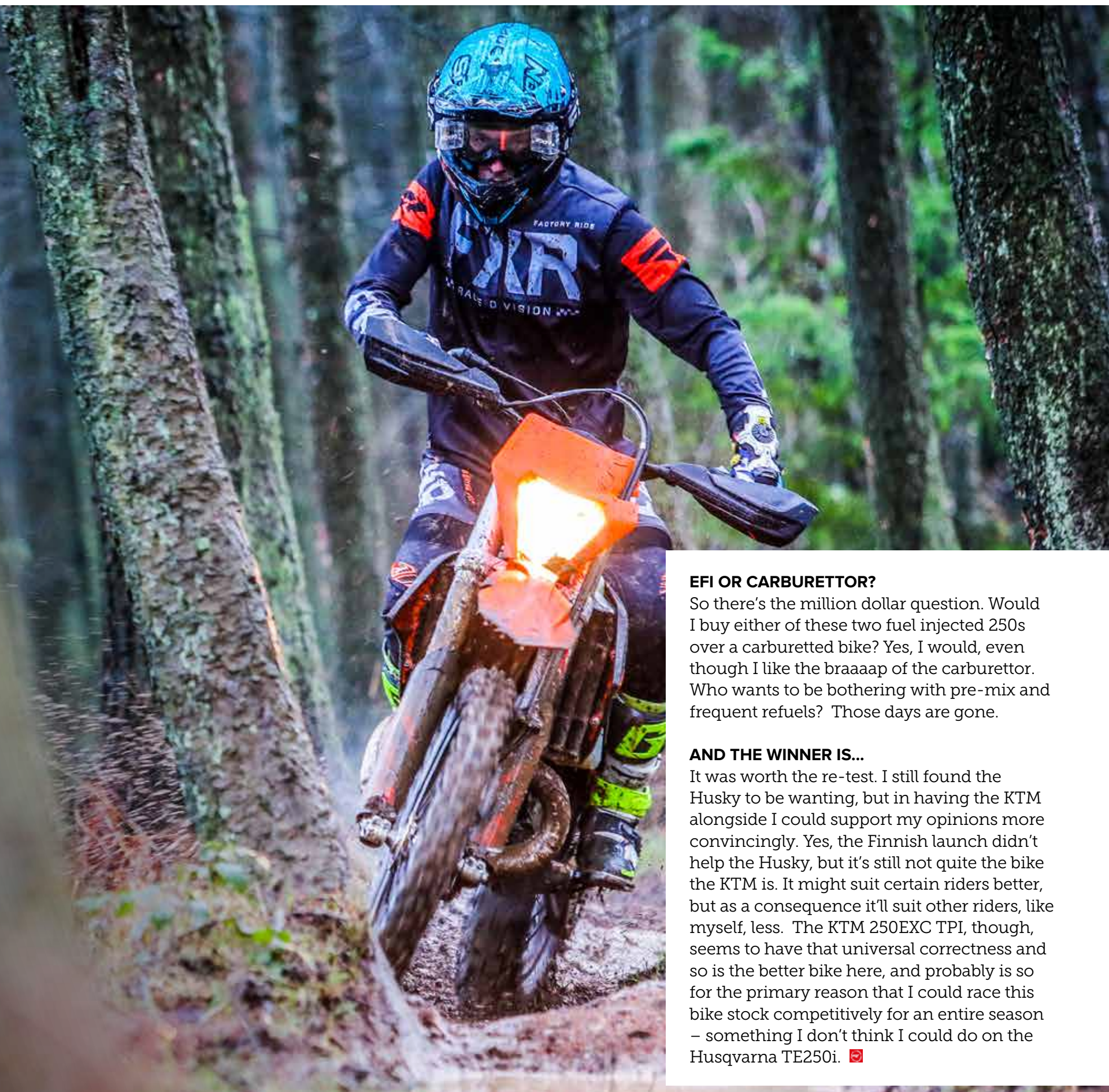
KTM EXC 250TPI

I like it. KTM has focussed on the bikes' handling and reliability. A new appearance seems to have been less important to them. This results in a subtler series of bodywork changes. The changes are improvements and have all been for the better.

This is the better race bike of the two, it's the more athletic, it's slim, lithe and more precise than the TE. The motor is less constricted and feels the more aggressive. I'd confidently race the 250EXC TPI in stock trim, although I would ultimately try and get some mid-range punch from somewhere.

I loved the chassis and suspension performance in tighter terrain and found that I could run the 250EXC TPI in a higher gear than the TE250i over the same terrain. It's just a matter of getting used to the power characteristics of the fuel injection. I seldom used first gear, second gear is great but the gap to third is a little too wide, (even more so on the Husky) – I'm sure the two bikes run the same transmission but the fuelling makes the KTM punchier down low and this influences which gear you're able to select.

I'm left wondering what the KTM XC or Husqvarna TX gearing is like in comparison to these two. Would the extra power and closer ratio gearing and still having a sixth gear make them better? I'm going to go on the hunt for one or both to ride and see... watch this space.



EFI OR CARBURETTOR?

So there's the million dollar question. Would I buy either of these two fuel injected 250s over a carburetted bike? Yes, I would, even though I like the braaaap of the carburettor. Who wants to be bothering with pre-mix and frequent refuels? Those days are gone.

AND THE WINNER IS...

It was worth the re-test. I still found the Husky to be wanting, but in having the KTM alongside I could support my opinions more convincingly. Yes, the Finnish launch didn't help the Husky, but it's still not quite the bike the KTM is. It might suit certain riders better, but as a consequence it'll suit other riders, like myself, less. The KTM 250EXC TPI, though, seems to have that universal correctness and so is the better bike here, and probably is so for the primary reason that I could race this bike stock competitively for an entire season – something I don't think I could do on the Husqvarna TE250i. 🏁



This is not Chris's workshop. This is not Chris's 2020 Beta 300 RR. But we all know Chris's photography by now, so we'll go with this, eh?



NEW STUFF FOR A NEW SEASON

Our man over there (be it Dakar, Silk Way, Rallye du Maroc, or just plain trail riding in France), Chris Evans, is starting the new year with new toys (well, one new toy, one new workhorse).

Words: Chris Evans **Images:** CE (the blurry ones), Beta (the cool shot)



DAKAR BLUES

I finished off my last column by predicting that the Dakar podium would be Sunderland, Short, Price. Didn't I do well? Writing this at the end of February the Dakar seems a long time ago now so I won't go on about it too much – I mean you all know the result and I'm sure if you were interested you watched it on TV and have already read a few post-race articles.

However, I'd just like to mention something you couldn't see on the tele' – it was really, really cold in the morning.

This year I did a job I'd never done before, with the impressive sounding title of 'FIM Motorcycle Competitor Relations Officer'. I even had a federation licence! Anyway, it meant that I had to get up at some ungodly hour every morning to be at the start of the liaison from the bivouac to wave the riders off. The organisers issued me with a duvet jacket, a fleece, a body-warmer and another jacket – and with all that on I was still freezing cold. I should have guessed it was going to be a bit parky when I saw I'd been given a bobble hat, which I stupidly left at home...



