

# More Advanced Timekeeping

This is where enduros turn into the "thinking person's game"



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Last month we presented part two of our timekeeping epic, where we talked about check-ins and check-outs, possibles, and what to do in a checkpoint. This month we'll tell you about all the other spots in an enduro course that will make you stop and think, and a few other fine points.

## Resets are Your Friends

When I was starting out, the one thing I really looked forward to on the course was the resets. Here was a spot where the benevolent club was going to give you time to rest and get your act back together. In a reset you could plan to fix something on your bike, feed yourself, get a drink, or just lay on the ground and get your wind back. A reset is always noted by a start mileage and a finish mileage, like "Reset From 26.4 to 30.0". In our sample route sheet, this reset occurs in a section with a speed average of 18 mph, so the 3.6 miles eaten up by the reset nets you a 12 minute break. Twelve minutes is a luxurious amount of time for a reset, and you could do all sorts of comforting things to your bike and yourself in that amount of time. You could eat your lunch, if you have it with you. I've watched professional riders in the Six Days change front and rear tires and install a new air filter in 12 minutes. Use your time wisely! All you need do when you arrive at the reset is reset your odometer up to the exit mileage, 30.0 in this case, and note your time. If you rolled into the reset on time you have almost a full 12 minutes to kill. Most likely you'll be late coming in, since most clubs put resets in the course to get you back on time, or at least give you a little of your late time back. In this case, check how much time you have until you have to leave, and then do whatever you have to do. If you were later than 12 minutes d own coming into the reset, then just reset your mileage and keep moving, and comfort yourself in knowing that you're at least not as late as you were a minute ago. However, if you have the time, it's best to spend at least the last minute of a reset looking at your roll chart and trying to think ahead to see what is coming up and how to attack it. Maybe there is a speed change to a higher average speed ahead; could be a dead giveaway for a tough section. Maybe there's easy riding ahead. If the reset ate all the "free time" following the last check (remember the "three before, two after" rule), then you know for sure that the next whole minute is a "possible," and you don't want to leave the reset early, unless you do so very carefully.

I remember once at a mountain enduro in California, I was sitting at a reset with nothing to do but wait, so I rolled up my roll chart and looked ahead. The speed changed to 30 mph immediately following the reset, and then there was another reset in exactly ten minutes, five miles up the course. The riders were leaving the reset following a cow trail wandering alongside a shallow stream. The fact that the next reset was so close made me deeply suspicious that there may be a tricky special test in that stream, and I told my partner that I'd bet there was a check in

4.5 miles, and in order to zero it we were going to have to ride straight up that stream, and forget about the wandering cow trail. We left the reset just a little bit early, and crept up to the next possible, which turned out to be a check-in. Now we had exactly four miles to the last possible before the reset, we were at the very top of our minute, and there was nothing to do but gas it! The majority of the riders hadn't figured it out by this point, and were still following the cow trail and trying to stay dry, but not us. We wailed through that stream like we were heading for a house on fire; luckily moving water rarely runs deep in southern California. For exactly four miles we rode like lu natics straight through the water, in the end mixing it up with the rest of the riders who finally figured out what was going on. At the check-out we were soaking wet, but we both carded zeros for the section--and that made it all worth it! The moral of the story is don't just collapse at a reset. Take some valuable time to gather your thoughts and look forward to what might be coming ahead. Every now and then you might get lucky--I won the B 250 class that day.

### **Gas Stop/Gas Available**

A Gas Available is a spot on the course where the club has graciously allowed pit crews access to service their riders, if they need to, and nothing more. Gas Available means if you can get a gas can in there you're welcome to re-fuel, but the club isn't going to give you any time, and there's no two before, three after rule. Usually if the club knows that their mileage between official gas stops is long, they will provide a gas available and rig the course so you have a few minutes available--they'll make the riding easy, or even provide a gas available at a reset. Occasionally there will be no extra time at a gas available, and a real need for fuel. This is also known as a panic stop, and you just deal with it the best you can. A Gas Stop is an actual, official place on the course where the club has deemed a necessary re-fueling point. Often times the club will provide a "gas truck" that will carry your can to the gas stop. If such a thing is provided it's a very good thing to know about, since you may run out of fuel on the course without your gas can at the gas stop. Whether or not a truck is provided is noted on the route sheet, or signs are posted to that effect. Clubs most often provide some amount of extra time at the gas stops, either through a reset, free time, or a layover.

