

ISDE Poland 2004

The Six Days Diaries

Report 4 – Prepped and Primed!

Since Friday this week, Chris and I have both been very busy. Chris put his bike into the parc ferme in Kielce city centre yesterday, so he really only has a few things left to do.

Most important of these is walking the tests. The track follows the same route on days 1 and 2, with days 3 and 4 the same as each other. Days 5 and 6 are a mix of the first two routes, with the final MX looking like it will be held in a flat featureless stubble field. Each of these routes has 2 MX and 1 Enduro test each lap, but all are in stubble fields. Each very fast test will take between 4 and 6 minutes to ride, but well over 60 mins to walk. The temperature is over 25°C, so again dehydration and dust will be big problems unless the weather breaks. Chris is drinking plenty of energy drinks and eating lots of energy bars, supplied to the British team from Science in Sport (SiS).

Fellow KTM rider Ed Jones had a very narrow escape. Having done some final testing on his race bike, he noticed the engine sounding rough. Not taking any chances, he went to the KTM lorry and ended up buying a new Six Days Special 250, then swapped the engines over, before impound. Provisional further investigation found that the main bearings were on their way to becoming welded! A big relief for Ed and the GB Trophy Team.

Friday night also meant it was time for the riders to relax a little and get themselves into Kielce for a spot of R&R. About 12 taxis were ordered from the Hotel to the best local nightspot. The cost to get in was an extortionate 20 Zlotys (about £3.50!) and the drinks were around £1 each. Definitely cheap for us, but pretty pricey for most Poles. There is still a huge difference in wealth between the affluent cities and the very poor rural areas. In the nightclub, most of the Brits had their chins on the floor as they spied the numerous very attractive young ladies. Some got chatting with the locals, but only because their English is much better than our Polish!! Most riders headed home around midnight, so they could get some tests walked the following day.

My big job for myself during the last few days has been finding a route through the maze of Polish roads and unpronounceable towns. Although the organisers had published a programme with an unofficial route marked on a map, it bears little resemblance to the actual route. So, finding a way between the checks is pretty easy, finding a fast way that also allows you to meet the rider during the check is really tricky. The organisers have also been plagued with the local kids stealing arrows as souvenirs, so sometimes you can't actually find the tracks!

On Friday, Mark Vaughan, Tim Lewis and I all enjoyed a roadside beer having spent ages getting Day 1 sorted. On Saturday & Sunday I have been riding with Wyn Hughes, Simon Evans, Gareth Jones (Geriant's brother) and loads of other Welshmen. Having taken a couple of hours, we sussed out where the first two checks were, where the course went and where we would ride! The little KTM fairly buzzes along the road, especially as the bike has been geared up, but I'd much prefer to have my four-popper! Because the course will be pretty fast, the outriders will really need to nip on along the road. This brings with it a few hazards of its own, such as cars pulling out and some of our four legged friends running out in front of me! One small tabby in particular will have to change his pants tonight, having darted out at the last moment!

Although I'd mentioned earlier the terrain was pretty flat around here, the route of Day 3/4 passes by a rather large and steep hill. Now, as we were actually on a trail riding holiday, we all thought it would be fun to try the hillclimbs! What has amazed me about riding here is that you can literally go anywhere. There are no fences to be seen! The local riders had obviously used this hill for practice, as it was very chewed up, although bone dry. I was the first to take a blast at the hill and quickly found the shortcomings of riding a 125! A quick flick of the left hand made the engine squeal and away I went. Having set the standard a few of the others tried to blast up the hill with varying degrees of success. Being a sympathetic bunch, we didn't laugh at anyone who wasn't in full control. Not too much anyway! By 4pm we'd had enough fun and had to head back to the hotel, as Saturday was the opening ceremony.

The opening ceremony was held in the centre of Kielce, with the teams paraded onto an amphi-theatre stage where they were introduced to the very enthusiastic crowd. After the suits had delivered their brief speeches, the ISDE was officially opened and a short firework display lit up the sky. The ever enthusiastic Spanish team started a Mexican wave that rippled through the crowd and put smiles on everyone's face! Most of the riders headed into town to get some food, and Chris and I blessed Pizza Hut with our presence.



This is the first ISevenDE! To allow the spectators to see the riders up close, the organisers set off each National Trophy Team, Junior Trophy Team and Club Team from the city centre parc ferme to the main Paddock area in Miedziana Gora. All the riders got suited up in their best gear to show off their



sponsor logos. A short road trip of about 15mins, but it had been accepted by the FIM Jury, that if any rider had seized the bike (a worst case scenario) then the rider would suffer the normal penalties!! Theoretically then, the rider could go out of the event before Day 1! The organisers did re-route the course onto tarmac however, as every nation was complaining that dust on the trail would be a real problem, especially with the trophy team having 6 riders on each minute!

Sunday brought a real challenge for GB team manager Euan Syme (Supremely Fit One!). He's had a meeting with the Trophy and Junior Trophy riders, another with the support crew and another meeting with the outriders! Questions were fired at him from all directions, but he had an answer for them all! Everyone that is part of the team knows exactly what they can and cannot do, so hopefully any potential slip ups have been eliminated. As a team of riders, they are all relaxed but determined to have a good result.

As it is now late on Sunday evening, Chris has sorted all his gear for the check crews, made up his energy drinks and is just about ready for bed. He's still very relaxed on the outside, but I know he'll be really determined to do well this week. The tests will really suit his aggressive riding style and he loves riding in deep sand, so I'm sure he'll do very well. The next few days will tell their own story.

Talking of results, I'm very aware that today was the Shiplaw event, which I have very much enjoyed in the last few years, particularly the fast grassy test which would have suited the big girl. I don't know who will have won their respective classes or what the weather and course would have been like, but I hope you've all enjoyed it. I'll no doubt see the results on Charlie's' website by the end of the week.

The hard work is about to start for the riders and support crew, so most of us are getting an early night. I can't promise, but I will try to get daily reports sent back, however you should be able to see the results on the link from Charlie's' website.

I've just seen from Eurosport that Stefan Everts has won his 8th World Championship – I hope that team GB meets with the same success by Saturday!



Fast Eddy
&
Fast Braybrook



The opening ceremony
Amphi-theatre



The Purple Helmets
even forked out for an
awning this year!



The Parc Ferme



ISDE Centre Stage!



Team Ireland



(l-to-r) Chris Hay, Robert Jones
Simon Wakely, Dylan Jones &
Geraint Jones
(Junior Trophy Team Manager)