

# Ride 541 Report – 27 May 2018

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## The Brösel Goes to Batam Ride!

### Hare: Slippery Nipples

Under the cloak of darkness, a small band of the faithful assembled at Harbour Front Centre for ticket collection and immigration clearance. From our original roster of 15, the group that boarded the boat was pared down to 13. TI Joe, who had booked a spot on the trip, was just returning from India on a flight and Jascha was tending to important business matters, so they both are forgiven but were missed regardless.

For the rest of us, there were a few “Keystone Cops” moments at Harbour Front Centre as our bike tickets were passed out, with Slippery Nipples in a panic until his own bike tag was sorted. Rik Oberoi was a latecomer and made the ferry with moments to spare. So much drama and we hadn’t even left the harbour yet!

The boat ride gave some of us a chance to catch up on our sleep. Rough Sex was lamenting how her favourite cartoon, Tom and Jerry, wasn’t playing on the overhead television set. Roughly one hour after setting out, our sleepy cohort arrived at Batam and somehow, we all managed to clear customs without incident. Drak Bike Park staff met us at the ferry terminal and we boarded two vans that ushered us safely to Drak’s office, which is housed in an Indonesian-style block of markets and storefronts. Since my last visit a year ago, the bike shop now looks markedly different and has become a full-fledged restaurant rather than the bike shop that I remember. Although the façade had changed, the service and attention to detail that owner Stewart Ong and his team displayed hadn’t changed in the least – it was as outstanding as ever. Sporting his trademark red motocross shirt and smoking a Marlboro cigarette, Stewart was in fine spirits and gave us a briefing before we set off in search of adventure.

The biggest safety risk at Drak Bike Park occurs even before you reach the trails, for crossing the busy 4-lane highway is like playing the 1980’s video game called ‘Frogger.’ We managed to cross without incident in groups of four’s and five’s. We cycled the 1km to the ride start and entered the Promised Land at last.

The weather was ideal for cycling – although the skies were overcast in the morning, it didn’t rain and the rain from previous days had tamped the dirt and eliminated any dust in the process. We were relishing the single-track experience and the idyllic fire roads until I traversed a rut at the wrong angle. The earth didn’t move, but I certainly did as I was thrown headfirst over my bike at 30km per hour and suffered a bruising pain in my right ribcage. As Wet Beaver and Deviant passed by, I mumbled “I’m okay, keep going.” Fortunately, the group did a great job of regrouping every 10-15 minutes so I was able to catch up to them at the next checkpoint – battered but not defeated.

No ride to Drak Bike Park is complete without meandering through the never-ending trail alongside the waterside where tree stumps and turns await you at every corner– the route is like Butterfly Trail (near Chesnut Nature Park) on steroids. Like a perilous path from Lord of the Rings, these trails have felled many a man (and woman) who didn't respect the laws of nature; namely, how you must cross a tree stump at a perpendicular angle. Woe to those who attempt to cross a stump at an angle, or you are certain to take a hard fall. Traversing this portion of Drak Bike Park was perhaps more difficult than usual because most of the roots were slick with moisture from the rain.

At some point that morning, I suffered another fall as I rode through a pool of water that was deceptively deep. As my pedals moved furiously like in a cartoon, my bike became mired in the bog and I took a spill into the murky water. This time the fall was more ego-bruising and comical than my perilous spill earlier that morning.

The motorcycle guides did a commendable job of keeping us on track, although on more than one occasion we had to 'double back' because the driver had taken a wrong turn. As Drak Bike Park has countless intersections that basically all look the same, if you happen to take the wrong path you are easily separated from the pack. This happened to me when a motorcycle guide offered to take me back to my friends. With his English being as good as my Bahasa (which is almost non-existent), he mistakenly brought me back to the cohort that was loitering around the lunch spot before heading off on their guided ride. Stewart kindly asked the guide to lead me to the group doing the full course, and in moments I reached them. Rik, who rides like a speed demon, was momentarily side-lined when he had to mend his tire, but in moments we were off to discover the rest of the bike park.

Lunch was an opportune time to refuel with Pocari Sweat and some trail mix. My Precious was revitalized, but the dried fruit in the trail mix had him lifting his leg like a dog to release some less-than-precious gas. We should give that man a wine cork to suppress his gas attacks on the single-track trails.

Stewart had offered to bring us to the 'top of a mountain' after our much-needed lunch break, so roughly eight of us made our way up some demanding switchbacks until we regrouped at the top. At that point, our guide said, "Who wants to go back down and come back up?" A hearty few said yes, while the more sensible ones like Tinsel Tits and I remained on the hilltop as Slippery Nipples did a recce to determine from which position he could film the most dramatic shot of the riders pedalling back up. Once in position, it was a matter of minutes until Rik cycled up the hill and exclaimed, "I could do that all day." Too Easy followed with a smile on her face – for her, this was merely another day of XTerra training. The rest emerged from the bush in dribs and drabs, the gasps coming louder and faster as each one finally reached the summit.

