

Trials Tales



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Maintenance 101

A modern trials bike is a wonder of refinement, honed by generations of engineers and matured by all-knowing mechanics since the day the internal combustion motor first combusted. And so, we arrive at a wonder of a machine that requires minimal maintenance to keep it in winning form.

That minimal maintenance, still required as it is, has reached the pinnacle of its development and I would like to list here for the benefit of readers, the art...no...the Zen of trials bike maintenance. My creed, no less.

Fuel – Very important is to correctly mix at the appropriate petrol/oil ratio. To assist beginners here, I forward this simple calculation: If 100/1 is 100ml of oil in 10 litres of petrol, then 65/1 is 305ml of oil in 5 litres of petrol, so therefore if you have 22.5 litres of petrol and you're running at 72/1 you need 312.5 millilitres of oil to achieve correct mixture...obviously. Then again, BP Zoom is also readily available and quite cheap or run a four stroke.

Washing – I always use a garden hose, and even better one attached to one of those rotating sprinkler things. This way upon arriving home with a dirty bike I set the sprinkler going and place the bike under the spray, thus washing the bike and watering my lawn at the same time. An hour or so should do it.

Chain – Maintaining a good chain is obviously important. This is why the simplest way to keep a clean chain is to buy a new one after each trial. They come ready lubricated so messy chain oil is a thing of the past.

Plastics – Plastics are forever getting scratched. You can't do anything about this.

Tyres – For optimal performance correct tyre pressure must be maintained. Special low pressure gauges take the guess work out of this. Your friends however will all have different ideas about which is the best pressure to run, so do what I do, use a high pressure gauge and maintain the guesswork. Tyres are worn out when you can't remember whether you're riding trials or road racing.

Spokes – These must be tightened firmly but not over tight. I like to tighten mine sequentially and at the right tension so as to play a nice tune when the wheel is spun at machine examination. Currently I have my spokes tuned to the Dr Zhivago theme.

Handlebar placement – Put the handlebars in a neutral stance. This is the best position to allow for forward movement when you get thrown over the bars. A neutral stance also allows for backward movement when the bike rears up and throws you off.

Grips – Do not allow your grips to get dirty or worn out. To alleviate this problem wrap the grips neatly in the same plastic covering that Mum uses on her lounge chairs every time you bring the kids around. Grips should also be "wired" to stop them spinning off. Special stainless steel grip wire is available at quite exorbitant prices. Why pay \$2-3 for something you can nip off the local farmer's fence for nix? Fencing wire only requires an old screwdriver and a Cobb and Co. hitch for fitment.

Air cleaners – As you are no doubt aware, an engine must run clean in order to operate at it's optimum. The stock air cleaner once dirty must be cleaned in a long and laborious way. You have to take it off and wash it ever so carefully in soapy water, then let it dry for like 24hrs or something, then you must liberally coat it in very expensive special air cleaner oil. Leave all this for the factory mechanics; I go down to Cheap Charlies and buy a couple of packets of those paper dust masks and just rubber band one over the carburetor inlet; job done in five minutes and I'm only out two bucks.

Running in a new bike – I love to run in and buy a new bike*. This way I don't have to worry about all the things mentioned above. Just replace the bike regularly and you never need to concern yourself with trivial matters of maintenance.



The result of not buying enough new chain.

*This "Trials Tales" sponsored by the purveyors of good trials bikes and fine chain everywhere.