

## RESTLESS RAINS - RUDY FAT 29+ REVIEW



*"Restless rain ruffled an orchard and we're on this war since few years. We'll go back home, we'll light a fireplace and feed the dog. We'll make it before the night, but let's only win, cause that's an serious game". We, the four Tank-Men, will get home faithful, "RUDY" and our dog"<sup>1</sup>*

Michał Śmieszek

You must forgive me such an introduction, but I could not resist myself. What's more I have no doubt that if the brave crew of iconic, invincible tank "RUDY 102" had had a British, half-fat 29er "Rudy Fat" they would surely liberated Berlin in one single attack and very probably they would pop in Tokyo for a cup of sake. After that US Army would not need to drop an nuke. Admiration and fear...



On my birthday I have received a "gift" from Michael Travers and his company - in the doorway stood a courier with a box in which the manufacturer gracefully packed the 29inch war machine. Well done my friend! It was hard to hide emotions, especially that barely a few weeks before I fell into the trap of love for thick tires, ultra-wide rims - in general, everything that has 29+ in title. So please, be aware that there will be a lot of "wows" sparingly interwoven with strand of objectivity.

If you read carefully my previous scribbles regarding 29+ bikes, then you already know what came to my face. Oh yes, Rudy Fat test bike is one of the few (yet) representatives of specialized segment of tanks based on a large wheels, of which the main advantage (but not the only) is mega wide tire 29x3. MTB beast tagged with Travers Bike badge was actually created for one purpose - long-distance races and multi-stage events in real off-road conditions. But fortunately for ordinary users, this does not disqualify it as casual 29er.

Let's go back to a magic box from which jumped out titanium fat rabbit. And here begins my fairy tale.

---

<sup>1</sup> This is a phrase from song written by Agnieszka Osiecka and sang by Edmund Fetting. It is an opening them for iconic Polish series: "The four Tank-Men and a dog" produced in mid-sixties.  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cztery\\_pancerni\\_i\\_pies](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cztery_pancerni_i_pies)



Frame - the heart of every bicycle, of which the beating determines the rest. Poetically written ©. In case of “Rudy Fat”, heart is the titanium alloy, which is on par with noble Cr-Mo steel that is said to have its own soul too. It demands a little notification especially for the laics - the use of titanium alloy in such specialized equipment is not just a marketing ploy aimed to attract wealthy client. This material contrary to steel offers lower weight, as a high resistance to fatigue and corrosion, and at least as good “cushioning”. Yes, it is expensive to machine, but the end result is worth the money



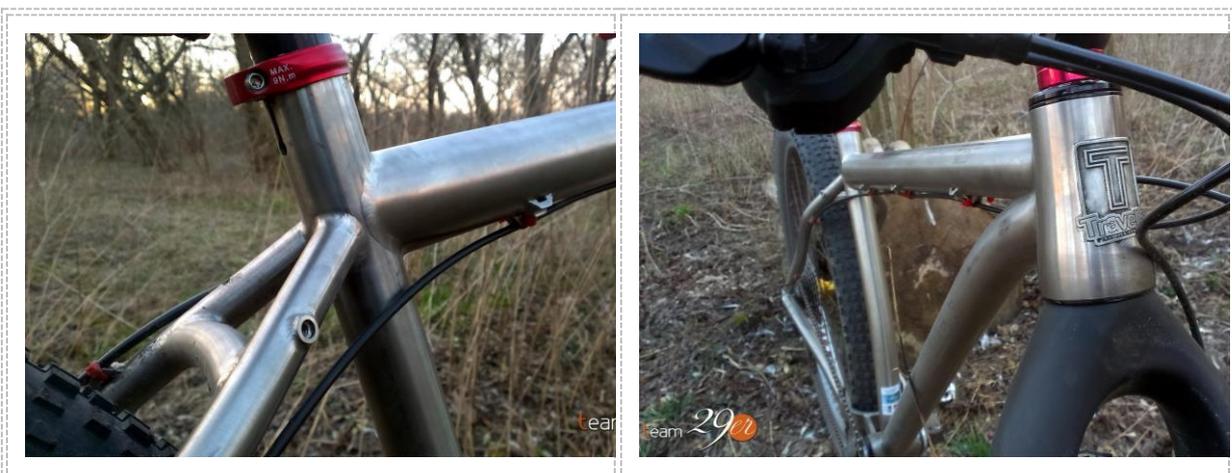
Michael Travers uses the popular and often used alloy Ti3Al-2.5V - the "equivalent" of AL7005. The main tube and the rear triangle have classical cross sections, maybe with the exception of slightly ovalized section of the down tube. Frame-builder did not make an effort to implement some technological and visual wonders. Simplicity, practical sense and minimalism - all are worth appreciating.

We come to a more or less important part. Although the British company boasts that the frames are "handmade" and probably at this point everyone already sees in his mind a lean English craftsman welding his wheelers in the garage, the reality is much different. Michael Travers teamed up with one Uncle Hong-Shih-Min in order to produce quickly, affordably but well welded extraordinary frames. It worked well enough. The frames are first-class! And You do not have to wait for them several months. Oh ... and please, do not bother to look for them on Ebay or Alibaba.com - you won't find it. The idea is completely "made in UK", but its realization is in professional hands of welders from Asia.

