

STEPPING OUT

WITH MARK ROBICHAUD

Hell In A Bucket - And Back Again

If you are in the UNB Woodlot and Game Refuge on most days of the week, usually late in the afternoon, and you hear:

"Give 'er!"

"Come onto 'er"

"Hard left! Whoa...damn."

That would be the freaks I ride with. Solid bunch, not afraid and chronically addicted to mountain biking. Can you blame them? Our biking season leaves casualties of bruised knees, raspberry scars, burning lungs, and a garbage truck full of busted parts; the season leaves us craving for more trails, more downhills, more riding.

This week's article is going to address a sensitive issue - trail use and abuse. Yes, I agree, this is an ugly topic. Trail abuse? Whatever. If I had my way there would be a short cut through the Student Union Building.

Singletrack riding has a number of fundamental features common to all trails, be it the riding here, a descent of Red Mountain (British Columbia) or a Costa Rican jungle ride. The main aspects include: trail conditions, frequency of use (etiquette) and difficulty level.

The state of your bike at the end of a ride is a great measuring stick for trail conditions. Do your front brakes stick to the rim? Can you remember what colour your bike is? Got a flat? Bent bar? Snapped cable housing? Busted frame to compliment your snapped collarbone? These are indicators of deep mud pits, soil erosion, foliage damage, hard pack, roots, etc.

Frequency of use. Boo hiss. Always ride all trails all the time. Maybe ten years ago, but now we must consider seasonal change, the number trails in the area and the dispersal of riding traffic. A trail can handle more traffic in the dry heat of summer than the soggy splatter of spring and fall. Riders should try and ride all the trails they know and make a point to find new ones. This alleviates stress on the more travelled trails like the Race Track in the Woodlot, an ugly example is the rock ledge section.

Finally, the difficulty level should be considered, this usually means that as the trail gets tougher - the turns get tighter, the rocks are bigger, the roots reach out to grab you, the logs bite back, and the visibility range is limited. Often, trail difficulty corresponds with sensitivity levels: the nastier the trail - more potential for abuse.

I admit that this topic has been eating my head. I feel guilty when riding trails that have huge ruts, foliage damage and people walking. I can't lie and say I don't ride these areas, because I do. Muddier! Faster! Air! All of these things scream in my head when we're blazing through some of the spots we ride.

Here we have dilemma number one: it's hard to turn down a great trail, even though riding it is a compromise of principles. I need a backbone I guess.

Dilemma number one brings to mind none other than... dilemma number two. The best trails are singletrack, which are prone to overuse. Now dilemma number two becomes apparent: I want to tell even more people how to get to them.

My solution to this is founded in the idea of trail frequency. I believe it would be best if everyone knew about all the trails and would ride them in accordance to the trail quality. This is impossible. I don't even follow my own rules, how could I expect someone else to? So I've decided to tell you kind folks about a series of trails on the North side of Fredericton. These trails are fed by a snowmobile trail, and are endless. The good thing is they are not over ridden. According to the Northside regulars, many of these trails can prosper into more defined and consistent riding with a some new blood taking advantage of them.

Hell and Back. Excellent name for one of the toughest trails in the Fredericton area. Somewhat slower than the Race Track, but more technical with gigantic boulders, twisting turns and huge

suspension destroying drop offs. Roper crashed about ummm... five feet from the truck. We usually drive across the river, this leaves our legs fresh for the singletrack. Road riding sucks. The access is excellent, with connections to Pain in the Neck and heaps of other trails waiting to be explored and hammered.

Here's how you get there. Drive/ride to the Northside and get on Union Street, heading toward the Nashwaak River (east). Keep your eye out for Canada Street, it's on your left, stop at the Kwik Way and buy a Snickers. Cruise up Canada Street until you get to Hollybrook. Here you have a choice, you can stay on Hollybrook and enter snowmobile trail #42; after a few huge mud bogs and about two clicks you will see a frame structure that is pretty run down. Beside the frame (on the right) you will see a little entrance to a beautiful singletrack. Ride it.