▷

Eventually I got bad case of man flu, and as there is pretty much nothing worse than being ill on a rally, that inevitably coloured my experience. Talking to the competitors – as I did every freezing morning – I discovered that they really liked the first week and weren't so keen on the second, which they felt was too fast. They also liked the pre-coloured road books, especially when given out in the morning, just 25 minutes before the start. It effectively liberated the factory pilots from three hours colouring-in per evening and even earlier mornings looking at what the map-man had found overnight. If it was a boon for the men and the woman up at the pointy end, it was a revelation for the privateers, particularly those in the malle moto class, a category that is now, with no road books to prepare, suddenly accessible to a whole load more cash-strapped competitors.

A BIGGER BETA

Once back home I took advantage of the rubbish weather to sort out not one, not two, but three motorcycles. First on the bench was my 2018 Beta Xtrainer that, with 230 hours, needed moving on. And by the time I'd finished with



Chris's Xtrainer cleaned up nicely. It probably looked even better than his photography suggests

Chris Evans

THOROUGHLY RECOMMENDED

The days of people working on motorcycle magazines blagging stuff are long gone. You have to be a social influencer these days to get anything for free... So, I paid full whack to the people below. And they all provided an excellent service at a reasonable cost. The only person who let me down was the bloke who plated me nuts – and he will remain nameless.

In Motion. This place had virtually everything I needed for my little Fantic in stock and some of what I needed was pretty obscure. www.inmotiontrials.com

Jamie Maclean. He does vapour blasting, cerakote on metal and plastic, welding. And he is really into bikes. You can find him on Facebook: Mac Clean 44

Central Wheel Components. Bikes with tatty wheels just look shit, however much the rest looks good. Central Wheel Components did an amazing job on mine. www.central-wheel.co.uk/



her she looked and rode like a million dollars. Well actually 4500 €, the price at which she literally flew out the door. I only paid 6000 € for her new!

I've been so impressed by the little Xdresser that my first thought was to get another, which is why I accepted a day's loan of my local dealer's 250 RR. I just wanted to see how smooth the engine they share was now it has been fitted with a balancer shaft. The answer is 'very'. The trouble was I also discovered just how good is the 2020 RR's new chassis and suspension – and so ended up ordering a new 300 RR. Initially I was going to get the Racing version with the Kayaba front



fork, but friends who'd tried it put me off, saying that the suspension was pretty stiff. And that's stiff riding at their speeds! I haven't done many kays on her yet, nor ridden her anywhere very complicated, but having kitted her out with a road book reader and a couple of other essentials, a few short shakedown runs out my front door have left me very impressed. Oh and in France at least they're a bargain – I paid 8000 € for my 300 – that's 2500 € less than the 'made in Austria' equivalent. It will almost certainly be my last carbureted two-stroke – I can't see even the Italians managing to

▷



Ahh, token workshop image with new bike and 'friend'. Friend is actually Benji Melot, formerly Cyril Despres' mechanic, this year 2nd in the Malle Moto class at Dakar...

Partly because it is the first bike I ever bought with my own money, that I have been dragging around with me from garage to garage for the last 35 years. But mainly because it was restored under the close supervision of my dear friend Mr Hall, who is quite literally a genius with a spanner. Now I know 'dear' sounds a bit Jane Austen, but I think in this case it's appropriate. Mr Hall and I go back a long way and we've been through a lot together, or more accurately he's been through a lot with me. Anyway, I have absolutely no problem telling you he's a brilliant bloke and I'm sure the many friends we have in common would thoroughly agree. All I have to do now is persuade him to do another one with me. I'm thinking maybe one of the bikes I lusted after when I first became obsessed with motorcycles, an Ossa MAR, or even better an Explorer, maybe a Bultaco Alpina. If you happen to have any of the above in complete but dilapidated condition you know where to find me 🇬🇧

▷ homologate anything like this the next time I go shopping for a new bike - so I think I will be keeping it forever.

A BIT JANE AUSTEN?

Can I hear the rolling of eyes? 'Here he goes again, the last bike he has ridden is always the best'. Well there's probably a bit of that, but I also think the 300 RR will nicely bookend another bike I have spent a bit more garage time on, another Italian two-stroke, my 1980 Fantic 200. Yes, I bet you weren't expecting to hear anything about that bike again, oh yea of little faith. As you can see she looks absolutely beautiful and I thoroughly enjoyed the whole experience of doing her up. In fact I'd go as far as to say it was emotional.



Here, you are just going to have to use your imagination. This is a beautifully restored - but poorly photographed - Fantic 200 Trials. JB had one of these back in the day, too - an awesome machine.



ROAD BOOK ENDURO TOURS IN FRANCE DATES FOR 2020

22/23/24 April	Massif du Moran
27/28/29 May	Pyrenees
17/18/19 June	Lozerien Bis
23/24/25 September	Pyrenees
21/22/23 October	Massif du Morvan
4/5/6 November	Dordogne
18/19/20 November	Normandie



All trips are priced at £560 (payable to ABTA bonded and ATOL protected UK travel agency S&N Pickford). Price includes 3 days riding, 2 nights half-board accommodation, loan of road book and road book reader, support vehicle and driver, an opener and sweeper and a classy T-shirt. Please don't hesitate to contact us if you would like any further information.

Chris Evans, Sport Adventure

Tel: 0033 662 487190

chris.evans@sport-adventure.com

www.sport-adventure.com



SCOTT 450 PODIUM

Contact: www.scott-sports.com

RRP: Shirt £47.50 / €59.95

Pants £145.00 / €179.95

When it comes to riding gear ('apparel' if you're from the US) it's common to find many quite distinct similarities in construction among bigger brands, primarily on account many draw from the same small pool of manufacturers (typically based in Far East).

The Scott 450 Podium gear is quite unique in this respect, especially the pants – as the construction of the 450s don't seem to share any of the common platforms the other brands use. The Italian design combined with its textile selection and placement gives it its own rugged look while the fit and feel is fluid and comfortable. I've ridden with a good many motocross pants over the years and the 450 Podium kit is up there with the best of them.

On the bike, they were soon forgotten about, probably the sign of great riding gear. The pants fit over my CTi braces well without being too roomy and the crotch area and waist sizing was top notch. The shirt, although pretty ventilated, didn't leave me cold, so the sweat wicking capabilities work. And you know what? I really like the colourways and style. Check out our 250i shootout in this issue, I think you'll agree the kit looks good.

We know Scott more commonly as a leading goggle manufacturer but they may be overlooked by the mainstream when it comes to their riding gear, I'm not sure why because I really rate them. I have had faultless performance from every variation of Scott riding gear I've used. I own adventure and enduro gear from them and, plain and simple, it rocks. The quality is exemplary. This 450 Podium gear is no different. Oh, and I know JB loved his Scott 350 Track series combo in blue and orange too. **Warren M.** 🇬🇧





DARE TO DAKAR

— Craig Keyworth's Dakar Rally 2020 —

Dakar is all over now, for another 10 months at least. But this being RUST we're not afraid to look backwards, to reflect, and seeing as we had a man in the Rally then it seems only right to properly investigate his experience. We know what he did, how he finished. But what was the Dakar Rally really like. How did it feel? What were the challenges, the emotions...?

