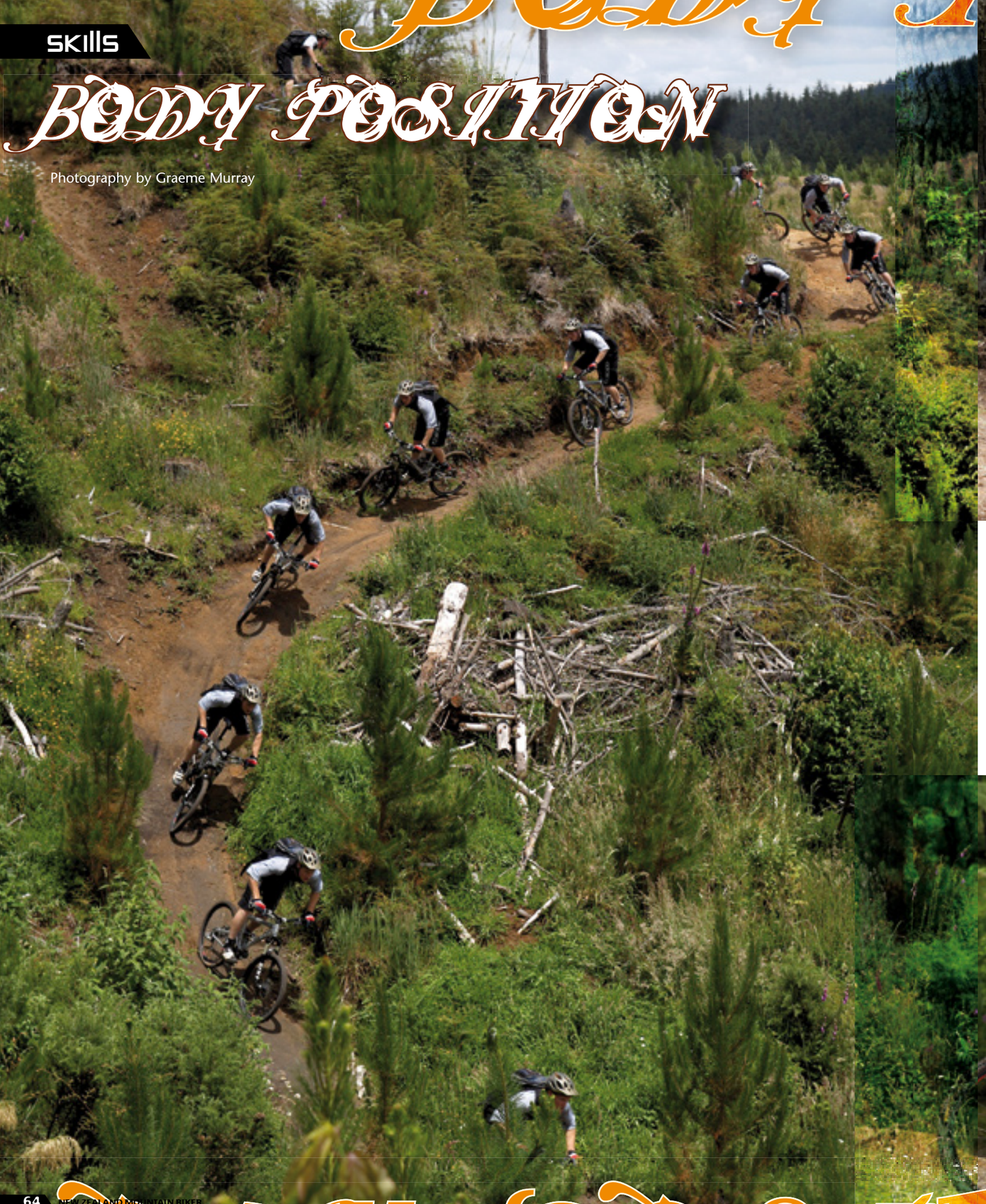
BODY POSITION

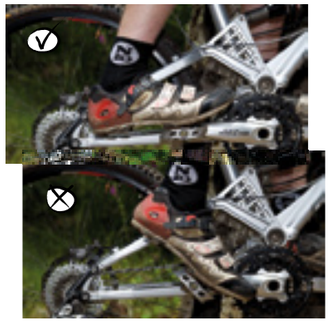
Photography by Graeme Murray



Now that you've all read the last issue on balance and bike set-up and are feeling much more comfortable on your bikes; this issue we'd like to talk a little more on why balance is so important and how to position your body to allow your bike to move around beneath you without taking you for a roller coaster ride with it.

We believe **ONE OF THE BEST WAYS TO FIND BALANCE ON YOUR BIKE IS TO HAVE A GOOD STARTING POINT** to reference from and to make adjustments for the terrain from there. If you are in an unbalanced position when you start it is likely you will feel increasingly awkward and uncomfortable in corners, technical sections and any time your wheels leave the ground. In the last issue we demonstrated how to achieve balance from front to back (not hanging off the back or too far over the front, rather being central in relation to your wheels which are your two points of contact with the ground). The same principle applies to your height on the bike. Next time you are cruising round in your double decker bus see if you can rail it round a corner as fast as the guy in the low sports car next to you. Feel like you were going to tip over? This is exactly the same as riding a bike. **IF YOU CAN GET YOUR WEIGHT DOWN AS LOW AS POSSIBLE THE BIKE WILL FEEL STABLE AND IS MUCH MORE LIKELY TO GO IN THE DIRECTION YOU ARE AIMING FOR.** Now, sometimes that is easier said than done!

Most riders are running a sensible seat height for pedalling efficiency and therefore are a little more restricted in getting their weight low compared to the likes of a jump hardtail with the seat on the bar. But there are ways around this, apart from buying an 'on the fly' adjustable seat post. **A GOOD PLACE TO START IS GETTING YOUR SHOULDERS LOW**, and we mean LOW. Your head wants to be sitting around a foot above your stem, probably a lot lower than you are used to. In order to give yourself room to move around your bike you need to make sure your elbows are bent in a press-up position. Next, while keeping your back straight and your butt sticking up in the air, relax your knees so that you aren't clamping the seat with your thighs. **IF YOU SWING/PITCH YOUR HEELS DOWN* IT WILL MAKE IT EASIER TO KEEP YOUR BACK STRAIGHT AND KEEP FROM CROUCHING FORWARD.** In this position your weight is distributed evenly over the whole bike and you can move your weight forward, backwards, and from side to side without feeling unbalanced. At the same time you will be relaxed and ready for any rough sections of track that would normally throw you off balance.



*A couple of points to remember are that **IT IS VERY EASY TO GET LOW AND FIND YOURSELF CROUCHING OVER THE HANDLEBARS, MOTO STYLE**. That is great for doing skids and nose-coasties as it un-weights your rear wheel. But it is not ideal for maintaining traction when riding down hills. Your weight will not be balanced and distributed over the whole bike and there is a high chance that you will go over the bars should you meet a rock or root. Make sure your back is straight and your butt sticking up in the air. Secondly, your ankles are the most responsive shock absorbers you have. If you ride down hills with your toes pointing to the ground and all of your weight on the balls of your feet, your ankles will be locked. Try to relax your ankles and sink into your pedals by pitching your heels down to the ground with your toes pointing up. It will also help to spread your weight out over the bike.

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