

THE TEST ZONE

The FULL SUS product testing section, led by publisher **SHAYNE DOWLING** and editor **FRANS LE ROUX** is where we put MTB and related products to the test. We get to pedal, feel, touch, kick, jump, rip, slide, click, wear, stretch, ride (you get the idea) and generally test the hell out of products. So, send us your gear or email frans@integratedmedia.co.za to be featured here.



1

BONTRAGER RALLY MIPS HELMET

RRP R2 399

Reviewer: Shayne Dowling

The Rally is an MTB helmet but more specifically a trail helmet, it has the low back that protects the vulnerable soft sides and back of your head, an adjustable peak and the typical look of a trail helmet. There are some really significant BUTS: The Rally is light – in fact only 30gsm heavier than my XC helmet (370gsm confirmed by us), this is with the MIPS integration. Trail helmets aren't meant for long marathon style helmets, more for safety so have been traditionally quite heavy and also hot! Not the Rally; it has 22 air vents that provide more than adequate ventilation – perfect for our hot summers. I also love it that the chin straps are connected to the inside of the helmet, not like most other trail helmets that extend from the helmet shell and connect at a weird angle under your chin – the straps fit snugly. The Rally sits so damn comfortably and their collaboration with BOA (yep the same bods that do the shoe system) has made the fit and ease of adjustment a cinch! MIPS is a safety system developed to help take care of your brain particularly on angled impacts. Basically, a layer inside the helmet that allows the helmet to move independently at impact, redirecting the impact force and protecting your brain. Definitely a good thing to have!

I loved the integrated light or camera fitting – I used it for my Bontrager light – the system uses a magnet to clip seamlessly into an air vent. Is so simple and so clever! I was really stoked that I never overheated with the Rally helmet, which I have generally experienced with other trail helmets. The peak is a must and it adjusts easily on the fly. A highly recommended lid.

I have said this many times, Bontrager make great equipment. Generally, they are practical, good to look at, functional and are well-priced. The Rally with MIPS sells at RRP R2 399 – not cheap, but then who wants a cheap lid on the most important part of your body?

www.trekbikes.com



2

SQ LAB SADDLE 611 ERGOWAVE – ENDLESS SUMMER

RRP R2 599

Reviewer: Shayne Dowling

SQ Labs have been around in Germany since the early 2000's – they lay claim to devising the first system for measuring your sitbones – now accepted as a must have measurement for ensuring you are on the right width of saddle. They developed their first “step saddle” in 2004 and have made a number of improvements and developments that have given us the 611 saddle and their other derivatives of this unique saddle. The step is the first thing you notice – you sit higher on the back-end of the saddle – there is no cut out but because you sit on your sitbones at least 1cm higher than the rest of the saddle there is no pressure on the perineum area. This step is beneficial to both men and women – less pressure, less numb bits! Second thing you notice is that there is one point of contact for the rails at the back of the saddle – in between the rails is an interchangeable cushion – what? Yip! There are three cushion blocks that fit in under the saddle that along with the natural movement the wings provide when pedalling, cushion your butt even more. The saddles are made for comfort as well as having ergonomic influence on your back – aimed at mimicking your walking movement and working to assist back comfort. The SQ saddle really looks different and I eventually had to take my new chamois off to make sure that what I was feeling wasn't just the bibs – it wasn't. The saddle really does make for a plusher ride – without feeling mushy or taking away from performance. The step doesn't feel massively different, but I can tell you that to date I haven't had any numb bits. Pushing back on the saddle on climbs is comfortable and stable. Coming off the Power saddle I thought it would take a while to get used to having a “nose” again, but not so. All in all, the saddle is superb. It is well engineered and makes sense. I will have to put it through longer rides as to date my longest ride has been a couple of hours a time and no complaints. A really good option to consider if you are in the market for a new seat!

www.gpm-sports.co.za

3

VYE CYCLE'S MIRAGE QUAD BIB

RRP OF R920

Reviewer: Frans le Roux

We are lucky enough to test some of the best mountain bike related products out there and few get us as excited as the prospect of a new bib. Cycling bibs are probably the single most important comfort item one has to wear. As with most products, bibs come in all shapes and sizes whilst some are very affordable, and others are super expensive.

We recently met up with the friendly folk of Vye Cycle to try out their Mirage Quad (men's) bib and some other goodies (stay tuned). A brief history on Vye: they are Cape Town based and have been creating custom and standard cycling kit since 2006. Being in the industry for over a decade showed after I decided to try their bib out for the first time during a 3.5-hour race. Yes, I know this seems stupid, but I pressed on and rode the bib as hard as I can. The bib is made of durable lycra which features a decent amount of stretch. They've incorporated a silicon gripper around the leg to keep the bib secure and in place. By far the most impressive part however is the chamois. A high-density pad, imported from Elastic Interface in Italy, felt so comfortable and provided me with ample cushioning and support in the most wanted places. The black bibs start at R920, whilst a custom bib would be R1 120. Prices would decrease with larger quantities and their minimum order is four units.

At an RRP of R920, I think it is great value for a premium product.

www.vyecyclekit.co.za



4

THULE VITAL HYDRATION PACK 3L

RRP R1 899

Reviewer: Shayne Dowling

This is the first item that we have tested from Thule. We know their bike racks and their reputation precedes them. So, we expected a high-quality product. The Vital 3L is in all likelihood the pack most of us will need. A 1.75l bladder will give most of us all the water we need, certainly between tables on an organised ride and combined with a bottle on the bike you should get through most rides. The pack isn't massive and has space for the basics – the side pockets are a great idea and easy to reach. Like all packs you need to find a comfortable position for the pack and this is easy with the adjustable straps – it does sit lower by design and this means you don't have much pressure on your shoulders – the tummy strap helps here too, it also stops any bobbing through the rough stuff. The underside of the pack – the side that is against your back/skin is made of a light, porous mesh. There is no ribbing, so it fits snugly but the material being so porous isn't uncomfortable or too hot. It has been autumn, going into winter, so I look forward to testing it again mid-summer. Thule's “ReTrakt” hose system is pretty cool, it keeps the hose in one place via a magnet and ensures the mouthpiece is always close. The Hydropak bladder ticks all the health boxes and uses the standard slide sealing system. My only preference for all water bladders is that I like them to detach and seal from the hose so that you can put it into the fridge. It's not a major and nothing a few ice blocks won't sort out on a hot day. There is a zippered pocket inside the pack and a loop on the outside specially placed for a light. All in all, a lekker hydration pack with the quality you would expect from the Swedish marque.

www.thule.com/en/za

