

BIG DROPS

PHOTOGRAPHY BY GRAEME MURRAY

THIS ISSUE WE'D LIKE TO TALK ABOUT RIDING BIG DROPS. WE CLASS A BIG DROP AS ONE YOU WOULD SNAG YOUR CHAIN RING ON AND RISK LANDING ON YOUR HEAD IF YOU JUST ROLLED OVER IT.

Translation – **THIS IS GOING TO REQUIRE SOME AIR TIME.** We would firstly like to say please be careful when trying this technique out as it takes a huge amount of practice to master and can go very wrong if done incorrectly. For a start practice it on easy drops until you can do it with your eyes closed, and if possible check out our clinics as there is no substitute for hands-on instruction.

The biggest problem most people encounter is trying to do a drop by just pulling up on the handlebars. In general, wrestling with the handlebars will get you into trouble as you are not guiding the bike with your momentum and weight, and the sudden yank will equate to erratic and very unpredictable outcomes (this is also applicable to bunny hops). Try to think of the handlebars as a resting point for your hands only, and concentrate on using your ankles to drive/guide the bike. This will result in **CONTROLLED MOVEMENTS** and the bike will respond quickly and happily to your requests.

On the ground practice standing right up on your toes and then letting go, allowing your heels to drop to the ground in a thud which you'll feel all the way to your chin. Practice riding up and down your street rocking up and down, doing this on your pedals until your ankles free up and you can **MAKE THE BIKE BOUNCE ALONG IN A RHYTHM.** Remember though that this is an ankle only movement, leaning on the handlebars and keeping your knees locked out will help you get it.

The second part is **ADDING A WEIGHT TRANSFER.** From a centred position, start by weighting the front wheel, and in one fluid 'rocking' movement transfer to the back. Once familiar, allow the momentum to carry on through your ankles and drive the front wheel up then return to a centred position.

Once confident, try doing it off a curb. This is quite tricky as you only have six inches to work with, but is also very safe. **IT'S ALL IN THE TIMING,** and when you get it right you should be able to keep the front wheel up long enough for both wheels to land at once.

Once you really get the hang of it, try it on bigger steps then drops. It is very important though that you think of the whole process **AS A CIRCULAR MOVEMENT,** i.e. make sure you bring your weight back to the centre as you land otherwise you will end up with all the problems that come with landing with your weight on the back wheel – for a start you will get sprung like a Jack-in-the-Box, and you can expect to include (no deposit, 24 months interest free) no steering, braking or traction on touchdown! Picture of incorrect procedure not included as neither of us were game enough to do it!

MTB SKILLS CLINICS JAMES 'DODZY' DODDS AND GABBY MOLLOY RUN MTB SKILLS CLINICS AT SITES AROUND THE COUNTRY. THE CLINICS ARE AIMED AT ALL LEVELS OF RIDERS AND THEY CATER FOR GROUPS OR INDIVIDUAL TUITION CAN BE ARRANGED. CHECK OUT THEIR WEBSITE FOR MORE INFORMATION.

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