

The perfect mountain bike...for muddy, river crossings and bike-a-hike conditions.

There is no way in a hash to avoid mud, river crossing and bike-a-hike sections. These elements are natural obstacles and one may safely argue that they should be embraced. Hash aficionados would argue that these are the elements required for a great ride. So a mountain bike set up for the hash should address the following:

1. Chain suck;
2. Wheels locking up from mud build-up on tires and;
3. Brakes;
4. Portaging;
5. Shoes and;
6. The mind or mental approach.

Chain Suck

1. Ride as much as you can in the middle ring, especially in muddy conditions. This moves the chain away from the rear tire so the mud doesn't get wiped onto the chain. The chain stays clean, you keep riding. It also extends the life of the granny ring, which has the long term effect of reducing chainsuck due to driveline wear.
2. Other riders have installed zip ties behind the front crank with limited success.
3. Carry a small vial of chain lube in your pack so that you can re-apply lube after water crossings or after stopping to wash it with water from your hydration pack.
4. Take good care of your chain. Clean it well and lube it after every ride in wet conditions. Some lubes work better in the wet such wax based lubes like White Lightning or Krytech as they seem to suffer less from suckage. Under dry conditions they aren't so good though.
5. If your chain and front chain rings are in good condition, it is unlikely you will suffer from chain suck. Re of chain/chain ring maintenance and replacement... but it does lessen the likelihood of chain suck dramatically).
6. If there is a stream or river, give it a wash as water is a better lubricant than sticky mud. Some hubs particularly loose bearing hubs, pivots and BB seem more susceptible to damage when they are dunk into a river. So cleaning the bike in the river comes with a proviso that your components are able to withstand a dunking.
7. You can also consider installing internal gears such as from Rohloff. They are expensive and add weight to the bike but do not suffer some of the problems from the traditional rear derailleur systems. The tips here are prescriptive and for those who need more science, here is a link on the how and why on the chain suck problem :

<http://www.fagan.co.za/Bikes/Csuck/>

Wheels locking Up

1. Using narrow tires eg 2.0 or 1.9 with deep and widely spaced knobs for the rear will reduce the chances of the wheel locking up from accumulated mud and muck . The narrow tires will hold less mud, dig in deeper and shed mud faster. The extra width of 2.1 and above puts them right up against the chain when you are in the granny. The smallest amount of mud on the tire gets wiped straight into the chain.
2. Bikes with ample mud clearance at the rear triangle will also help reduce this problem.

Brakes

1. Install disc brakes. The performance of V brakes decline dramatically in muddy conditions.

Portaging

1. Anything below 30lbs is good. Lighter is better when one has to carry a bike.
2. Learn and practice carrying the bike on your shoulders and back. Lift the bike from the top tube and support the weight on both the shoulder and back. I have also seen riders carrying the bike by hanging the saddle on their shoulders. This method works when crossing flat areas such as a stream but will not work when negotiating an uphill incline. I have seen people tie foam insulation around the top tube to give a more comfortable perch on the shoulder.

Shoes

Studded shoes with deep knobs give much better grip. Some shoes also come with two toe spike receptacles that can be fitted on the tip to improve grip. Shoes should be light with a sturdy base and use quick-dry material. Sole designs with wide spaced studs also shed mud quicker than knobbed or pattern soles. Rubber soles, which work well for flat pedals, tend to give no grip in muddy and slippery conditions.

The mental approach – The most important tool!

This is the most important skill. If you look forward to and have a positive mindset when an obstacle presents itself, then the hash will automatically be more fun. Natural 'fun' obstacles are :

1. Hike-a-bike sections,
2. River crossing,
3. Hack & negotiating deadfall and,
4. Muddy terrain.

Tackle and work on your skill set and strength so that you can negotiate these obstacles more efficiently. Challenge your ability in each ride and see your skill sets improve. The mind is a powerful weapon. When it is negative or defeated, then no investment in bike technology will work. Look at it from a different and positive perspective and a whole new world of mountain biking experience will open up.

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