Words: Craig Keyworth **Images:** Rally Zone & CK





Craig's Dare to Dakar

We've been following Craig's Dakar Rally adventure from the very moment he said 'to hell with it' and rushed out to sort a Husky FE450 and ride the Rallye du Maroc in 2018, then put in for an FR450 rally bike and lodge his Dakar entry back in 2019. You can follow his build up in RUST issues 41, 42 and 44 and his daily Dakar Rally reports at www.rustsports.com/rust-blog

I'm beginning this article on the flight out to Marseille to pick up the support van. It's a budget flight and naturally it's awful, delayed and the seats are rubbish. The life of the rally privateer is total rock and roll...

I'm slightly conscious this is the end of my 2020 Dakar. Once the van is home and unpacked, it's officially over. The stickers will come off, it'll get a wash and polish and it's into the big wide world of eBay for our 4x4 Sprinter. I've a new and rather posh one that'll do the bike shifting and camper duty in the meantime, and nobody needs two Sprinters, even if it does look like a huge Tonka Toy. What the new van/camper is going to shift and to where remains an unknown. I've started to feel keen again though. I've had about three weeks of total inactivity, aside from catching up on real work, tidying the workshop and some life admin, not least eradicating the evidence of 'third parties' in my rather nice workshop.

My workshop is my sanctuary. I decided a while ago to not call it

a garage, it's way more than that anyway, but it's a place I like to exist in my own, admittedly somewhat special, little world. Mrs 275 is sometimes allowed in, but only if I'm drunk (there's a beer fridge in there) or she's bringing cake. I'm now further insulating the ground floor (that's right...) for future baby-sitting purposes. The baby is ours, due very shortly, but it's still classed as baby-sitting as per our workshop rules, some of which are fluid, some firm.

I had to do a bit of real work pre Dakar bike/support van collection, which meant that the support crew of Rog and Del were left alone in my workshop. The results were catastrophic. Shoes were worn inside. Wrong hammers used. Fingerprints left on toolboxes and coffee machines tampered with. Serious and unforgivable stuff. It'll take me at least a year to get the feng shui sorted. It's a cult of one, plus some dogs, if they wipe their feet, and perhaps, if she's very well behaved, the odd few hours for an up and coming female moto rider.



THE BIG QUESTION

So let's get the big question out of the way. I do fancy at least one more crack at the Dakar, but most likely in Malle Moto. I'm going to suggest 2022 is my target. I wrote in the online RUST blog about how a Dakar is a huge consumer of time and 2021 is just too much too soon, especially with baby Keyworth due in March.

As well as knowledge and an understanding of it that can't be gained from questioning other people (I did this a LOT!), having done a Dakar the advantage is that I won't really need to do any other qualifiers or hoop jumping. I'm in the club. It's relatively exclusive. Only so many Brits have a recorded a finish (who? Well that half-Brit Pavey comes to mind, his son Liel too, then Plumb, Extance, Sunderland of course, Deacon, Craigie – although he's Irish...). Probably less than 20 guys. It's not a question that a Google search has an answer to.

We should mention my little band of desert brothers here. Friendships have been cemented in the sand along the way, and Neil Hawker, Simon Hewitt, Mick Extance and David Westwood have all been a part of my journey. The stats are brutal. I'd pointed out before the start that at least half of us were

unlikely to make it, and I was right. David crashed out of Rally Maroc, winning a proper break of his arm in the process, meaning he never made the start. Neil crashed out in stage 5, breaking a shoulder. He rode out of the stage like a hero but it was the end of his 2020 ride. Mick had a serious day in the desert which saw him lose a tyre, then an engine, then his finisher's medal after he was pulled out before making the final check after being towed and coming in after the 'closed door' time. Simon had a catastrophic engine failure, putting an end to his race on day 7.

Both Simon and Mick went on to ride the Dakar Experience, both having rebuilt engines; Mick with the assistance of our own crew (and some of the factory KTM boys too, who couldn't help themselves getting stuck in until well after tea time), Simon with the assistance of his Drag-On racing support team. Simon's race nearly fizzled out before the start also, when he was terribly let down by his previous support arrangements. He found out just a matter of weeks before that a bike had not only not been built for him, but a base WR450F hadn't even been sourced. It's not all lollipops and rainbows out in the rally world.





THE RIGHTS AND WRONGS

Was it what I expected? Just how tough was the riding? Did I do the right kind of preparation? What went wrong? What was narrowly avoided? What went right? What would I change?

The riding was in no way easy, the rocky and technically trails required 100% concentration, and no less when it came to commitment and probably skill, but no one's expecting any novices to be present. We're here on merit. Likewise some of the sand and dune days required the sort of competence that comes only from an extended exposure to sand dunes the size of small mountains. It's difficult to assign a metric to the level of riding required; for example if you're not comfortable with hitting a downslope of a near vertical dune drop with full gas in order to keep atop and ahead of the couple of tons of sand you've just dragged over the crest – the other side of which was completely unseen and unknown only a nano-second previous to you doing so – you're probably not going to have much fun.

The same can be said for the pace 'required' over unknown terrain whilst navigating – this is mental fortitude – to keep abreast of your road book, aware of your navigational position while keeping your eyes peeled on the horizon for an unknown and as yet unseen obstacle that will end your day, and possibly days, with no warning. This isn't for everyone. You can be super quick at an enduro track, but generally it's a bit more controlled, and if it's a multi lap it's unlikely that on lap two you'll forget about a rut or a step that catches you out. You don't have that luxury in rally.

I think the real hardship of a Dakar is both the above intensity coupled to the duration. I said before that I could've ridden much quicker, and I'm going to stick with that sentiment, but what is a constant battle is your own head, and its limits.



Obviously if you're fat and lazy, this would be a barrier. There's few people arriving at the Dakar without physical training – plenty think they not done enough, and that's fair, as you'll never feel you've trained hard enough or for long enough, this is the nature of racers and adventurers. Honestly, if you arrive at an event thinking you've done enough I think you're in the wrong place, or the sentiment won't last very long, and you'll have to agree that you should or could have done more. If you believe you're own hype for too long you're going to have a massive crash....

CRASHES

There were plenty of crashes. Some of them huge, some silly. Plenty of my own, too. There was obviously and tragically the two fatalities, but there was a constant reminder of the frailty of the notion of achieving a finish. On day one I called two helicopters. Day one. Imagine that. To crash out on day one and throw years (18 months of high intensity in my case) of preparation in the bin. What a huge frustration. That wasn't for me. Sometimes your gentle reminder was an unseen rock or rut kicking you back into reality about your own insignificant disposability. Other times it was a lonely, bent bike parked up in the desert awaiting the broom wagon, most probably the result of the briefest lapse in concentration, or simply an unfortunately timed glance at a road book. To say I tempered my riding would be fair. That's not to say I didn't have some real, selfish and unwise fun, it's just that more often than not it preceeded a bit of a moment.

I had quite probably the biggest moment I've ever had on a bike. I'd lost a good chunk of time helping Mick (Extance) with his tyre, and I'd decided that morning that today was the start of my push. When I left Mick on stage 7, along with Simon we were flat last. My berries were still fizzing though, and I

was on it. There were a lot of big rock slabs hidden or just peeking out of the sand that day. There was also a lot of throttle stop action for me. Whatever I hit was totally unseen, I was flat out, literally stretching the throttle cable and I knew I was taking liberties. I'd passed a rider just before a fuel stop and it was mentioned that perhaps, given our position towards the rear that day, that I might be going too hard. I hit whatever it was and it sent the front end high, all the way high – it snatched the bars (even with full damper) and I lost a foot off a foot peg. I landed/hit two further 'whatevers' and it was pure luck that I kept the throttle on for the second one.

