

John Shirt SSDT advice. March 20th 2024

I now write this for all riders that are riding the SSDT as I respect all riders in the event.

I am 53 years old, a SSDT veteran, and have a lot of experience at the Scottish (34 years this year) and I'm still learning!

My advice is suggestive only and many have their own plan which is fine. I certainly don't claim to know everything.

I also have no profit motive for writing this.

We get a lot of inquires about the SSDT and I just feel compelled to try and help the riders especially the newcomers to advise you as much as possible which makes for a more enjoyable week for all concerned.

This is my favourite event, I love Scotland and still cry at Braveheart 😊

Its now approx. 6 weeks until the event and you need to be riding as much as you possibly can from now until a week before Day1.

The weather has been poor so far this year but hopefully it will soon improve.

There is no better substitute for riding your bike in preparation for the Scottish so get out riding as much as you can.

Its also maybe a good idea not riding the weekend before the event to give you more time to get your bike sorted. The week leading up to the event is incredibly short and you need time to organise everything.

EVENT:

Last year the club had a riders briefing/meeting after the parade which was very informative and necessary. To run an event of this magnitude must be massive and I can only begin to imagine of how big a job it is. We all need to behave and it only takes one mindless rider to put the whole event in jeopardy so please go and listen.

BIKE:

Modern Trials bikes are not designed for the Scottish so each UK importer will inform you about bike preparation beforehand. They will all have a checklist available.

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. They are not there to rebuild your bike before the event.

Go to the event 100% ready with nothing to do on Sunday paddock day regards to bike prep. All should be done by then.

FAIL TO PREPARE = PREPARE TO FAIL.

Here is a general checklist for all bike brands.

- Don't try any major changes directly before the event.
- Do your normal bike maintenance and check everything more than once.
- Fit new Michelin (only) front tyre.
- Fit a new thicker Michelin front tube part number 833092
- Fit new Michelin or Dunlop rear tyre. Michelin grip the best. Dunlop are the most secure on the rim.
- Don't try and make your rear tyre last all week. Change after 3 days.
- If your bike is a few years old, renew the cylinder o-rings. If you boil your bike, these will go next. Also carry a spare set and the tools to replace them.
- Make sure you have a small hole in the lowest place in your airbox to let water run out.
- Get your forks serviced and oil changed.
- If your bike is very old, maybe get your rear shock service as well.
- Grease all your linkage, replace and renew bearings if necessary.
- Make sure chain sliders and tensioner pad are all good condition.
- Fit new chain and sprockets. Renthal, DID or Regina non o-ring MX chain is best. Use the gearing you are used to, no need to change just for the Scottish, you'll be too confused when you get to the sections.
- Fit new brakes pads front and back.

- Change gear oil.
- Re pack silencer and reseal all joints and re-new o-rings.
- Front mudflap and radiator mesh on the grill are a good idea.
- Don't fit a new spark plug if your bike is running fine.
- Check all electrical connections and if unsure clean them out and refit with dielectric grease, especially your cdi.
- Fit a new, oiled air filter.
- Check all spokes.
- Check (and renew if unsure) both front and back wheel bearings.

TIME CARD:

Use a decent watch with a countdown.

Learn to work out your timecard yourself then you've only yourself to blame if you do it wrong!

Simply add to the time limit your lunch, all delays and final control to paddock

Example;

Start time ----- 10.00am

Time limit ----- 7.00 hrs

Lunch ----- 0.15 minutes

Delay 1 ----- 0.20 minutes

Delay 2 ----- 0.12 minutes

Time back to paddock - 0.30 minutes

77 minutes of extra time = 1h 17mintes (add this to start time)

Total running time ----- 8 hrs 17 minutes

Bike in paddock ----- 18.17pm

What to wear?

As Billy Connolly said, 'Theres no such thing as bad weather, its just the wrong clothes' 😊

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 being heavily involved in the industry I have always tried to promote the brands that support myself and my riders. However if the weather is bad, the most important thing is to be as dry and as comfortable as possible. Some days can be over 8 hours long so be prepared.

Its so important to keep the rain out and equally important to also let the body breathe and let the sweat out.

Ok this is what I think works best;

Base layer, breathable boxer shorts and T-Shirt. Go for brands like 'UnderArmour' or Berghaus.

Socks, I only use 'sealskinz' and always a new pair.

Then wear your normal Trials shirt and Trials pants. I also use and recommend a decent set of braces to keep your pants up. They can often creep down over the long moor crossing and annoy you.

Your normal riding Jacket is fine if the weather is ok and I like to use one that you can remove the arms.

