

Emily leads the way, while husband David films and provides much-needed-at-times encouragement

Out Front

WELCOME TO THE WORLD OF MOUNTAIN BIKING



TRAIL TALES

THE COUPLE THAT SLAYS TOGETHER...

What's it like racing an enduro with your partner? **Emily Horridge** and husband **David Billings** headed to Switzerland to find out

Words Emily Horridge
Pics Alphafoto, Andographie

'The couple that prays together, stays together' says the old adage. Shared interests can certainly strengthen a relationship, but is entering a trail-slaying enduro race with your partner taking things too far? Only one way to find out! The Mondraker Enduro Team event in Davos can be ridden as a pair (mixed, male or female) or, in the Fun category, with up to five of your mates. We opted to ride as a wife-husband duo, and came across several other family groups taking part.

Making our way around the course on day one, we quickly realised we were in the minority as first-timers. This was the eighth edition of the race, and almost everyone else had been several times before. We were about to find out why, as we started high up in a lunar landscape, like nothing we'd ever ridden, with questionable grip, before stage two took us on an amazing freshly-cut rocky loamer of a trail.

Because so many teams had been before, quite often the marshals knew

them, and could let you know if you needed to leave an extra gap. This was the case with two brothers riding with their dad – an older gentleman, just there for the fun with his sons. However, shortly before them, pro cross-country racer Anne Terpstra and her brother had dropped in, so the rider level varied wildly.

One of the most striking things about this event was that no one had an ego. There was never any moment when someone would try to barge past to start in front of you, nor any bolshiness on the trails. Another thing that struck us was how easy it was to get to some amazing riding. The infrastructure in Davos helps make this race what it is, because with mountain railways, huge cable cars and gondolas, you can quickly access many different trails on several different hillsides.

As we continued, I quickly realised that this was a "proper" enduro. For some reason, I'd expected the stages to be 100% descending and not



particularly challenging. How wrong I was! Stage three was a really rooty, undulating number, which rewarded good on-the-fly line choice – something I really enjoy. It was fun riding it with David and choosing totally different lines from each other. We weren't really sure of the best way to approach the race, and, being fairly evenly matched speed-wise, took it in turns to be the lead rider.

Friday was the big day, with six stages. We were seeded based on our overall time from day one, so now everyone around us was a similar speed. It was fun to compare lines at the bottom of each stage, and get some trail knowledge from event veterans before dropping in. We had some pretty hilarious moments – including me coming to a full stop in the middle of stage seven because I thought I'd heard David shout out, "whoa!", as if we'd taken a wrong turn. The husband-wife "discussion" about who'd said what continued down the

stage, when we should really have been concentrating on the trail itself.

There were positives to racing as a pair, too. I had a difficult day one, and having David with me made a big difference. He was there to help me bounce back from a big crash on stage two, and he ran back to help me up from another crash on stage four. At the start of day two, the XC section on stage five took me out as well, so to have him behind me shouting encouragement and getting stoked on my lines was what I needed to cheer up and enjoy myself.

By the end of day two, we'd met a couple we dubbed 'Team Sweden', and we spent the intra-stage liaisons chatting about one of their sons, who was racing the Downhill World Cup in Loudenvielle that same weekend, plus how they got into mountain biking. We also met one of their friends, Mikey, who we caught up with in the woods on stage 10 and had a cool mini-train with for a short while until he was able to let

MONDRAKER ENDURO TEAM 2025

WHEN: 4-6 September

FORMAT: Enduro race with 13 stages over three days, ridden as a pair or team

WHERE: Davos Klosters, Switzerland

GETTING THERE: Fly to Zurich. By public transport, take the SBB train (www.sbb.ch) to Landquart and the Rhaetian Railway (www.rhb.ch) to Davos. If driving, follow the motorway to Landquart, then take regional road 28.

ACCOMMODATION: Head to www.enduro-team.ch for details of Davos's 'bike hotels' and camper van parking. Campsites can be found at www.davos.ch.

MORE INFO: www.enduro-team.ch



I almost gave up!

Check out Emily's video of the event:



us pass. The post-stage chat was great fun as we compared notes, including some of us misunderstanding the instructions of one of the marshals as to which line to take through one of the rock sections – I got it but David didn't!

Day three dawned bright and early, and we took a long, undulating traverse in the high mountains to get to stage 11. It felt like we were on a real adventure, with lots of like-minded people. We met Pascale and Dany Häfliger, who were sitting just ahead of us in the rankings. Pascale is a Swiss enduro racer, and her dad, although only recently recovered from two collarbone injuries, was clearly a very able and fit rider too. I found it very cool that instead of the more common father-son riding combo, they were father and daughter.

That final day was a lot of fun. I finally found my riding mojo and led

the way, with David riding behind, telling me what to do (well, reminding us both what to do). Stage 11 was epic, stage 13 probably even more so, and the ridgeline to get to it was insane. The race ended with a super-fun blue bike park trail into the finish.

At the end of the day, the marshals rode down in a mega-train, and we lined the track to welcome them in and show our appreciation for their hard work, standing up there in the cold wind, feeding us Haribo and keeping the stoke alive. Then there was just time to watch a cool kids' race on the Sunday morning before we had to leave.

We can't wait to go back next year – but we'll have to be quick off the mark when entries open in December, because this race sells out fast. Now we know why! 🌀