



Terrain test:
Jörg Glocker sells
paint for mountain
bikes and knows
its limits.

The thrill and stress of the trail

Cycling as a stress test. Mud, stones and bad weather strain man and machine. You see what the innovative frame paint can withstand on the trail. And for good measure, in the pouring rain.

By Jürgen Löhle; photos by Oliver Roggenbuck



People debate the weather endlessly: it's too cold, too hot, or too dry. Right now it's definitely too wet. In the beer garden of Katzenbacher Hof just outside the gates of Stuttgart, it is merely drizzling to begin with. Seconds later rain is pouring down from lead-gray skies. A fine spray turns to big, fat raindrops, pelting from above or wind-driven from head on. Jörg Glocker seems unperturbed. "There is no bad weather, only bad clothing," quips the 47-year-old Director of Sales Administration at Wörwag dryly. Hop on the bike no matter the weather! Admittedly, a competent bicyclist can handle a lot. Getting soaked during the ride is part of the game. But setting off soaking wet? Only if it is absolutely necessary ...

Glocker is still undeterred. You have to set goals and achieve them, that's his motto. Today the goal is to do a terrain paint test. And not even thunder god Thor himself is going to stop him. So slip into the clipless pedals and push off. There is one good thing about constant rain: the forest paths between Katzenbacher Hof, Schloss Solitude and Glemseck are virtually empty. Here and there, put-upon dog-owners peer from under their capes with apathetic canines at their side—that's all the company we'll have on the paths today.

At first, there is a slight descent towards Pfaffenwald. Glocker's heart rate remains calm in keeping with the route. Still no trace of deep holes or knotty roots. Then gently uphill towards the university. For Glocker a chance →



→ to lightly warm up his muscles. After tearing his Achilles tendon twice, the former handball player switched to bike-riding. But not simply to make a quick trip to the bakery on Sundays. He covers about 7,000 kilometers (4,350 miles) a year, overcoming many challenges like the climb to the Stelvio pass or the Albstadter MTB Marathon. "I need challenges like that," he admits, just as the next one arrives: The gravel track leads steeply downhill towards the highway. If you hit the front-brake too hard here you'll sail over the handlebars. If you don't brake, you'll end up in the hospital. Glocker controls his braking perfectly. After that, the route goes along the lakes to Bärenschlössle. Washed out trails, loose stones, puddles, roots. The handlebars vibrate, raindrops on his glasses cloud his vision, but Glocker focuses intently on avoiding dripping, drooping branches overhead and other obstacles to find the best path. This is when recreational cyclists quit while fighters push on.

The athlete awakes

Tenacity—without it, Glocker and his Wörwag colleagues certainly would not be in the market with a complete bike coating solution. For a long time, the Stuttgart-based company sold a leading clear coat for seal-coating the frame. Then a customer asked for a complete solution comprising a primer and base coat to match the acrylic powder clear coat that was already available. Wörwag started development, but it stalled and was almost dropped in 2011 as a result of changing company priorities. "But then," said Glocker, "we would have done all that work for nothing and the money invested would have been lost."

