



BURNT RUBBER, MYSTERY LUNCHES, AND GREAT TRIPS

Story And Photo By Pete Peterson

I was holding a chunk of tire mousse as Shan and I reached the Fiat in the parking lot of the Circuito de Navarra. As the sun set on our trip I said, “You were right, Shan!”

About three hours before that I stood next to Kailub Russell’s bike as Antti Kallonen lit up the rear tire until it exploded into rubber and foam in front of the shipping container that the World and Junior Trophy Teams had used all week as a changing room.

About two minutes before that I was slamming my fingers into my ears.

About 20 seconds before that I was wondering why Kailub was removing his bike’s muffler—half with a T-handle and half with the heel of his boot.

About 30 minutes before that Team USA was holding the World Trophy over their heads on the top step of the ISDE stage’s podium.

About four hours before that I carefully walked across the motocross track of the final test, where victory hinged. The soil was as slick as river-worn rocks on the bank of a frozen creek.

About 22 hours before that Shan and I enjoyed coffee and pastries at a table on a narrow sidewalk in Larraga as race support vans and fans raced to their spots and we awaited the Team USA riders to motor through town to the next test.

About three hours before that Spain and Italy, the second- and fourth-place teams, both dropped out of World Trophy contention with rider DNFs.

About one day before that Team USA lost a few overall points but kept their lead by well over a minute.

About two hours before that we took a full lunch break in Mues and ordered based on the recommendations (given in hand gestures and encouraging nods) of the Spaniards at the table next to us.

About three hours before that Shan made me drive him twice around a one-way valley road to set up for a trail shot he insisted would be the world’s greatest ISDE photo... But he hiked back up after a better look as I was standing in the rain trying to convince a compassionate course official to let me

park the car along the road.

About one day before that Shan and I saw a tiny roadside fire on the way to Ancin’s Cross Test, and before calling it in worried we’d somehow get arrested and be reporting from a Spanish jail as the ISDE finished up. Strangely we found two cops at the next roundabout just as we were driving back to pour water on a fire we didn’t start in order to not get arrested for starting it!

One day before that Shan and I made a morning beeline to the rut-filled Enduro Test at Berbinzana that had the handlebar-deep ruts all the riders had been talking about at dinner.

About 15 hours before that Team USA finished the day in the lead. The biggest course problem was dust (and those ruts).

About three hours before that we arrived early to shoot the test at Larraga on day one—good thing we were early because we’d misread the check arrival time chart and it was only a service check on this day.

About two hours before that Shan and I arrived at the first Cross Test to catch all of the US World Trophy riders racing over the hard-packed and dusty course.

One day before that we bought souvenir bota bags in a trinket shop just before the US World Trophy team riders showed up in a mob to get their own souvenirs.

About 45 minutes before that Team USA marched through the streets of Pamplona, the town famous for the Running of the Bulls, to the event’s opening ceremonies.

About one full day before that Shan and I drove from the Madrid airport across a beautiful part of Spain to reach Logrono and the hotel HQ for Team USA.

About 20 minutes before that we piled into our Fiat rental car at the Madrid airport. Shan said, “I really think we can win this thing this year! This trip’s gonna be freakin’ awesome, dude!” **DR**

“Antti Kallonen lit up the rear tire until it exploded into rubber and foam.”