

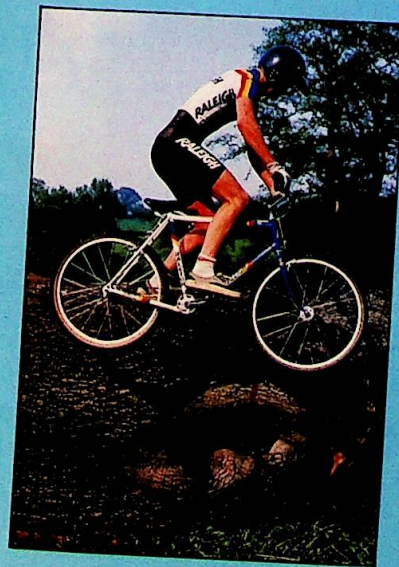
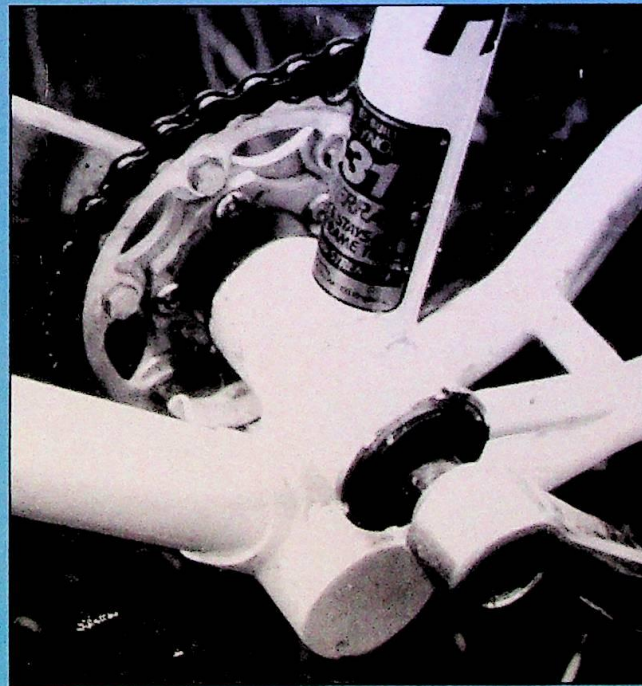
Mountainbike Leaplog

A skill much prized by off-roaders is the ability to manoeuvre over obstacles in their path. People boast of their prowess during the after ride and one story leads to another so before you know where you are there is a self-contained branch of activity which various competitive souls have taken to ridiculous extremes. None more ridiculous however than Chris Simmons, who set his front wheel at a log some two feet higher than a trials motorbike has managed in pursuit of the world record...

It all started some months ago. Chris and Tim Gartside were cruising the trails around Llanwrtyd Wells when they spotted what they thought was an impressive hunk of felled tree. It was only three and a half feet high - a baby - but it was a useful starting point. The log was owned, it transpired, by Colin the Butcher of Llanwrtyd Wells.

There was a problem with Colin's log - it had to be moved before Simmons could get a go at it. The local contractor, known only as Wally the digger, was called in to move it. No mean feat. It weighed eight tons.

The log was moved. The log was conquered. And Chris was claiming a British record of 37.4 inches. He wasn't happy.



He was keen to stamp his signature firmly on this aspect of mountainbiking, by tackling something significantly bigger. Besides which, NORBA UK had already put out a world record challenge to its American counterpart. Simmons was determined to give the Yanks something to chew on.

Three things had to happen. Rules for the world record attempt needed to be sorted out; an appropriate felled log found and a bike had to be built.

The agreed rules dictate that the rider needs to get over the log without putting his or her foot down - the technique employed is up to the rider - and execute a clean entry and exit of five metres either side of the log.

The log was found. A real beauty. Courtesy of the Hon. Hugo Phillips of the Llanstephan Estate on the banks of the river Wye, permission was given for an attempt at the monster.

The bike had to be built. Who better to ask than Gerald 'As I said to Merckx' O'Donovan (see page 64). Gerald dreamt up something special for the attempt - a bike with a keel. A false bottom bracket below the functional one acts as an integ-

ral chainring protector. The geometry of the bike is a delicate balance between short wheelbase for manoeuvrability and long enough to enable the rider to hoik the bike up and onto the log.

Chris had three problems to solve, each of them considerable. First, he had to get up and on to the log. It would need to be a perfect combination of balance and timing. Once on top, he would have to position himself for the descent by a series of little sideways hops. Then he'd have to get down - a horrifying five foot leap. And then ride away.

The initial aim was simply to get on top of the log. The second and third phases could be attempted later. After three-quarters of an hour and thirty or forty approach runs, Chris successfully clambered the bike to the top of the log. It went to his head. With the gusto that marks out all true lunatics, he went for it.

He hopped the bike sideways. A quick glance and then the sickening leap. He almost made it. On impact, his foot slipped off the pedal, the pedal embedded itself in his leg and a nasty gash left him five metres short of a world record. But then, there's always next time!