We enjoyed the post-lunch ride but as always, even an enjoyable ride can eventually test our limits. Slippery Nipples was growing impatient for the end to come, as he was heard to bark out, "I thought they said this was only going to be a 5km ride?!"

Eventually, the sound of the highway traffic could be heard through the treeline and we gathered near the road as a steady stream of cars made it a battle of 'man versus machine.'

Stewart and his crew were able to carve a path for us to safely cross the road, and from there we headed straight to a carwash where we left our bikes and proceeded on foot back to the restaurant.

Those who had arrived before us were showered and tucking into soup, rice and local dishes from the restaurant. A can of Bintang was put into my awaiting hands and was like a taste of nectar to a thirsty bee. We made our way to one of two shower rooms and took a rustic 'scoop shower' that brought immediate relief and washed away the layer of sweat and dust.

When I emerged back at the storefront, the gang had moved across the road to a shady area where The Circle was already underway. Slippery Nipples, Stewart Ong and his wife were ushered into the Circle for a hearty charge. Without their initiative and guidance, this ride would not have come to fruition. "Here's to the Hares, they're true blue, they are bastards, through and through, they are piss pots so they say, tried to go to Heaven but they went the other way. Drink it down, down, down, down, down..."

Next up, one of the resourceful and friendly guides was called forth. His chivalry and excellent service had not gone unnoticed. And the choir bellowed, "Here's to the Guider, he's true blue, he's a bastard, through and through, he's a piss pot so they say, tried to go to heaven but he went the other way. Drink it down, down, down, down, down..."

The next ride – to be held on 17 June – was mentioned but no one seemed to be certain of when the date was, where it will be held, or even who is organizing it. Coo Chi Coo said the next ride is a secret (Hint: you can now check on the website, [singaporebikehash.com](http://singaporebikehash.com) to get the latest update).

FCB was feeling in a *kiasu* mood, so much so that he wanted to promote his ride that will only occur at the end of July. The Bastille Day Ride, which Coo Chi Coo regards as the 'best-laid ride' in SBH history, includes 35km of pristine single-track just across the border in Malaysia. Our dedicated Hares for the ride include Fat Crashing Bastard, Too Easy and Old Worn Stump. As the crow flies, the ride site is about 10km away from Singapore, but worlds away in terms of the excellent riding experience you will encounter there. Do spread the word among your cyclist friends, as this ride will certainly be on the shortlist for Ride of the Year. "Please support the Hares!!" bellowed Fat Crashing Bastard, before he sheepishly added, "Alright, I'll shut up."

Crash of the Day nominees Knobby Boy Scout and Flaming Anus were brought in to be shamed and blamed for their mishaps. Knobby fell twice, once a full-on, 'sack of potatoes' fall and the other a less-dramatic fall into a deep pool, whereas Flaming Anus was lassoed by a vine and toppled from his 'steed.' "The taller they are, the harder they fall," quipped Coo Chi Coo, who at that moment must have felt that justice was served. And the choir refrained, "They ought to be publicly pissed on, they ought to be bloody well shot, "bang bang!" they ought to be nailed to the shit house and left there to fester and rot. Drink it down, down, down, down, down..."

A Quote of the Day charge was called and My Precious was summoned front and centre. He had been overheard when he was talking about the ride up the mountaintop after lunch.

My Precious said, "If we ride all the way up there, are we going to be able to ride down again?" And for his uttering the laws of gravity, let's give our Kiwi friend a note: "B-I-M-B-O, and Bimbo was his name-o! Drink it down, down, down, down, down..."

Wet Beaver called in Rough Sex and Deviant. Rough Sex lived up to her name as Knobby was spotted with a red welt around his neck, and Deviant showed how she had earned her name by deviating off-trail on a few occasions. And the crowd bellowed, "They're all right, they're all right, they're a little flat-chested but they're all right!"

Wet Beaver called in Rik and asked him to turn around so that his back was facing us. "Most of the time, this is the only part of him that you'll see!" Wet Beaver proclaimed. Let's give our speed demon a note: "He's all right, he's all right, he's got a teeny weeny willie but he's all right!"

No Good was brought in on a charge for talking too much. "Are you chatting up men again?" quipped Coo Chi Coo. And the Circle sang forth, "Here's to Star Trek, she's true blue, she's a bastard through and through, she's a piss-pot so they say, tried to go to Heaven but she went the other way. Drink it down, down, down, down, down..."

As the Circle, came to a close, everyone was heard to agree, "Let's do it again next year, same time, same place!" ("although maybe we can avoid Ramadan?," queried Too Easy). Drak Bike Park is a labour of love for owner Stewart Ong and his crew. Do show your support by cycling there periodically and recommend the park to your friends in the mountain bike community. This is certainly one of our best cycling experiences that is easily accessible and earns a deserved spot in our yearly Singapore Bike Hash Hareline. Moreover, Stewart and his team cater to our different abilities and help every rider to get the most out of the day-trip. For their dedication and Hash-friendly camaraderie, let's give the Drak Bike Park crew a hearty round of appreciation... and we look forward to seeing them again in 2019.

Until the next ride, on on!

Scribed by: Knobby Boy Scout