THE STATS ARE BRUTAL. I'D POINTED OUT BEFORE THE START THAT AT LEAST HALF OF US WERE UNLIKELY TO MAKE IT, AND I WAS RIGHT.

But I had enough time to contemplate my stupidity, my vulnerability and what I would be throwing away before making a conscious decision to again keep it pinned. I don't think like this. I ride to my limits and take calculated risks, but I ride with confidence and don't dwell on the what ifs or the might haves. Crashes are digital, you crash or you don't. I don't like the term 'try' either. As it implies there's a possibility of failure, so I don't try to avoid stuff, I just DO avoid it. This was a crash though, in everything but the horrible ending. I sat up and rode all the way to the finish line on day 12 with that little warning sitting on my right shoulder. Don't be a dick.

Now, to be clear I'm not suggesting the crashers have only themselves to blame, just that I rode with enough in the bag that I could catch, correct or stay lucky for the rest of the show. It worked, but let's not kid ourselves, those three were equal in measure. I still hit things I'd not seen, and got caught out by things I should have seen, but it wasn't happening so fast or so on the edge that it was a game ender. There are still plenty of dings in my Husky!

WHAT ABOUT SAUDI?

Prior to our arrival, there were many detractors; a host of naysayers and the usual politically or socially offended



vocalists. I've worked in some of the world's biggest social and ethical hotspots. I work in oil and gas in my day job, and have gone to work more than once with armed guards, guys with pixelated faces and total lunatics, in places you're probably best not to admit ever having been, so I'm not naive here, BUT I took a view of looking to the future, and not getting bogged down in past or more recent histories. There is no one that can really throw stones, or at least our great granddads certainly can't.

We were welcomed to Saudi. Strangers we met in the street said hello and welcome. That doesn't happen in London. Our taxi ran out of fuel on the way to the airport for the home run, and within the time taken for the (non-Saudi) driver to begin arguing this part-service was somehow worthwhile of payment in full a driver had pulled over to give us a lift. He went on to go out of his way to drop us off and despite very little English totally refused any form of payment over a shake of a hand and

friendly smile. (The taxi driver didn't get paid btw – Lincolnshire lads are generally tighter than Yorkshire lads, we've just more decorum about it, so you'd maybe not know.)

The landscape was nothing short of fabulous. There was much speculation prior to our arrival about the amount of sand, some gesticulating about closed doors and tough days and some general unease among the participants about the unknown. Well it was incredible. It was different in many respects to the Saharan sands we've seen in other rallies, and there was much surprise about the amount of rocks and technical going. There were without a doubt riders, sand experts if you will, who had ideas of dominance that were left wanting in week one, which saw a lot of loose and harsh trails winding through valleys and over relentless boulder fields. Rally bikes are generally set up to go quick in loose sand, so weren't naturally at home here. I thought the variation in riding was fabulous. There were guys ending

the days detracting from it, suggesting 'it wasn't all that', but that mostly was as they didn't enjoy that particular day. Tough luck I say – everyone rode the same route (some got quite lost obviously) and you've to suck it up.

It was cold though. Seriously cold in the mornings and early evenings. It made for hard work with keeping your temperature correct. It wasn't overly hot during the day, maybe low 30's max, and it was a very dry heat, but you had to factor in the minus temperatures at the start of the day which meant carrying lots of layers and maintaining accordingly. I'm going to suggest this is a more difficult scenario than the more constant, admittedly higher, African temperatures. Not so bad if you've a decent sized team and have a (quickish and mostly additional to the one at the bivouac) service vehicle that can get out to the service points and the starts, as you can offload and have help to get dressed etc (not easy on its own this – try getting a rally jacket over a drinks pack and a neck brace solo, then

imagine doing it by week two when at least one hand or limb isn't quite as keen as it was at the start, and with zips filled with sand and energy gels).

WHAT WENT RIGHT

Well I finished, and with my bike and body in one piece, albeit both with some scrapes, rubs and bruises, so there's a great start. Post analysis is always easier when things have gone wrong. You can hunt down the source of a problem and assign blame duly, but we were reasonably slick. We didn't have any issues with a lack of spares, or tools – only borrowing a chain tool for endless links from another team when we changed the chain mid week, which was only really a precaution. The bike held up marvelously, although I'll take some of the credit here, as bikes don't tend to kill or harm themselves on purpose. Del looked after the bike with very little drama, and not too many complaints, our pre event efforts and learning about the bike coming into its own.

Likewise, my personal routine, sleeping and on-bike eating went okay, with man servant Rog getting into the swing of things reasonably quickly. My sleep and recovery were a well-honed regime, borne of many small yet important factors and experience. There were days, as I recall I mentioned in my blog, that I left my bed/cocoon with the same sense of loss of saying goodbye to a loved one, vowing to be back as soon as physically possible and believing it – making every part of the day about returning as quickly and efficiently as possible to deliver myself back into its warm and comfortable embrace. You might think this a waste of a day's riding, and it is, but leaving that bed got tougher each day, and returning to it sweeter by the same token. Lack of sleeping does not a great racer make!

WHAT WENT WRONG

I didn't spend enough time pumping iron, and I didn't spend enough time actually riding the rally bike. I'm not a professional, I have a proper job (honest). I don't have an unlimited budget. I don't live in the desert.

Not to dwell on the negatives, but all of the above were avoidable, could have been improved or their impact could have been reduced with effort, finances or time. Unfortunately, for the most part they required all three. With the exception of pumping iron, I'm comfortable with the efforts expended on my training and my preparation. I spoke earlier of the amount of time consumed by a Dakar attempt, and I simply didn't have the budget – financial or man hours – to improve on these.

I trained hard. I had a serious regime which I know many would consider insane. You can only post so many images of gyms and static bikes, but I spent a minimum of an hour a day

cardio training, irrespective of where I was.

I was left wanting when I was trying to dig a bike out of a hole, and on the odd occasion drag it up or off the desert floor. I'd decided long ago, though, that carrying 'pub biceps' was best left to posers. I wanted to be lean and light, concentrating on not burning my matches and not dragging around a lot of useless weight. There were however times when I needed some grunt. The thing is in these situations, like cardio capability, there's never enough, and perhaps I'm just being a bit overly critical of myself. Also, I don't go to the pub that much.... Still, I know what I want to do more of next time...

WHAT NEXT TIME?

I'd prefer not to spend so much of my own money that's for sure! People always dwell on the cost, it's human nature – the same way if you're driving a beautiful car most people suggest it's going to be terrible on fuel! The Dakar is an expensive undertaking, but year on year it proves that this, aside from the obvious requirement for being able to obtain the funds, is actually irrelevant in terms of success. Big, top budget teams have riders (and drivers) that don't finish, crash or have problems just as we as the smallest 'team' in the caravan did. I believe luck does play a role. But I also believe you make your own luck. I heard a great little saying the other day, and it almost trumps my favourite – victory favours the prepared approach – if you're hoping for peace, prepare for a war.

I'll take a much more relaxed approach into my next war on the desert, and maybe push for more ground, but for sure I'll be mindful that if we stick with the analogy, it is without a doubt a war of attrition. This in mind, I need to work on some bigger guns... 📷



2020 DAKAR RALLY CRAIG KEYWORTH #114

Craig finished the Dakar Rally in 81st position overall, his best individual day result coming on the final stage 12, with 67th. His total time for the 12 stages was 64hrs, 30mins, 22secs.

