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part XXXI

in good company

Celebrating the Sh*tbike, Porsche style

THE STAFF HERE AT *BIKE* WERE FEELING rather disappointed that the Mountain Bike Hall of Fame did not include the old Softride on its final list of nominees—and didn't even make mention of the fact that it was nominated by respected industry luminaries. As stewards of what is arguably the world's most famous bicycle, we've seen firsthand how this stunning example of mid-90s technology makes people smile and outshines so many flesh-and-blood celebrities. We believed our bid for the Sh*tbike to be inducted was respectful, so the Hall's silent treatment definitely had us down. Porsche's phone call couldn't have come at a better time.

"What do you think about doing some kind of a bike and car duathlon?"

Needless to say, we declared it to be a brilliant concept and quickly sorted out the details.

The format was simple, and in classic Sh*tbike style, somewhat convoluted: Racers would do a one-lap time trial on bicycles over the 0.6-mile go-kart track at California's Willow Springs Raceway, followed by two laps of the famous 2.5-mile road course in fast cars. Representing racecar drivers in the event was Porsche factory driver Patrick Long, whose impressive list of victories

includes some of the gems of auto racing, including the 24 Hours of Le Mans and the Rolex 24. The mountain bike contingent was served by Giant's Carl Decker, who holds multiple U.S. national championship titles, a singlespeed world championship, and who also drove a rally car in the 2010 X Games. In the spirit of making this competition truly well rounded, we included road biker Christian Vande Velde, who has worn the leader's jersey in the Giro d'Italia and helped Lance Armstrong win two Tours de France.

Not surprisingly, word got out about our race, and we were also joined by Vande Velde's astonishingly tall Belgian teammate, Johan Van Summeren, who earlier this year won road racing's most off-road race, Paris-Roubaix.

The competition needed to be as evenly matched as possible, so we employed a handicapping system of sorts: The road guys were treated to a lap aboard a flat-pedal-equipped, one-speed Sh*tbike, and their weapon for the auto-racing portion was a brilliant red, 408-horsepower 911 GTS. Decker piloted one of his Giant mountain bikes and then hit the car track with a 500-horsepower Cayenne Turbo. Since we gave Long a proper road-racing bicycle, his *racecar* was his daily driver, a four-door Panamera. And the fact that Long's car had fewer ponies than the other two didn't seem to handicap him enough for us, so we made the three giggling bike racers ride along to add a few hundred pounds of penalty weight.

After a flat-out time trial that left all four athletes gasping for air and coughing from somewhere deep inside their bodies—not to mention some seriously inspired hot laps in the cars—our duathlon was closer than anyone would have expected.

When the dust settled, it was our mountain-bike brother Decker who took top honors, narrowly nipping Long. Vande Velde and the Sh*tbike claimed the podium's third step. And with the focus that defined their efforts during the race, each racer pored over the results to keep everyone honest.

True to *Bike* magazine form, we forgot to bring champagne and trophies, but we didn't forget to celebrate the Sh*tbike with some smoking tires. After life in the fast lane with this crew, the prospect of retirement inside the cramped quarters of the Hall of Fame is looking pretty dull. —JOE PARKIN

