

SSDT 'What to wear' and 'what to carry?'

I have written this list not only for GG Riders but for all riders that are riding the SSDT. This year will be my 30th year and I have a lot of experience of the Scottish but I'm still learning!!

We get a lot of inquires about the SSDT and I feel to inform the riders as much as possible makes for a more enjoyable week for all concerned.

All the modern Trials bikes are not really designed for the Scottish so each UK importer informs their customers about bike preparation before hand.

All the importers are in the paddock, 12 hours a day to look after you.

They will help you as much as possible but PLEASE prepare your bike properly before the event and don't rely on the importers to rebuild your bike before hand.

Ok, what to wear?

Scotland has the most changeable weather conditions ive ever known so no matter what the weather is when you set off believe me....it will change throughout the day. If you have your folks driving around looking after you this is a major help because they can carry spare clothes, drink, food etc. but a lot of riders are on their own with only the clothes, tools and spares on their back to help them.

I have ridden the Scottish in all sorts of clothing and mostly trying to keep the sponsors happy which is important but as ive got older im learning that fashion goes straight out of window. To be dry and comfortable out ways fashion 100%. Also you can always take stuff off but not always put it on!

Ok this is what I think works best;

1. Breathable Base-layer clothing including underpants! This includes a thin base-layer long sleeved, high collar top and a thin pair of leggings. Buy good quality base layer like Berghaus. This will allow the body to breath and the sweat to escape.

2. Then fit your normal Riding shirt and pants that you would normally wear every Sunday. You can swap your normal riding shirt for a better quality mid-layer softshell if you prefer.

3. The only socks worth wearing are proper Gore-tex socks or 'sealskinz' and they need to be new. Same as all waterproof clothing it doesn't stay 100% waterproof for long unless you are the type that reads washing instructions! NO Trials boots are waterproof so you must invest in some sealskinz socks.

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4. Then buy yourself the best quality waterproof pants and jacket you can afford. Most Trials Clothing companies do very good waterproofs but Goretex and breathable is preferred. They must be fully waterproof from the rain but breathable to let the sweat out. The older I get the more I need my body to breathe! Also, don't buy big heavy pants and jacket because you'll fry up when grafting over the moors.

I only wear a really heavy-duty jacket on the long road sections knowing I can swap for my lighter one from the van. I tuck my waterproof pants inside my boots and then seal with duct-tape around the top. If you put them over your boots they just get wrecked and also can catch on your footrests etc. One thing that always annoys me are modern riding pants that fall down when wet or the weight of a bumbag drags them down. Your riding pants and over-trousers need to have a decent belt fastener to hold them in place or (don't laugh!) a decent set of braces! Nobody will see them under your jacket.

5. Helmet.... Go for comfort and lightweight. 8 hours a day for 6 days is along time. Also, which may sound daft, have your haircut shorter than normal so there's less to get wet! I also wear a 'buff' which you can use to warm your neck and also pull up over your chin / nose etc on the road. Get a thin one so it dries quick.

6. Goggles.... Needed, even when not raining. A bug in your eye can be painful.

7. Gloves.....use the ones you would normally wear (and grips). Strange gloves and grips could give you blisters and will annoy you. I actually cheat and fit heated grips (ta kev) which are heaven but a pain to fit and must only be fitted by a competent mechanic regarding the wiring. A thin pair of over-mitts are handy but again only thin ones because how do you carry big daft ones?

8. Boots, these must be almost new, 'bedded in' and comfortable. We now use and recommend Stylmartin but the market has many good boots available nowadays.

NO boots are waterproof so get the seal skins bought!

OK, what to carry?

This will differ from bike to bike and how good your bike preparation is !

You need to decide on either a bumbag or rucksack.

The most common problem is punctures. Carry the normal 'dogturds' and tool to fix a hole in the rear tyre. When you realize you have a rear puncture stop immediately and repair it. Do not risk it falling off the rim, if it does...you are in BIG trouble. You must carry a good quality hand-pump as-well as air bottles. With a pump you have endless amount of air as long as your arm can keep pumping! Don't rely on air bottles alone.

If your tyre does come off the rim then it's a pain and you'll start to panic. You need to take out the wheel and take the tyre off and the sealing band. Fit an innertube (a front tube will do in an emergency) and refit tyre. Then you'll sit there pumping for ages to try and get the tyre out on the rim. THIS is where you need a good quality pump.

For the front puncture, two choices.....either fit a thicker inner-tube and run 7psi and risk it or carry a tube and tools to remove the front wheel.

I'll leave this decision up to you. You can always carry a puncture repair kit if you don't want to carry a bulky inner-tube.

Don't bother with spare clutch and front brake levers, just drill a 5mm hole in each lever near the ball so that if you crash the ball breaks off and not the whole lever. Some levers have a notch already cast in to create a weak point. Carry a spare throttle cable. They are lightweight and not bulky.

On a Gasser, you need to carry a spare gear lever or zip-tie one top the LH side front down-tube of the frame.

Don't bother with spare footrests, they will bend before snapping. I advise NOT using titanium footrests because I have seen these snap.

Definitely carry a link wire to bypass the Thermostat on the radiator. Or carry a thermostat switch...again a small item.

I also carry cylinder head o-rings and tools to change them in case you fry them. This is a real easy and quick job and no weight to carry the parts.

If you fit either a bigger fuel tank or auxiliary tank then you don't need to carry extra fuel. Otherwise carry 0.5 litre in your rucksack.

Make sure when you park your bike at a section the fuel is not leaking if left over too far. You could be at section for over an hour (if there is delay), get back to your bike and you're empty!

If you turn your fuel off, remember to turn it on again or else it will run out always in a section!

You need a spare spilt link and pliers to fit one.

Spare Zip-ties a small roll of tape.

Tools to remove carburettor, air-filter and spark plug in case you fill it full of water....and know what to do.

If you do fill the engine full of water, don't panic. Take out the air-filter and spark plug and turn the bike upside down and pump the water out by turning the engine over. Then refit plug and air-filter.

Take out the Carb float bowl and drain carb.

Turn the fuel on, choke on and kick start the bike with NO throttle. It will start after a few kicks and smoke for a while but this will clear and will be fine. When you return to the paddock change the filter again and clean the carb out.

Other tips...

Eat well and sleep well the week before and during the Scottish week.

During the day at the Scottish keep snacking whenever you can. 8 hours with no food is no good, your body needs fuel too! Try and lay off the booze Scottish week because alcohol dehydrates the body big time. I know it's your 'holiday' but don't get 'leathered'....you'll regret it.

If you're a gym freak like me this helps but the best training is riding your bike. Try and ride a decent Trial every weekend 2 months before the SSDT and also get out cycling if you can after work a few times a week. Jogging is great and better on a treadmill for your knees.

Don't hang about for time but you must go steady (40mph) on the road and 'cuddle' your bike, don't abuse it. If you want to ride fast on the road ride a four stroke but then put up with riding a 'tank' across the moors and in sections. If you ride too fast on the road you risk seizing the engine, wrecking tyres and exhaust systems....its not worth it, let the idiots race past you.....you'll pass them a few miles on in a cloud of smoke !

The top riders will hang about a lot at sections waiting for a tiny rock to move but they have the skill and speed to fly past you on the moors so keep moving and don't hang about at sections, quick look and ride...

If you maintain a steady pace all day you will be fine.

Use your head when you finish a moors crossing. Look at your radiator and remove the mud and grass before you go down the road.

Also, which I've noticed with a few small injuries, be careful when walking sections. You can easily tweak a knee or ankle whilst walking the sections and some are very slippery.

Have fun!

Regards,

Shirty #79