Craig was supported by Adventure-Tech, Docks Beers, Rock Oil, RAW Enduro, Alpinestars and of course RUST!



2020 KTM 350 EXC-F

LONG TERM
PART ONE

words & images: WM & KTM

Warren has a 2020 KTM three-fifty for the new season. It's not turned a wheel yet, because as regular readers know by now – stock is a four-letter word in Malschinger's world

RUST has a new pet in the garage for 2020. It's been a few years since we owned a new KTM but the glistening new KTM 350 EXC-F is a trick looking bike, stock. Stock is how it was delivered, not how it's going to be ridden and already the workshop is full of parts all waiting to be united with this beauty. And there's no buyer's remorse here. I'm not saying the bike is perfect – they never are – but I'm looking forward to sharing my journey with it, discovering its traits and foibles along the way.

It's a task arranging builds; it takes time to design a bike that is able to deliver on what you want. And my plan this time is to build a true all-rounder. I want versatility; with a minor amount of

fettle this bike should be as at home in extreme conditions as it is in the desert.

Now we love testing new equipment but it's always a struggle to deviate from using tried and tested favourites when it comes to our own bikes. So fighting my own instincts there are a few newcomers on this build that I think will fit the package well. So, in the new-new stuff pile is a Hinson Slipper Clutch, a custom-programmed GET ECU and K-Tech ORVS suspension (the latter we will be testing next to our Stillwell Performance A-Kit forks which we know and love).

There are a few new protection parts, too, and we have seen some exciting new developments from our usual aftermarket suppliers. For example, we





like the look of the new rear disc guard from Fastway (Pro-Moto-Billet) which looks the business, along with the new Dirt Tricks brake rotors that are made from the same chromoly steel as their sprockets – a part I will not

substitute on any of my builds. The DT sprockets are the best sprockets out there in my opinion.

There are, though, one or two disappointments that will leave us lying short of our project bike goal for at least a few months. You see, aftermarket development in certain areas is lagging behind on the new 2020 models so we'll

have to wait patiently for the WP PDS Supertrax shock to arrive – hopefully this year. That and some additional pipe / frame protection options.

Anyway, as you can see I've got the bike and now a stack of parts. It's time to get the toolkit working...



2020 KTM 350 EXC-F

What's going on...

From KTM PowerParts

- Factory Brembo brake calipers front and rear
- Radiator sleeves
- Grab Handle
- Wheel bearing protectors
- Front Disc Guard
- FMF titanium Mega Bomb header pipe
- FMF Titanium 4.1 muffler
- Trailtech programmable digital fan
- Carbon rear brake shield
- LEDheadlight

From Technical Touch EU

- Hinson Slipper Clutch – complete
- Hinson specialist clutch tool.
- XTRIG ROCS 'PRO' triple Clamps
- XTRIG preload adjuster
- Emig lock-on grips

From Acerbis

- Acerbis frameguards
- Acerbis X-seat soft
- Acerbis replica styling kit (White/Black)

From Dirt Tricks

- Dirt Tricks zirconium rear sprocket
- Dirt Tricks front sprocket
- #Dirt Tricks chromoly front brake rotor
- #Dirt Tricks chromoly solid rear brake rotor

Others...

- Slavens Mule GET RX1-PRO ECU
- Fastway rear disc guard
- Tyres – TBC
- Michelin Mousses
- Regina chain
- TMdesignworks Baja slide 'n glide kit

- Bulletproof Designs gen2 swingarm guard
- Double take trail mirror
- Eiine megabomb heatshield
- Protech fork guards
- Talon carbon hubs
- Talon spokes
- DID Dirtstar rims
- Twin Air powerflow kit
- Raptor titanium footpegs
- SAMCO Sport silicone hoses
- Scotts Performance steering stabiliser
- ProTaper Fuzion handlebar
- ProTaper clamp-on grips
- BRP submount bracket
- KTech ORVS front suspension
- Stillwell Performance front suspension
- Polisport graphic guard protector
- Polisport armadillo pipe guard



ALSO IN THE RUST GARAGE

2015 KTM 200EXC

The last of KTM's seminal 200s. This one has already had the full Malschinger treatment. Too good to sell on, this is a 'special occasions' ride. Not sure on what the special occasions are, though – the Queen's birthday? You can check out the build in RUST issues 6, 14, 27, 29, 32, 33.

2017 HUSQVARNA FE350

A 2017 model but, as WM will tell you, updated to full-factory 2019-spec. Yep, WM's full-house FE350 is quite a beauty and goes as well as it looks. You can check out the build in RUST issues 37, 39, 41, 42, 43.

2019 HONDA CRF250RX

A sweet wee enduro four-popper, this one. Being a JB-bike it's only seen gentle mods (all it needs, he says) but coming into 2020 it'll see a suspension make-over and with JB injured WM's angling to race it in a couple of UK events... Check it out in RUST issues 41, 42, 43.

1985 HONDA TLR250F

JB's long-suffering twinshock trials bike. Wreck or classic (you decide)? If he can get his leg fixed in time, JB wants to ride this in the Manx Two-Day Classic Trial. You can follow the full sorry tale in RUST issues 13, 15, 19, 25, 27, 34, 36.

2018 BMW R nineT

The R nineT has seen plenty of planning and the plan is to make this something of an ultimate street scrambler – but we'll see, will 2020 be it's year. It all started in RUST issue 40. But where or when will it end? 🇬🇧

KTM 2020 KTM 350 EXC-F





BRIDGESTONE BATTLECROSS E50

Contact: www.bridgestone.com

RRP: US\$158/\$172, **UK prices circa:** £67/£85

It's been some time since I've had a pair of Bridgestone boots on my any of my dirt bikes. But with the new FIM and DOT-legal Battlecross E50 on offer the time had come to try them again. According to Bridgestone, 'the E50 is built specifically with the hard-core enduro rider in mind'. Well, I qualify for 'enduro' and 'rider' and boy I've put some hours in on the bikes this past couple of months, so, 'hard-core'? Yeah, I'm good for a set.

As I'm riding the Husky FE350 the most right now I chose the 140/80x18 for the rear and the 90/90x21 front for this test. I fitted them both – with the irreplaceable Rabaconda (thanks endurotyres.com) – with new gen Michelin mousses. The tread pattern on the E50s is quite noticeably different to its competitors. The rear tyre features what Bridgestone call a 'Castle Block' tread pattern which is a convex shaped block within a block design combined with its 'Bunker' feature which is essentially an indent cut-out in the carcass that adds an additional edge to aid traction when the knobby is buried. The new block patterns have been aimed at increasing side grip for improved cornering on the front and less block deformation on the rear, which translates into transmitting more traction force from tyre to trail.

I noticed when fitting them that the E50s have quite a chunky profile for an FIM approved tyre, especially the front. However, the sidewalls on both the front and rear tyres also seemed quite pliable which made fitting them both a doddle.

The conditions for testing were perfect with a good mix of high speed riding on hard pack rocky and gravel strewn tracks, some rock sections, some deep sandy conditions and, best of all, loamy soft chocolate cake dirt. The E50s



impressed over all terrains and the end of the day impression was that this was one of the most versatile enduro tyres that I have ridden on in a while.