### **Free Time**

Free time or layover means that the clock is allowed to run while the mileage remains fixed--you're given a length of time to spend at a particular mileage. The key thing to remember is that it's not a fixed length of time from whenever you arrived at the layover. The layover time is calculated from whenever you were supposed to arrive; if you're late into the layover you're certain to not have as much time as the club originally gave you. Either case, follow your roll chart. You will have a note on the chart telling you when you have to leave, and you'll be well aware of that time, since you carefully made up the chart yourself, right? Gas stops and layovers can be tricky things. In the start of this Timekeeping series, we reproduced a route sheet from the 1996 Stumpjumper enduro. Looking at that, it's interesting to note that they had the riders refueling back at the start, after the first loop of the ride. The club gave 29 minutes for the layover, and called the refueling stop a gas available rather than a gas stop. Of course, what this means is that there could be a check at any legal location prior to the layover, since there's no "two before..." rule for a gas available. However, the club designated the start of the second loop

as a Start Control, which is affected by the "three after" part of the rule, so there couldn't be a check until the first possible after three miles. What this meant, at the time, is that all the confusing instructions to go 6 mph for seven tenths, then change to 18 mph for another nine tenths, then change to 24 mph could all be basically ignored--you could just ride out to 2.8 miles on the course, make sure you were close to the top of your minute, and then ride to the first possible at 3.2 and start looking for the first check-in. It may be worthwhile to note the difference between free time and a reset here. When you're in a "free time" section, or a layover, the club is giving you time. When you're in a reset, the club is giving you mileage, which in a roundabout way also gives you time back. However, a reset is always something to study carefully on the route sheet, and should prompt you to ask if the club is doing anything sneaky with the reset--like taking away time in which a check isn't possible, or setting up a course to use a specific location for a check.

## **Key Time**

One of the terms you'll hear a lot is "key time," and if you don't know exactly what it is you're going to eventually embarrass yourself. Key time is nothing more than the theoretical start of the enduro. All enduros will have "Key Time 8:00 a.m." or Key Time 9:00 a.m." on the race flyers, or some such time notation as that. It means that the enduro starts at that time, and everything with a time attached to it, during the enduro, is based on "key time." Remember there are no riders on key time. The first riders, riding on minute one (1A, 1B, 1C, 1D), start when the key time clock rolls up to 8:01, or 9:01, or whatever key time is. For the rest of the enduro, you'll find key time notations on many instructions, like speed changes, gas stops, layovers, and your crew will be noting key time listed for spectator points and gas availables, along with all the rest. To know when you're expected to pass a certain point on the course, assuming you're on time, just add your starting number to key time. So, if you start on minute 24 (24C is your number), just add 24 to key time. Thus, your starting number in the Stumpjumper enduro is 8:24. Now, way back in the old days it was normal to set your roll chart up so it started at :24, so that you could set your watch to the key time clock and when you looked at it you would see key time as well as the actual time of day. Hardly anyone does this anymore, since all commercial roll charts start at "0.0" and all enduro timers and computers start at "0.0," and if your clock starts at :24 I'll guarantee you that at some point during the day you're likely to get terribly confused...especially if you try to reset your equipment off of someone else's. Best to just go with the flow, start everything at "0.0," and get on with your riding.

## **Course Mileage**

Two terms that are common: Route Sheet Mileage and Ground Mileage. Route sheet mileage is whatever the final numbers say on the route sheet. For all intent and purposes this is the official mileage of the course. Ground mileage, or actual mileage, is what you wind up riding with all the resets taken out. Ground mileage is the important one for figuring out whether you can muster the strength or fuel mileage to get between the gas stops. If your bike can't make the ground mileage between the gas stops, you'd better make sure your crew is at the gas availables. Most enduro association rules require the posting of mileage on the course, during the enduro. Some clubs use pie plates, some just scrawl the mileage on major turn arrows fixed to the trees. Either way, you should know in advance that this marked course mileage is the official mileage of the

course, and no matter how screwy they might be, they are correct. In other words, if your \$300 electronic odometer says 24.2, and you pass a mileage marker that says 24.4, you'd better reset your instrument because it's wrong. The marked mileage reflects the findings of the layout odometer, and it is considered the true mileage of the course. Every now and then a club will mess with your mind by stretching or shrinking a section by a tenth or so, and then plainly mark the mileage just to make sure you're not sleeping. If you do find a mileage marker that appears to present a major correction, be alert for a checkpoint ahead. If the club is playing with you, they may be trying to burn you right around the corner!

### **Putting it All Together**

In conclusion, it is very difficult to convey in this article all the information you're going to need to stay on top of things while you're riding the enduro. To be absolutely competitive, you not only have to ride fast, you have to THINK. You have to be totally aware of where you are, both on the course and within your minute, from the moment the enduro starts until you finally clear the finish checkpoint. It is not easy to accomplish this.

What happens if you foul a plug? What if you rip your odometer cable off, and you don't have a working odometer any more? What if you whack your foot on a stump and can't see for all the stars swimming in front of your eyes? What if you crash? What if the batteries in your clock die? What if....?

Well, the simple answer is this: if you stop thinking about timekeeping while you're in the middle of the enduro you're almost guaranteed to lose, unless the weather has turned the run into a pure survival event, which doesn't happen often any more. Practice is not all that practical, but you have to be good enough to ride your bike unconsciously, without thinking about controls or suspension or handling or anything. You have to have your bike set up to where you're positive it's going to finish the ride without giving you any trouble at all. And, you have to know the rules and your timekeeping system inside out, so there are no bad surprises out on the course. You'll get to this point by gathering experience; the more enduros you ride, the easier it will become.

However, if you want an "edge," and you don't mind paying for it, there are enduro computers out there that will take a lot of the hard thinking out of your enduro riding. We'll take a look at them next month, and then after that maybe we'll look into some of the secrets of the pros for you really hardcore riders. Stay tuned, and never start with old batteries.