

Logs



Logs, the bane of my existence... Well, at least in a trials section.

I don't think I'm an orphan when it comes to logs. Who can honestly say that when rolling up to a section, they don't feel their heart sink when they spy in the middle of the tapes a ruddy great log? There it sits, an upended red gum or ironbark, looking for all the world like a beached whale with split markers decorating it like kid's drawings on a kindergarten wall.

You would've thought growing up in the big timber country; I would be quite comfortable riding over timber. No, that is not the case. Any fallen timber around our farm was always immediately set upon by my father in his relentless pursuit of getting fuel for mum's cooking stove, which has a voracious appetite for wood. Now as a trials rider, I too, like my father before me, admit to a love of the chainsaw, but only as my way to settle scores with logs that have foiled me. Whilst I could say I'm au fait with the ways of wood, at least with one form of two-stroke motor in hand, I am not good at riding over it.

So woe is me, because it seems no trials section is complete without a log or two... And, I'm not even going to begin on rain-soaked logs – slippery beached whales!

In my own relentless pursuit to improve my trials riding, I have hoarded (*much to my father's disgust*) a few modest logs for practice. And, I do practice. My practice doesn't actually entail riding over logs, but rather bashing into them. I have been shown the log crossing technique and had it described to me ad nauseam. But still I falter.

Why should it be so hard? My tutor cheerily reports that, "it's a slow rollup, aim the front wheel into the log face... Oh, about three-fifths the way up, a little blip of the throttle, whilst slipping the clutch, squatting down on the rear springs"... And guess what? All that has to be accomplished before you are to think about getting to other side. My tutor continues as my head starts to ache... "then as your front wheel hits the face the log, compress the front forks, give another little blip of the throttle, dump the clutch and use the rebound of the rear springs, whilst uncoiling your bent legs to assist the lift to get you up and over".

As I collect the bike from the blackberry bush, I am informed that I didn't use enough rear compression and my front wheel made contact with the log four-fifths the way up instead of the required three-fifths. Of course, at this stage the tutor feels duty bound to demonstrate, easily clearing the log, whilst also doing something with the clutch to have him hanging front wheel high, before hopping on the rear wheel across two further equal sized logs upon exit. "It's easy", he cries rolling to a stop alongside me. It may be stealing candy from a baby for him; I am more familiar with the term, *as easy as falling off a log*.

Whether this quick demo improves my riding I'm not quite sure. It doesn't in fact even make me envious (much), just silently cursing and vowing to conquer this wooden impediment.

With all due respect to my tutor, who I am sure is a man, but perhaps not a mortal man. As a mortal man myself I believe it to be so that I cannot multitask. Certainly, I understand from the many "factual" emails that circulate that men are quite incapable of doing two things at once. (*Which should mean women are very good at crossing logs?*)

By my recollection of my tutor's spiel, there are about one hundred and thirty two things I must coordinate to successfully prevail against these lumber leviathans. No, I am not talking about broom handles here, these I can cross at least 65% of the time, but proper big logs that actually require the rider to not sump out thereby falling off the log backwards and not to overcook which causes the front end to tuck under, thereby having the rider fly off into the sunset *or blackberry bush*.

Because I desire to be seen as a competent trials rider I will continue to practice and practice to get my log jumping right. My firewood supply will continue to pile up as I will have to exact some revenge for at least some of my misdemeanors, that is, until a tree falls to leave a log so large even my tutor's eyes will water.