I can't say I found the tyres lacking in any specific area or terrain type. They performed well everywhere. What I did notice was the positive traction under heavy braking on the front. To me this was a standout feature – I'm not sure if this was a result of the pliable sidewall, but the tyre seemed to flex slightly and widen into the track – not badly so, rather the opposite, the tyre bit into the track really well and provided a really stable feel.

The rear traction was excellent. The rear tyre mimicked the front for positive feedback under braking and acceleration and I liked the flat corner feedback most. These tyres gave me the impression of riding on a much softer tyre than they actually are – and the tyre wear over the 400km or so that I have since ridden on them has been what you would expect, so as a guess I would think these are good for over a 1000km of trail riding – depending on your speed.

So far I'm impressed but watch out for an update and rating on these tyres at the end of their life. 📧 Warren M.



» Also check out our full product review at <https://rustsports.com/bridgestone-battlecross-e50/>

Words: Warren M. **Images:** JB

Yeah, not just faster, but safer, and making your riding that much more fun, too. Warren has been following a serious fitness programme this winter and the effort is producing great results. So here's how it works...

Fitness above 40

HOW FITNESS MAKES YOU FASTER, SAFER, HAPPIER...

In my last article in RUST #43 I introduced the concept of shorter more intense programs as the pathway to becoming a fitter rider. I suggested a slow and steady start to keep you motivated at the outset – train too hard too soon and the most probable outcome is to quit.

Yo-yo base fitness is a thing I think most of us struggle with, well I know I do. The key part to training consistency is motivation – especially in the beginning. You need to know why you're doing what you're doing – to constantly remind yourself why you're training. The cool thing is that once you're in the thick of it and you start seeing the results, both on and off the bike, the motivation part becomes way easier but don't fool yourself, you need a goal and you need to visualise yourself achieving it.

MOTIVATION

How I want to ride is probably like Ken Roczen – or any of those pro AMA supercross guys. Where they seem at one with the bike, they hit flow state, everything moving as one, everything is natural, almost effortless – poetry in motion. Now at 50+ that's a big ask, impossible given work, physiology etc, but if I can get closer to where they are than where I am, then that has to be a good thing.

I love riding when I'm fit, it just makes the pain and effort you put in training all worthwhile. Head-up, elbows up and agile on the bike with a clear mind makes for a blissful riding experience. Not to mention that 'topping up' base fitness while on the bike is all that more enjoyable.

I'm not winning any championships, god I'm not even winning any local vets



NUTRITION

Monitoring your nutrition is a key to be able to train well, especially when you're over 40. The simple rule is to manage your day so that you are either running at a calorie deficiency or at calorie par every day. Also, what you eat and how you eat is crucial to maintaining energy levels throughout the day. If you're training more than 4x per week (and if you want to be able to keep a good level of fitness) then you will want to be adding your BMR (Base Metabolic Rate) which is the number of calories you need to basically function for each 24 hour period with the number of calories burned during exercise to get to your calorie equilibrium. If you're overweight or just want to trim excess flubber then calorie deficiency for eight weeks should do the trick, and then you can transition to a calorie par regime for long-term maintenance after the weight loss phase. I use the 'MyfitnesPal' app to track my calories which sync's with the Garmin connect app on my phone.

So with all this in mind, my training programme over the past four months has been a combination of the following routines.

F45 / CROSSFIT / RIDING

F45 is a 45-minute functional training program developed in Australia with worldwide franchise outlets. Training is six days a week and has a myriad of programs based around HIIT functional training that is either cardio or strength based with a one-hour hybrid combo class called Hollywood on Saturdays.

They have rolling eight-week challenges throughout the year which focus on transforming both body composition and fitness, combined with dedicated nutrition plans and recipes.

▷ races but I do love improving every ride. But with age I do now have a little more headspace for sports analytics, nutrition and training and how that influences staying healthy and the enjoyment you can get from riding fit, knowing how to eat for energy and to keep hydrated. And that is my advantage.

PROGRAMMES

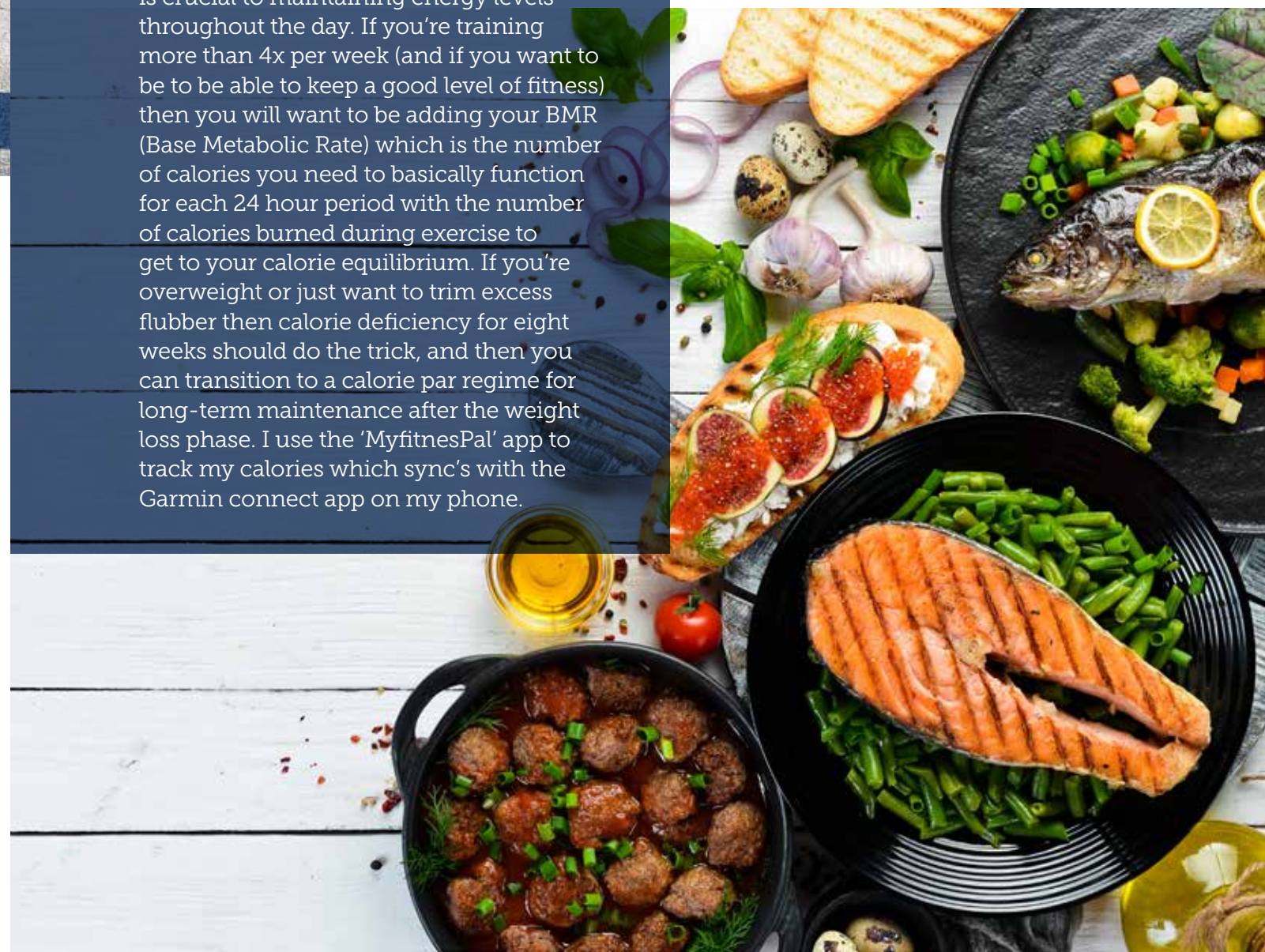
So the goal for my fitness regime has to be to get me to that point where I can ride at my best, without a lack physical condition holding me back. I've spent years applying myself to various programmes hoping to achieve this. Rarely with success. But recently with time to properly research then apply myself, I think at last I have found something that really works... it would seem the key to effective results has to do with cardiovascular health. Obviously, the less strain on the heart having to deliver oxygenated blood around the body improves your endurance capacity.

