

Stink Stories

It should come as no surprise that I have something of a reputation as a stinky mountain biker – [and not just as a trail gnome](#):

1. I ride a 2004 Kona Stinky – an ~~ancient~~ “classic” freeride/downhill bike... all-mountain;
2. Dirtbag – gear is infrequently (if ever) washed, so... stinky; and
3. I’m not the best rider technically (so my riding is pretty stinky).

This has led to the occasional funny situation.

There’s a standing rule with my customers: you CAN call me out of the gym or out of the woods in an emergency. Better hope it’s out of the gym, where I just smell like sweaty gymrat, otherwise you’re getting Stinky the Mountainbikasaurus.



Mountainbikasaurus Stink = old coonhound and randy billygoat living in a hockey bag.

I have had customers call me out of the woods anyway... even with me on the phone on-trail telling them, “You REALLY don’t want me in the building right now.” “We don’t care how you smell – GET HERE.” Okeydoke. (I tend to ride at sunrise, and

these are construction companies and machine shops who begin their day early.)

That said... A few years back, it's an early mid-September morning – I'm on a ride at Waldo State Park in Southbury, Connecticut at first light when I get a notice from a customer's server that the backup that night had failed. We were heading to the house lot in New Hampshire to get some work done in a couple days, so I would rather get it fixed and know they had a working backup so as to avoid making a 200+ mile drive later to fix it, and Waldo wasn't far from their place. At that time of the day, the only ones who should be there are the mechanic and an engineer or two, so I abbreviated the ride and headed over. I could get it fixed, let it run a day or two, and be sure all was well.

I was there before eight. Problem fixed, I was about to leave when the one engineer who was there buttonholed me with a, "WellWhileYou'reHere..." I don't remember what the problem was, but I fixed it, too.

A couple days later – and a day before driving north – I had to go back over there for something. The same engineer was there.

"Well, it's a good thing you took a shower this time."

"Come on, I wasn't THAT stinky."

"Oh yes you were – when you left, we had to open all the windows."

Oops.

There was a time I fought it. Trouble is, some gear either cannot be washed (e.g. helmet – the pads can, of course, but the rest can only get a cursory rinse), or can but it induces wear and tear (e.g. gloves and armor).



And then there's my 5.11 RUSH12 Pack-0-Wonder. Per their instructions, it CANNOT be washed (again aside from a cursory rinse). It got smelling so bad I actually opened a trouble ticket with them.



“It’s easily among the stinkiest pieces of gear I own – anything I can do?” Nope. Per them, just water.

As for riding clothes, they have to be strictly segregated

from the rest of my laundry, lest the stink infest everything else. I used to wear the same tech shirts I wear on rides to the gym – I figured my laundry protocol was sufficient: sport wash with Oxy and borax, two shots of Mirazyme in the rinse, hang on the line in the sun. I was told one day in no uncertain terms that it wasn't.

Oops.

Gymwear is now confined to non-synthetics I can bleach, usually white t-shirts and heather gray shorts.

But for the bikestuff, I've just learned to embrace the stink.

Sometimes, though, it hits even me hard. A couple falls ago, we were headed to New Hampshire. To make room for other stuff, I took the gear – which normally lives on the passenger side front seat and floor of my truck – and tossed it in the back seat, atop the mountain of stuff that was there. It was cool that morning, so I had the windows up and the heat running for awhile. About when we reached Woodsville it was starting to get warm, so I opened the window a bit... causing the air to blow across the back seat, and my gear, and filling the cab with the thickest bikasaurus stink so bad my eyes were tearing (and I'm used to it). It didn't help that I'd been riding a lot (almost daily) the previous three or four weeks.

All of this comes as no surprise to the hockey guys, who have been dealing with it for years. [The pros actually employ what I call the "nuclear option" – ozone.](#) I actually have an ozone machine, but am afraid of what it would do to the material of the gear itself, O3 being a heavy-duty oxidizer, so it remains new-in-box.

In summary:

- 45 lbs of Stinky (bike)
- plus 35 lbs of stinky pack,

- plus 180 lbs of StinkyCritter
 - equals 260 lbs of stink I'm propelling through the woods.
- (No, I won't win any races. Or attract humans.)

But how do the critters react? Fun fact: the worse I smell, the easier I can ride right up to deer. The bears, OTOH, can't stand it, so it's apparently a woodland rule that I'm not allowed to outstink the bears.

That said, I had a buck cross the trail in front of me close enough I could easily smell him. "You stink!" I yelled. "Pot, meet kettle." (I didn't hear him say it, but I'm sure that was the thought.)

Be sure to read about my life as a [stinky trail gnome](#).

Of course, stink isn't limited to mountain biking. Me, after a work session in the garden a couple summers back:



Some of that dirt is rotted cow manure, so I smelled pretty much how I looked.