

Ride 435 Report – 22 July 2012

Neo's Led Ride.....!

Hares: Neo (on a motorbike)

It was a motley crew of true believers that assembled in the car park outside Neo's place, including Coo Chi Coo, No Good, Uranus, Hartmut, David Lucas, Squatting Frog, Patrick Escalle (what- no hash name yet?), Philip Kaldis, Goes Both Ways, Copy Cat, and yours truly, accompanied by a virgin friend about to earn himself crash of the day...

The sun beat relentlessly down on this small kampong in Johor – less than 10 kilometres from Singapore as the crow flies yet a world away – but did nothing to diminish spirits. After the usual milling around and perving at each other's bikes, the magic moment arrived... 10am, and we were off.

There's nothing ignoble about being led on the ride that ensued – though having the Hare on a motorbike was a bit rough. No doubting Neo's local knowledge however, nor his commitment to the cause – 32kms of tough climbs, fast descents and exciting single-tracks through plantations and dense secondary forest.

After a few hundred meters of broken tarmac, the distinctive 'brr' of Neo's motorbike (bloody cheater) could be heard pulling off, after which we climbed 45 meters within the first 10 minutes, ultimately cresting a large expanse of open grass – hot hot hot. A pause to admire the view, muster the troops and catch breath, then a fantastic fast single-track descent into the heart of the plantation. Briefly emerging to civilization in the form of a [small road](#); as yet no-one had taken a tumble – but that was about to change. Virgin finds Malaysia's entrant into the 2012 Hidden Pothole Competition, and was unceremoniously parted from his bike. Though missing Gold through lack of a full-frontal face plant, he achieved a respectable Silver by virtue of blood from three of four limbs. Silver for a flesh wound?! Yes, and well-deserved after he willingly submitted to an evil stinging tonic administered by Doctor Death, aka Copy Cat.

Sympathetic moment over ("how's the bike, is it OK?"), the pack was off again, a bunch of cheese-eating front-markers doing their best to outpace each other, followed by the rest of us mere mortals. Soon it was yours truly's moment for a big off: a passing attempt gone wrong, a rutted trail, a moment where man and machine were airborne as one – and then a (thankfully gentle) side-swipe of an elevated bank, resulting in nothing worse than the kind of full-body graze that makes for great bragging in the pub.

Before we knew it, we'd outdone NASA's Curiosity, being the first mountain bikers on the face of another planet – or so it looked, and felt, as the sun beat relentlessly down. Mars? No, we'd ridden into a disused quarry (or some other similar example of Malaysia's specialty, raping nature in ugly ways). Our cheese-eating leaders, riding boldly for Uranus, were lassoed by Neo before they penetrated Jupiter's Ring and hauled back into the forest with the rest of us.

By this time a good hour had passed, but the most interesting part of the ride was yet to come. Emerging into a small clearing, a simple (some would say Stone Aged) hut sat adjacent to a goat pen. After restraining some of our riders – it's funny what the forest will do to a man – Neo led us through a veritable maze of tiny trails through rubber trees. Not set in any sort of orderly array – instead, seemingly at random and interspersed with plenty of secondary forest – nevertheless the trees clearly are still being worked, as they bear tell-tale tapings, with accompanying cup to catch the sticky run-off. A fascinating glimpse of how the other half lives.

Neo thus far had been doing a pretty good job of keeping the pack together and headed in the right direction (though how he knows his way 'round the forest is anyone's guess). But that soon was about to break down, as the rest of us followed the fastest down an awesome dirt trail that dropped more than 10 meters over a

kilometre, a couple of evil-coloured green ponds requiring rapid evasion *en route*. The fact that we'd overshoot Neo's intended reverse point didn't matter; the descent was very memorable and entirely worthwhile. Interestingly, we'd also reached what Neo assured us was a rideable lake... Taking Neo at his word, rumbling stomachs, parched throats and the fact that we were already two hours into a demanding ride dictated an about-face.

Climbing back up the very same track we'd just careened down, the pack followed Neo in the general direction of home via a few exciting, challenging single-tracks, before finally re-emerged onto a road and the sweet smell of trail-bike fumes. Pushing hard along the road – you've got to love a last-minute hill – we emerged back at Neo's a full 3 hours 20 minutes after starting. Neo's Led Ride a tremendous success and no-one lost to a *pontianak*.

Highlights of the circle included a visiting young Frenchman – apprentice to Patrick Escalle – no doubt wondering if we might be persuaded to let him have more beer; virgin Lucas being anointed crash of the day; and a pink helmeted dude, apparently of Swiss origin, being given the hash moniker "Rule No. 1". Following which there was an unseemly scramble for the border.

OnOn

Scribed by,
Brick Shit House