The biggest revelation for me and the primary difference between how I trained before and how I train now is not simply elevating your heart rate but how you elevate your heart rate.

Long distance running or sustained periods of exercise at a steady heart rate just never worked for me. I'd get

on the bike and the first time I needed strength to lift the bike out of a muddy bog, manhandle it up a steep ascent, pull it out of deep sand, all while kitted up carrying more than my joggers and a vest, I was blowing out of my arse. Not only did any 5-minute spell of this send my heart rate through the roof it sapped my energy stores so badly that it was likely that I would be blowing hard for the rest of the day.

So, I figured that the best way to fix that was to simulate being out of breath and then having to exert power and strength for short intense periods. The aim being to teach the body and mind to become accustomed to this situation. That meant that I would have to find exercise routines that would enable me to adopt my heart rate programme method.





▷ The eight-week challenge is you against yourself and you can decide on the number of days you train per week – they do recommend a minimum of 3x per week but you can train from 3x per week up to 12x per week, although I'm not sure that I know of anyone that has managed that many. I averaged 6x training sessions a week during the eight-week program.

I had done a number of F45 classes in 2019 but started my first eight-week challenge in early October 2019. I needed to lose some weight and I needed to get fitter.

Since the completion of the eight weeks (with a 10-day rest afterward) my routines have shifted to trying Cross-fit combined with F45 and loads more riding.

Typically, if you're following a vigorous training regime you should see the time spent in your max heart rate zones come down significantly doing the same program at the same effort after a few weeks.

MEASUREMENT

So, how do you monitor your heart rate during training or measure your training effect afterwards?

I always use my Garmin HR monitor when I train or ride, which is paired with my Garmin Fenix 5X watch (training) and with my both my Garmin watches (Fenix 5X and Fenix 3x) when I ride. I know I know – OCD. I just can't help myself. Using both watches paired with my HR monitor while on the bike provides a primary and secondary data feed on my training effect, speed and performance.

I'm sure I labour under some illusion that if I hadn't wasted my life working and raising a family and was able to ride more I could have been at least an expert or pro rider and now that I'm older and non-one's watching or cares, I can continue to live in my illusion. So, I track my results, monitor my nutrition and compare my rides to see if I'm improving or not. To me it sort of adds to the fun.

So how do you set up your devices and what should you be measuring so you can translate the information into improvements in your fitness and riding?

Firstly, calculate your max heart rate which is done by applying the following formula.

$206.9 - (.67 \times \text{age})$: This is more accurate than the simplest heart rate calculations but obviously this is a generic formula and does not consider individuality which most pro racers have tested in a specialist facility.

Once you know your max heart rate (MHR) you can calculate your percentages against MHR and set up your heart rate training zones on your devices.

I have set my zones as follows:

90%-100% - Zone 5

80%-89% - Zone 4

70%-79% - Zone 3

60%-69% - Zone 2

RHR (Resting Heart Rate) – 60% - Zone 1

THE STRONGER THE HEART, THE STRONGER THE BODY.

When you're training make sure that you target elevating your heart rate by using strength moves when you're already breathing hard from aerobic exercise. Try and make sure that you do this for at least five minutes in each workout – longer if you can. Tracking your heart rate output while you're training helps you remain focussed on your approach and your goals. I will go into more detail on this training method next time but using this method I am now able to do the same 45-minute routine as I did two months ago but at a vastly lower level of heart rate stress.

REWARDS

I'm loving being on the bike and knowing that I have gas in the tank even when the going gets hard. It feeds my motivation. Looking at the metrics and data from rides I am now able to operate on the bike at 80%+ effort but with much lower heart rate stress than I was able to do previously. Where I was averaging over 150+ beats per minute I am now able to ride harder and longer at lower heart rates averaging at or below 140 beats per minute for sustained periods. This has helped improve my focus and concentration so much so that I am able to focus on my technique and reading the terrain which has improved my riding considerably. Not only have I noticed the improvements but others have too and the gap to riders that have traditionally been loads faster than me has narrowed considerably. 📈

Below: WM's heart rate during his first F45 class. Note he's nearly 35 minutes with a heart rate over 152bpm – in other words, blowing chunks



Above: WM's heart rate during his final F45 two months later – much more under control, just three minutes in that red Zone 5. He was burning less calories as well, which means more energy in reserve

A DISCLAIMER

Given the nanny states we live in I would like to advise you that you should ignore everything I write or say. You should not watch any of the videos and for your own safety please do not follow any of my comments on nutrition. In fact, please be careful that you don't strain yourself lifting any of the devices you may need to. Seriously... if you are in any doubt about your state of health please consult a health professional, take out insurance and always train with a health and safety officer present. I take no responsibility whatsoever for anything I say or do and for any of you that decide to follow my ramblings you do so at your own risk.



ADVENTURES IN AOTEAROA

The seventh BMW Motorrad International GS Trophy took place in New Zealand, in February. JB was there (this was his sixth GS Trophy) and these are his eight most favourite images from that memorable eight-day 'week'.

A QUIET CALM

New Zealand is a beautiful country; with barely five million inhabitants – most living in the cities – it offered huge empty landscapes like this that you just had to stop and absorb. No motorcycle in this image, but we don't care, this is the glory of nature.

Image: Markus Jahn



A MORNING WASH

Team India's Sathyananth Vasudevan hits the very first test of the GS Trophy in style. 'Sath' takes a shower, but such were the hazards of hidden rocks that a few riders ended up taking a bath.

Image: Amelie Mesecke





▷ GOING NATIVE

One of the pleasures of this GS Trophy was getting to ride through native forests that are thousands of years old with species only found in New Zealand, with all the variation in trees and bird life that brings. Team Japan's Sunao Ueda was clearly enjoying the experience.

Image: Vanessa Blankenagel ▷



▷ MOTORCYCLIST

When the public think of motorcyclists (or bikers as they often refer to us) do they visualise this? This is old friend Andrea Box (see RUST specials 'Madagascar' and 'Australia'), with teammate Klara Finkle in the background. And this is the modern GS Trophy – female riders, team colours, Leatt protection and SENA communications for all riders. And of course – big smiles.

Image: Amelie Mesecke ▷





▷ SKIDS

Who can resist making a few skids on a beach?
Especially when high tide will wipe the sands clean.
Clearly not marshal Robbie Schweiger aka Robbie
Two Dinners. He's one smooth rider, that's for sure.
Image: JB





▷ KOREA!

