

Report by Harriet Shore on the 2009 European trials held in Poland, Italy & the Czech Republic

My minder Darren Haines, dad, my chauffeur and I are home from this year's Europeans. We started off in Krzeszowic in Poland in May. This being the first round, Darren and I were both apprehensive as we had no idea about who my competition would be, what the terrain would be like, the severity of the sections or what the weather was going to do. It was supposed to rain for quite a few days but we only had one day of slight showers and it was a scorcher on Sunday- the hottest day we had. As it turned out, my competition was mainly Polish with the top 3 Polish girls riding. There was also a German girl and a Norwegian girl; both of whom rode last year, and of course me.

Having viewed the sections on Saturday, I was quite nervous about the trial because the majority of the sections were rocky and I'm not used to riding rocks.

After the viewing lap and signing on, all the girls were invited to plant a tree and we were given a green ribbon.

Sunday came around and section 1 was a typical British section, downhill, turn and uphill. Unfortunately I 3'd it but pulled it together to clean it second lap.

At the end of the first lap I was in 3rd place on 20 but I had a better second lap of 14 and I finished in 2nd place, 1 mark in front of the Polish champion who was publicised on all the posters. A good start to the season.

The next round was in Pragalato in the North of Italy in July. This trial turned out to have 10km laps. So after the viewing lap on Saturday and the two laps on Sunday, that totalled up 30km! The first 3 sections were in a rocky stream, more different terrain to what we have down South. Then a 4km ride up the side of a mountain to the next section. Part of it was up a narrow path so windy you had to lift the front wheel to turn, then it was along the side of the mountain with a sheer drop on one side of you. Partway up if you looked down the hill you could see over the top of the Olympic ski jumps that were on the other side of the stream, next to the Paddock. After section 4, which was also in a stream, it was a 4km ride back down the mountain to section 5. The way back was just as severe as the way there, down a thin rocky path where you could only see a few metres in front of you. But you couldn't dawdle because it was quite

tight on time. Our viewing lap on Saturday took 2 and a half hours and we only had 5 hours overall for the trial.

Sections 5 and 6 were like arena sections within their specially built trials park next to the local market, a good spectator spot. 7 and 8 were by the stream on the rocks and 9 - 12 were on the side of a mountain. They were the sections you wanted to keep your feet up for as opposed to dabbing where there was nothing there and ending up falling from a great height. Me being me, I decided this would be the opportune moment to dab on the right hand side, as I was off balance, where there was nothing but a 10ft drop onto the rocks below. Of course everyone rushed over to me but not too close because the bike was following me. Apart from Darren who jumped over me so the bike fell on him, not me. That was on section 11 on the first lap and contributed to one of my many fives on this lap. On my second lap though, I only had one five, on the last section, but due to the major confidence knock, most of the sections I 3'd although I'd previously cleaned earlier.

We were both bruised and knackered but we both thought that overall the trial was brilliant and it was an amazing experience despite the weather being so warm and the course being so difficult and tiring and the competition being fierce; the majority of the entry was Italian and an Italian won it. Unfortunately I could only secure 6th.

Monday morning we set off for Tanvald in the Czech Republic for the 3rd and final round. We had some interesting weather out there, nice sunshine some days then a typhoon which drenched us in a matter of seconds on Thursday. Friday we looked at the sections and Darren and I concluded that they weren't much of a challenge. The only section I was worried about they had to modify after a tree fell down blocking the end.

It rained Friday night and Saturday morning and we were soaked before we even got to the first section. Proper British conditions. The other foreign girls were clearly not used to mud as they were all struggling and falling off going up and down the muddy hills. It did dry out a bit during the day but it soon started to rain again. I had a brilliant day and was chuffed with my riding; watching other girls foot their way round sections that I was cleaning, and I would have been really pleased with a spot on the podium so to then win it was fantastic. What a way to end the season. The weather certainly played into the Brits' hands as they all had their best results here.

As usual, dad was running round taking pictures of everything when he wasn't feeding us or maintaining our bikes.

All in all a great experience and a great result.