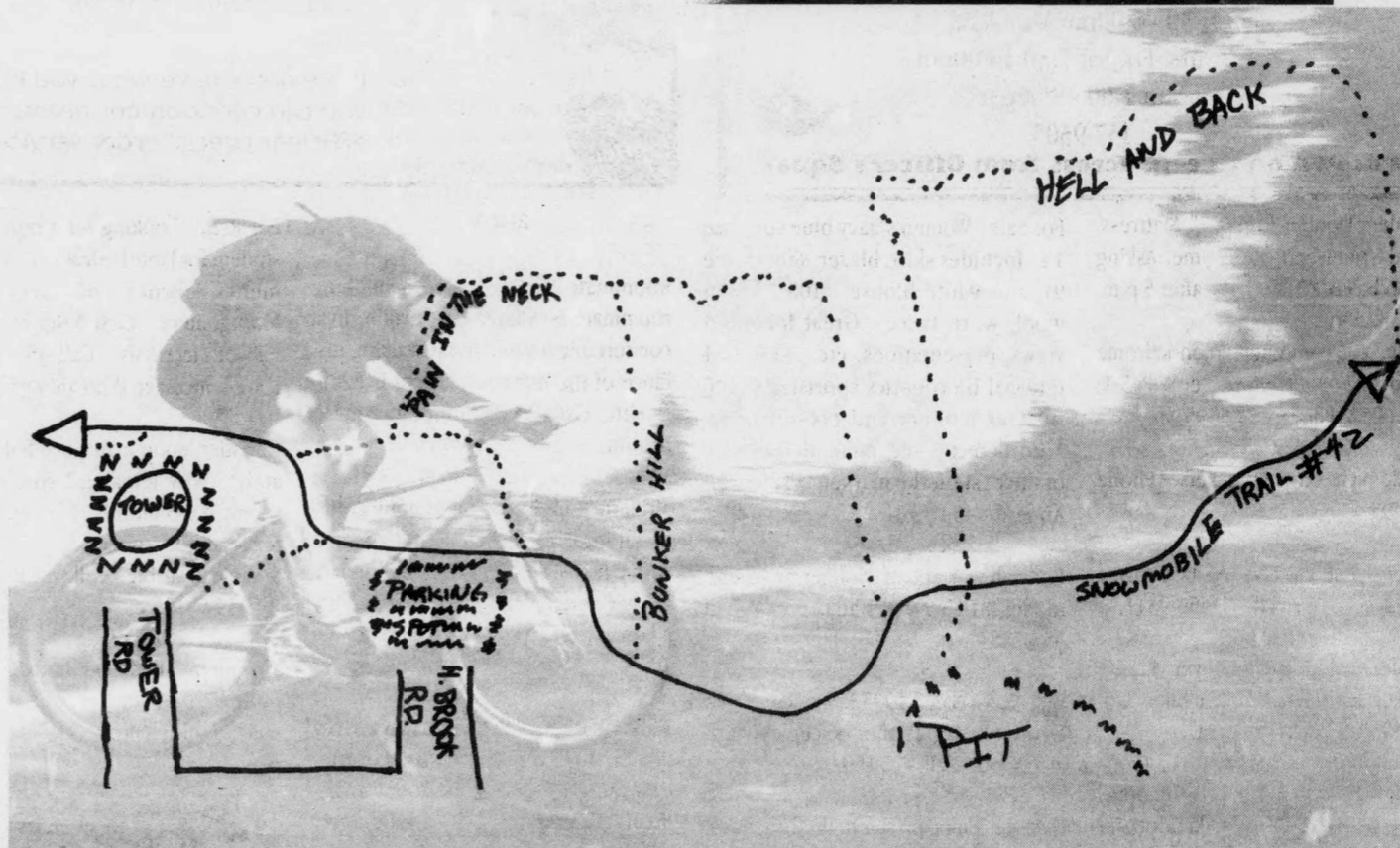
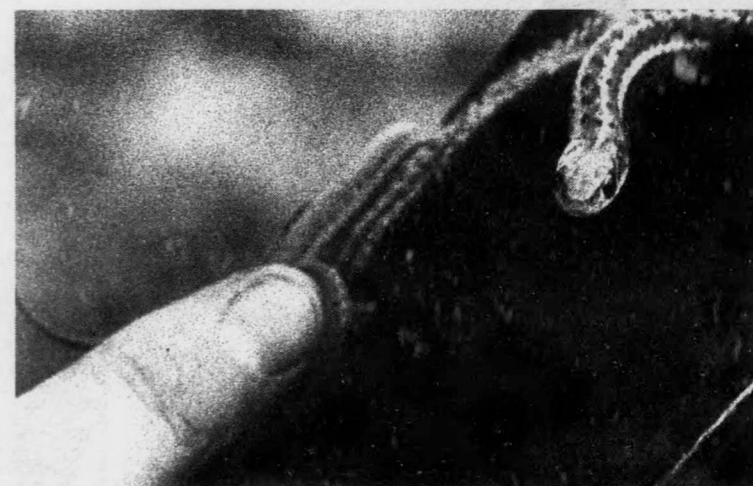
Choice number two: you can turn left and look for Tower Street. Hop on your bike and ride around the fence, it doesn't matter which way, the north route leads to Pain In The Neck and the west route leads to the snowmobile trail. Hopefully this little explanation combined with the enclosed map will lead you to the ride of the season.

Have fun. Our riding season is coming to an end; the short days combined with lower temperatures makes me think of snowboarding. But with head lamps and bike lights we're going to be riding into late November.

Out On Forestry Field School. Where's My ChainSaw?



Mike The Friendly Snake Discovered On The Trail



Coming Down The Mountain At Silverwood



An Ugly Stump Reaching Out For A Front Tire

Octob
GREE
Nov. 1
please
For Sa
4096
per Pa
62 Sc
have a
F
Big
Inc
C
Down
Do
For
Natu
#30
For
mon
Quan
For
454
For
matt
For
Voy
Call
For
and
bag,
CD
in ca
198
cust
189
For
lent
Jasc
Tr
wo
the