

# ARTICLE 1 (Enduroworld Jun 2010)

[Stefan Janse van Rensburg]

Day 1: Friday 14 May 2010

The long awaited day has arrived. Lesotho, here we come!

My brother and I left Midrand in severe misty conditions at 04:00 and arrived 8 hours later at Ramabanta Trading Post Lodge just in time for the afternoon's outride.

On arrival I was astonished to see a sea of red Hondas, among them three 450X and two 250R's. Those two guys were going to have a long and painful weekend. Everybody was in good spirit and after a quick briefing the important question came: "Who is in the very peri-peri snowflake group"? I swear I didn't do it, my hand went up all by itself.

6 of us set off at approximately 13:00. Wade Steel-Smith as tour guide with Ian (assistant), Tobie, Warren, my brother Johan and myself (Stefan). The mission was clear-cut: Pieter planned a few old unused roof routes 60 km in reverse, frequent waypoints was put on a GPS and we were to follow it.

It wasn't long before we realised this was serious, not the usual Sunday cruise we do at de Wildt. Wade is an exceptional rider and resting is not a word in his vocabulary and Ian was always prompting us to move on as we were already behind schedule after 15 minutes.

Sometimes we were on track but mostly we explored the vastness of the mountains while Wade did his utmost best to find the goat paths with the info he had. After we managed a mere 15 km, daylight was running out and we reluctantly found a dirt road leading back to base camp. Wade saw it fit to do deviate every so often and we played and learned along the way.....and fell.

We had a marvelous dinner and war stories were told and we had a chance to talk to the people from the other groups.

Day 2: Saturday 15 May 2010.

I strongly considered to join group B, but of course this was not possible. Robert and Dudley joined us after missing Day 1 as they missed our departure. I forced my body onto my trusty Honda trying to erase Friday the 14th from my memory and shutting the part off that register current pain. The previous night's rain was certainly going to take the difficulty level up by one notch.

The day's routes consisted of a morning session, quick refill back at Ramabanta and then an afternoon session.

We set off after a healthy breakfast on session 1, a 70 km loop for group A & B on routes planned the same sadistic way as the previous day with group A doing a quick 10 km extra hot peri-peri warm-up before joining the joint route.

After just 1 km Wade realised we had to be on top of the mountain and not in the valley where we were plotting along. To rectify this he went...well, straight up. His KTM450 moaning and groaning and he almost fell, got off, pushed, tried another line and eventually worked his way to the top. We watched him in shock and disbelief as he smiled and his voice echoed in the mountains that he found a track, "who's next?" ..... Well, he just had to come down to the grazing flock and find another route. After 2 km the first 2 KTMs boiled furiously and I could follow by just sniffing the coolant trail left by Ian. The problem now was that Wade was

following a straight line between 2 waypoints as close as possible, regardless of terrain. But this proved to be endless fun. After each really bad patch we looked back at the real easy track we did NOT take and a smiling Wade "why take the easy route if we can have fun doing it the hard way." At 13:15 we took the second of only three stops for the day, next to a big arrow pointing straight down where we just came up. The "fun part" of our route was starting to take its toll. The remaining water from some backpacks went into empty radiators of the KTMs (did I mention that the three 4-strokes did not lose a drop the whole day).

By now everyone that considered doing the Roof in November realised just how immense and rather impossible this will be for mortals like us. We have done a mere 14,6 km of our morning session's (70 km) ride.

We continued by going, well, straight down. (By this time I already planned my voodoo doll for our course setter).

Tobie took a heavy tumble down the mountain after a small calculation error and after salvaging him and his bike (note to myself: learn the bulldog maneuver) he decided to wait there as we were coming back on that path anyway. A totally drained Robert also rested and Dudley volunteered to keep a watchful eye over them, just in case.

By now Wade found a familiar route, I felt strangely very strong and the 5 of us pushed on at an alarming pace for the remainder of the daylight before returning to pick up the strays and headed home.

Pieter himself took out the Group B. They found the initial route a tad challenging and Pieter took them on a different route. But they still did some gnarly stuff and with perseverance, help from fellow riders and locals they managed to conquer what seemed the impossible earlier.

Apparently one of the locals asked very mystified "why are you doing this?" ... How do you explain this humongous passion to someone like that?

Unfortunately the 2 Honda 250Rs came back prematurely from their ride, apparently boiling furiously on route. I asked Migial why he bought the moto-X 250R and not the Enduro 250X, the sophisticated answer being he liked the two pipes at the back...hmmm.

Group C on Saturday was on slightly easier routes, or that at least was the idea. Laird took them out and they also only managed to do the morning session for the whole day.

The kid (15) on the Honda 150R blowing in the guide's neck the whole day.

Gary himself took out the adventure guys and girls on what I thought were a scenic dirt route. Boy was I wrong - I gasped when I later saw on the slideshow what passes these guys went on with those heavy bikes. Hats off to them.

The luxurious Ramabanta trading post lodge was a surprise: the rooms clean, hot water and food excellent. The hospitality and friendliness of Rose and her team were great. All had a great time and great camaraderie was seen all over and new friendships were born.

I certainly have learned a great deal over the weekend, not once did Wade lift a finger to help physically. He just said "you got yourself into that mess so get yourself out" and then gave advice on how to achieve that. I am a much better rider and learned a lot this weekend.

I'm just still trying to figure out Wade's smiling "now that was a nice flowing section" after a serious workout section, while I'm gasping for air. LOL

Another approximate phrase from Wade: “get yourself up here somehow” while pointing at a small ledge, “ then stop just before the overhang, now pivot-turn your bike towards me, put all your weight on the back wheel and launch yourself in one continuous movement over the boulders, don’t look right”

Thank you a very much Enduroworld (Gary, Lynn, Pieter, Laird and Wade) for an excellent, well-organized and wonderful weekend. Everything worked like clockwork. If you have any doubts in participating in Enduroworlds tour...just do it!