What a team were Team South Korea. Hugely funny, self-effacing, and demons when it came to the riding. They led the competition for three days. And when they flawlessly performed Gangnam Style at the closing party they just sent the whole GS Trophy entourage into raptures!
Image: Amelie Mesecke



▷ POSSE

This pack of BMW F 850 GSs ridden by Teams France and South Korea make a pretty sight, like modern horsemen, as they pass by the historic Victorian built Martinborough Hotel (c.1882). The hotel is one of New Zealand's oldest buildings, bearing in mind European history there really only began around 1840. New world indeed.

Image: Vanessa Blankenagel





▷ DAWN PATROL

The GS Trophy starts each day early, breakfast at 5:30, hitting the road at dawn. That made for chilly but enchanting first rides.

Image: Markus Jahn



Discover the world with Bell's adventure helmets

A select range of Bell Helmets is
now available through RUST at
www.bell-motorcycle-helmets.co.uk



*RUST subscribers get member discounts



ALPINESTARS TECH 7 DRYSTAR ENDURO BOOT

Contact: www.alpinestars.com

RRP: \$419.95

I can't help but think of these new Tech 7s from Alpinestars as adventure boots, or perhaps more accurately as extreme adventure boots. I'm probably like quite a few adventure riders here, guys who like going a little more off-piste when it comes to choice of adventure trails, riding where a standard adventure boot just doesn't feel to have the strength and protection to deal with the hard stuff on a big bike, but at the same time find motocross or enduro boots lack that one much-needed adventure facet – waterproofing. I've ridden in some great locations like Thailand and Madagascar in motocross boots, happy for the protection (when riding a Triumph Tiger 1200 and BMW R 1200 GS) but suffered from chronic trench foot on account the boots were letting in water at every possible occasion.

So these Tech 7 Drystar boots kind of answer a prayer. At last, motocross levels of protection, a grippy enduro sole and waterproofing thanks to the water-resistant but breathable Drystar membrane. And that attention to keeping the water out extends to details like a higher gaiter (the web between the front and side of the boot when you open it) so these boots should be good for water/river crossings too (up to a certain depth of course).

I like the standard Tech 7s as they come without the bother of the inner bootie that say the Tech 8s and 10s feature, so are quick and easy to put on (the latest buckle design is the best yet) yet are very comfortable given the soft polyfoam padding. Now with the Drystar membrane added they're looking even more likely to be my go-to boot for adventure riding. Only one complaint – can we have these boots in the same cool funky colours as the rest of the Tech 7 range please? I mean, just black?

C'mon Alpinestars... **JB**





Back in RUST #39 JB rode in the Mojave Desert with 3Bros KTM's Ricardo Barbosa. He enjoyed the ride so much he vowed to return. And he has, along with Warren M. this time. Ricardo again was our guide and this time he took us to one of his old racing stomping grounds, one of historic notoriety – Barstow...

Words & Images: JB

MOJAVE

revisited



1 THE RANGES

Ricardo and Warren are just tooling along, but forget them, check out the view. The wild lands of California – like much of America – confound European concepts of size and space. This is why most US dirt bikes end up with oversize fuel tanks. ▶



2 SUMMITEER ↑

There are a surprising number of hills in the desert, some big ones too. These are among Ricardo's favourite playthings (as you'll see). Nothing super-special about this one, but it does give you an idea of the kind of spotless skies you get in this region.



3 HEADING OUT ↑

Dust is a constant in the desert, although it varies in density, in this sandy section it gets pretty thick. So when this is the plume that kicks up off two KTM 450XC-Ws, it makes you wonder what it must be like when the Barstow-Vegas desert race kicks off.





4 CHEESE GRATER ↑

The hills are of course made of rock or they'd not be there at all. There are some pretty steep slopes about and here the best ploy is to scamper down them rather than deploy brakes and shred your tyres.



← 5 DIRECTISSIMO

Ricardo knew his hills and here he is blasting to the top of one of them. You can see Ricardo by his dust trail, Warren is in the shot too: the little black dot at the foot of the climb. These were big climbs that were attacked in big gears with big throttle.



↑ 6 HILL VIEW

"Stop at the top chaps and I'll get a photo of you riding the ridge." Well that didn't happen, they just rode off clearly intoxicated by the brilliant trail, so it's just a landscape shot you see here, but you can see the trail and the incredible landscape. Quite something.





7 A STUDY →

A close-up of Ricardo's hill climbing technique, you can see by his wrist he's fully on the gas, but otherwise he's the picture of neat composed riding. Tidy.







8

LORD OF HIS DOMAIN ↓

Ricardo surveys the desert while Warren takes a breather. The number boards: M denotes 'Masters' class (or Magnum as Ricardo prefers), 199 is Ricardo's chosen number on account he's a big Pastrana fan.



9

FINE TUNED →

It's worth taking a moment to study the prep that goes into Ricardo's bikes. Rekluse clutches, Scotts steering dampers, FMF full systems, Cone Valve forks and Trax shocks, another had a full Öhlins setup – that's just the start, there's so much more you can't see and is too much to detail. To a factory standard for sure.



10

BREAK TIME →

Although not too humid, it was hot, so a break in the shade was welcome – if hard to find! Gotta say Warren and I stomped around a little before we settled, this looks like rattlesnake country to us – although we didn't see any wildlife the whole ride.





11 JOSHUA TREE

We're no Monty Don wannabes here at RUST, but we're pretty sure this is a Joshua Tree (ask Bono perhaps?). Pretty cool, eh!



← 12 TRIALS TIME

Ricardo doesn't let you get bored on his rides, he puts variety into his trail and he took us through some great goat tracks that weaved through the rocks, with step-ups and ravines, so you got to working the bottom end power and your feet-up skills.

↓ 13 GRIN & BEAR IT

Ricardo's smiling but check out his posture. While out of sight, blazing a trail across a flat section ahead of us, he suffered something of an endo. Warren came across him just getting up. He clearly landed heavy on his shoulder but we think he took a blow to the head as well. This actually gave him a challenge when it came to navigating out of the desert again when clearly not feeling himself. Low on water, with no food, low fuel and no idea where we were it kind of brought home the dangers of riding out here. Fortunately after something of a mini chook chase Ricardo regained his bearings. For sure that shoulder must have been sore for weeks to come.





← 14 TALES OF THE TAILGATE

Back at the truck, the shadows betraying the low sun (desert sunsets are cool!). Yes, it had been quite the ride. JB's 350 there had been a hasty addition to the fleet and came with tubes. True to form he punctured the front about half an hour from the truck, so rode the last section perched over the rear mudguard, like you do...

↓ 15 ALL SMILES

Ricardo is about grandfather age (we didn't ask). JB's grandfather (Bert) wore a three-piece suit at all times, unless he was umpiring cricket, or on dress down Friday when he wore a cardigan to the whist drive. Ricardo meanwhile is wearing full A-stars, riding a race-prepped 450XC-W, clearing widowmaker climbs – times have changed, eh?





THANKS

Thanks again to the wonderful Ricardo Barbosa for hosting us on this super-memorable trail ride, he is a top man. If you're in LA do check out his shop 3Bros KTM at 1560 Superior Avenue, Costa Mesa www.3brosktm.com It's a great store with amazing stock (the size of which us Europeans can only dream about). 🇩🇪

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Image: Markus Jahn

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