Waterproof jacket must be a decent Gore-Tex type like Berghaus Paclite or checkout brands like Endura MTB Clothing. Use a thin, lightweight jacket you can fold up small enough to fit in your backpack.

Try and get a waterproof jacket with no hood. A hood is not needed, bulky around your neck and will keep tipping your helmet down which will annoy you.

Gore-Tex over trousers again the thin type. Again Berghaus Paclite are great. Thick ones feel horrible to wear and will weigh you down when wet.

I always tuck my waterproof pants inside my boots so they don't snag on the footrests and rip. Seal with duct tape if needed.

I sometimes wear a good quality windproof (Windstopper) bodywarmer under my jacket to keep warm on the road.

Use your normal helmet you are used to. If your helmet is old and sloppy then renew it. Constantly lifting your helmet up over the moors will do your head in.

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

Gloves.....use the ones you would normally wear (and grips). Strange gloves and grips could give you blisters and will annoy you.

A thin pair of Gore-Tex over-mitts are handy but again only thin ones because how do you carry big daft ones?

The heated grip kits are amazing but you need knowledge in how to fit them. They must only be fitted by a competent mechanic regarding the wiring.

Do not try and fit these in the paddock on paddock day!

Boots, these must be almost new, 'bedded in' and comfortable.

Tip here, your feet will keep warmer if your boots are a little bit big for you.

What to carry?

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

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 trouble. You must also 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 cut out the tubeless valve to 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.

If you carry a rucksack and you're worried about tyre falling off the rim then you can carry a tyre fitting moose.

For the front puncture, two choices.....either fit a thicker Enduro 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 front inner-tube.

Don't bother carrying spare clutch and front brake levers, the standard levers and the decent aftermarket levers are very strong nowadays;

Spare gear lever and rear brake lever is a maybe depending on your bike brand, try and fix them to the bike.

Definitely carry a link wire to bypass the Thermostat on the radiator.

Taking off both wires from the switch and joining them together with the link wire will make the fan run all the time. Fix when your back in paddock and don't wire your fan up permanent all week, it will wreck the fan.

Carry a set of cylinder head o-rings and tools to change them in case you fry them. This is an easy and fairly quick job and no weight to carry the parts.

If you boil your bike and lose any amount of water you MUST stop and top the rad up. Most bikes only hold about 300ml of water which is less than a can of coke! Do not risk it and carry on because then you will fry the head o-rings.

You MUST also keep your rad as clean as possible. Use your common sense (if you have any), when you finish a bad moor crossing and join the road or fast track just spend 10 seconds and reach down and brush your rad off.

Fuel, to stop you worrying, carry 500ml of petrol in your rucksack in proper metal fuel bottle, not plastic

If the weather is bad you will burn more fuel revving across the moors. You may get lost or your bike may fall over whilst walking a section.

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

Spare Zip-ties and a small roll of tape.

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

If you do fill the engine full of water, don't panic and don't try and start the bike because you will just drag more water into the engine. Take off the air filter lid/cover and turn the bike upside down and let it drain out of the airbox. Then try and start the bike with choke on and NO throttle. It will hopefully start after a few kicks and smoke for a while, but this will soon clear and will be fine.

If it won't start, the water has gone into the engine/combustion chamber. Turn the bike back upside down and take out the spark plug and pump the kickstart to pump the water out. Then it should start. If the bike runs crap after you cleared the water out you will have to clean the pilot jet out. (if you have a carb bike)

Eat well and sleep well the week before and during the Scottish week. When you put your bike in the parc ferme, you need food shower and bed, nothing else.

During the day at the Scottish keep snacking whenever you can. 8 hours with no food is no good, your body needs fuel too!

Drink a decent energy drink through the day and not just sugary drinks. Get a drink with carbohydrates and electrolytes in.

I only drink Lucozade or high sugar drinks when im proper tired and need a sugar rush towards the end of the day.

Energy gels are also great and easy to carry but don't go mad with the caffeine ones! Only use the caffeine ones when your dead and not before.

Don't go mad with the booze Scottish week because alcohol dehydrates the body big time. I know it's your 'holiday' but go easy.... you'll regret it.

Don't hang about for time but you must go steady (40mph) on the road and use the choke. If you want to ride fast on the road ride a four stroke! 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 moor crossing. Again, 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 slippy.

Enjoy the best Trial in the world and have fun.

Best regards and good luck 😊

John Shirt

PS;

If you are riding a JSM supplied bike in this years event please contact me via email only to apply for your free goodie bag 😊

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