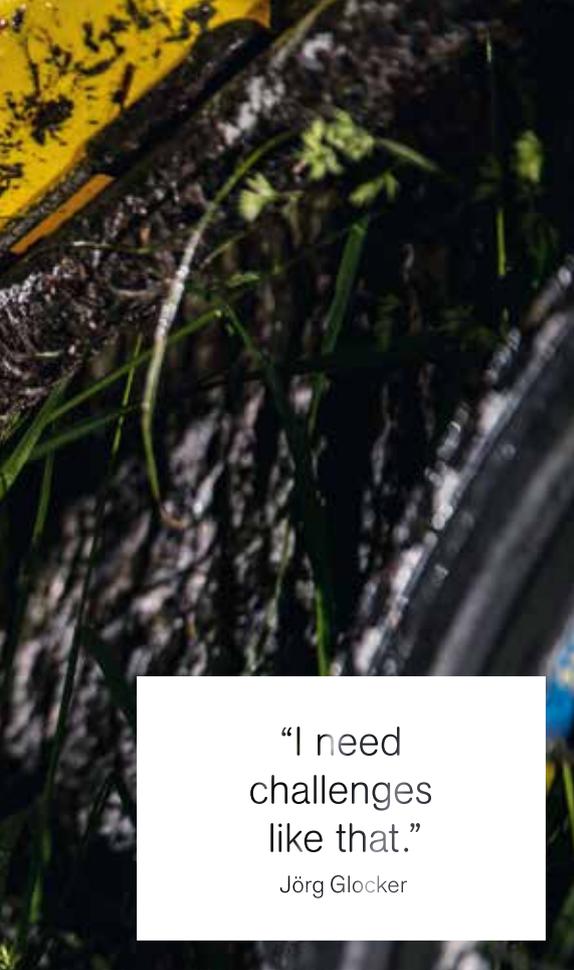
Sights set on big targets



Cycling requires perseverance, which proves equally useful in paint development. Besides Jörg Glocker, Riechard van der Zaag (photo) and Thorsten Bollinger also worked on the complete solution for bicycles that has been taking the market by storm since early 2015.

The Dutch sales professional, van der Zaag, got the Dutch Accell Group to on board, and they now use Wörwag products to paint many of their brands, such as Batavus, Haibike and Staiger. The karate practitioner and amateur cyclist is proud that "our coatings have automotive quality", and is busy trying to convince more brands of Wörwag. A move which Bollinger fully supports. The market manager contributed significantly to the development of the coating system and is pleased that factories in Holland, Hungary and Turkey are all working with it now. Bollinger is now in the process of trying to enlist more well-known brand names as Wörwag customers. A tall order, but Bollinger is also working on his physical fitness in the saddle of his mountain bike to improve his job performance.





“I need challenges like that.”

Jörg Glocker

Protection under constant stress: MTB paint is tough, defying mud and stones.



Hitting the limits: If you love your bike, you'll wash it after the ride.



Light at the end of the rain? Glocker is almost there—but not done yet.

That awoke the athlete in Glocker. Grit your teeth, endure, rise above the setbacks. People like Glocker keep going after the muscles cramps set in at the 28-kilometer (17.4-mile) point and finish the marathon, or keep cycling in heavy rain. They aren't deterred that easily. Wörwag called in some experts, and the paint was developed, tested and approved by the customer. Since early 2015 it has been on the market.

That was tough, sometimes sticky work, like this ascent to Schloss Solitude. Barely visible, Glocker winds his way through the forest. His body is warming up on the inside, while the rain cools the outside. Again and again the tires flick stones against the bike frame. But the paint holds, the protective layer is like the weather—extreme.

More bicycles than cars

Half-time, the turning point. Then it's back via a different route. That's also standard, because breakthroughs tend to come when you try different paths. This is a key to success, especially in development. The approach has also proved successful in bicycle coatings. The prospects are bright: There is only one competitor in the European bicycle market, but a dozen in the car industry. And the number of new bikes being produced far exceeds

the number of new cars. 5,000 tons of paint per year seem doable. The perseverance invested will pay off.

Like Glocker's ride. He is still waiting for a real thrill. Suddenly, it appears—the wall. It is not particularly long, but it's steep. So steep that the rear wheel starts spinning when you stand on the pedals. It must have been a log slide at one time. There is no alternative but to bear it for a while. Glocker is extremely fit, but even his heartbeat leaves the comfort zone as he struggles up the wall. Where minutes before in the Pfaffenwald, there was no cog small enough, the chain now whirs left to the largest sprocket. At the top, even Glocker is panting, and he can feel the strain in his calves. But that is the thrill that every bike athlete seeks. After all, anyone can cruise on flatlands. That's why he's beaming even though he is dripping with sweat.

“My first goal is getting there.” From here that shouldn't pose a problem, because the rest of the route is level.

Back at Katzenbacher Hof. Wet, dirty, but successful in defying the rain and the wall. A mere 24 kilometer (15 miles). For someone like Glocker that's nothing. He rides further on Sundays with his wife and children. Oh, and the rain: It stops as soon as he gets home. ■