

## **Two Ways to a Difficult Step**

*From the staff at the Trials Training Center*

This article will focus on the techniques used to climb a step which has a difficult approach in front, with a jumble of rocks and gaps that make a small step into a much more difficult obstacle. TTC Pro Bruce LeRiche demonstrates two ways to approach this challenge. The first we'll call a basic ride through, using timing and a lot of body English to get up the step. In the second approach he'll use a momentum wheelie to keep the front end up and demonstrate how this technique can help maintain momentum and actually make the ledge a lot easier, especially if traction were poor. The challenge for this article consists of an undercut step with a rough approach containing a rock just over a bike length away followed by a small gap and another rock obstacle immediately in front of the ledge.

### **Ride Through**

The most basic approach would be to ride through this jumble of obstacles and dealing with each as they come. Precise timing is important through the sequence of moves. The key to getting through this mess cleanly is to maintain forward momentum. In the sequence of photos A-1 through A-3, Bruce zaps the first bump, jumping forward so that the rear hits the first rock in the same place that the front had hit. The zap helps you to maintain forward momentum across the gap so that the front hits the 2<sup>nd</sup> obstacle simultaneously with when the rear hits the first. If a ride-up technique were used on the 1<sup>st</sup> bump, you would need to work more to pick the front up when the rear hits, and you would lose some forward momentum. Also the zap allows you to compress BOTH the front and rear. As you jump you push the front down so that both ends compress together. Look to the top of the step that's coming next (see Bruce's eyes in photo A-3), rev the bike and use the clutch to keep the engine spinning up.

From the zap across the gap, jump hard forward and up and dump the clutch. Notice the handlebars coming to Bruce's chest in photo A-4, so that he can extend later on the top of the step. In photo A-5 he's getting very far forward because there isn't much momentum left and he's going to need to transfer momentum from his body into the bike by extending. Photo A-6, start to extend when the skid plate clears the step and the rear is in contact. Photo A-7 shows how the impact bounces the rear tire. As this impact occurs, you must extend the arms to bring the bike over and the front down. Legs bend to absorb the impact, then push the rear tire back onto the rock. In photo A-8 get the body centered, recover balance, and look to the next obstacle in the section.

### **Momentum Wheelie Through**

This approach allows the rider to better maintain momentum, but requires a more advanced skill in the ability to carry the front end in a wheelie through some rough terrain. The first rock is zapped as before, but as you can see in photos B-1 through B-4, Bruce keeps the front end higher on the first zap so as to carry the front to the step. Compare photos B-2 and B-3 with A-2 and A-3 and you'll see how the body is positioned more like a normal wheelie than before when the front was allowed to drop. Look to the top of the step where the front will impact, keep forward momentum and drive the rear through the gap. Consistent speed is very important, especially if traction is poor.

Notice that Bruce doesn't jump the bike across the gap in this case but rather drives through with smooth consistent speed and with the front end up. Jumping would carry him too

far so that the front wouldn't compress on the ledge and the skid pan might hit the ledge. In photo B-5 you can see that the front has compressed along with the rear. The bike has momentum and can basically coast through the step. His body is centered and ready to absorb the subsequent impact of the rear into the face of the rock. Compare this photo to the previous A-5, where he had less momentum and therefore had to lean much farther forward and get into the power to get drive up onto the step. Because the forward momentum of the wheelie move will carry you up, Bruce only must be prepared to absorb the impact which his legs and extend on top to bring the bike up and over, as he's doing in photos B-6 and B-7. Compare these to the previous sequence where the bike bounced harder and the rider must work more to accomplish the same thing. Note how much more effective the "wheelie thru" would be in low traction conditions. In photo B-8, he's on top, centered, and ready to look to the next obstacle in the section.

These two different approaches show that there's "more than one way to skin a cat" when it comes to trials. It helps to analyze and consider alternatives and figure out what works best for you and the individual set of skills you have to bring to the challenge. And don't forget the practice those skills, as you can see the need to have precise timing on a number of techniques (wheelies, zaps, ledges and extending, throttle control and clutch launches) to put everything together to clean the tough ones!