Believe me, I have carefully observed the quality of welds, final build of the various sections of Rudy Fat and I cannot fault the least one of them. The joints are elegant, and the tubes folded precisely, of which the best example is the hallmark of Travers Bikes - "unusual" horse shoe - a massive ring that is an extension of chainstays, connecting them with the bottom bracket muff. Thanks to its shape it provides plenty of space for large three-inch gum slipper. Clearly bent seat tube is also decently shaped, and the bend point itself is "smooth" - Asian factories really use professional tools, not a hammer.



Meanwhile, I come to the conclusion that the only element that can confirm Asian origin is a simple graphic design - no finesse matt surface, "mirror" logos, etc, something which is often boasted by the western frame builders. The only extravagance is laser applied "Travers" inscription and titanium badge with the company logo, attached to the head tube.





Since we are looking now at the BB section, it is worth to say three words about it. In every Travers Bikes you will find a massive PF30 muff that uses pressed bearing cups. This solution has as many supporters as opponents, and each has its good reasons. However, Michael Travers came from the assumption that, in addition to greater rigidity PF30 unit is also extremely versatile - for example, it lets you use eccentric bottom brackets. Thus, this classic MTB beast can be easily transformed to single-speeder or equipped with planetary hub. I can only confirm that the slot in the muff is precisely finished - nothing crackles and the bearings are mounted straight.

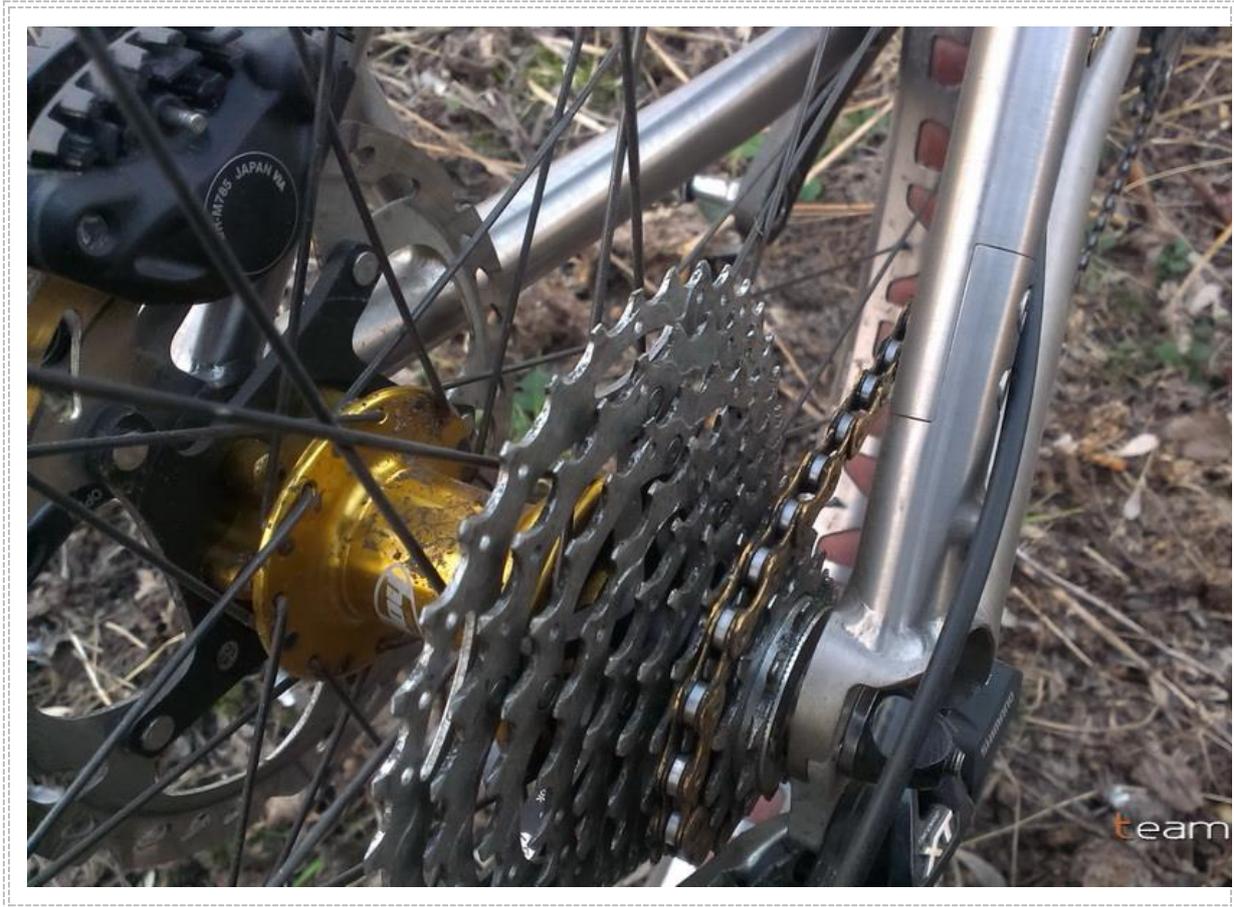


Rudy Fat has several other flavors. These include tapered head tube which seems to be the only reasonable solution concerning such a massive front end. I am writing this, because often tailor-made frames have a classic steering tube, or only theoretically "universal" ID44. Rudy Fat's lower bearing seat has an inner diameter of 56mm, while the upper gets standard 44mm. Therefore, there is no problem with buying dedicated, semi-integrated headset. Another pleasing touch is a slightly bend down tube close to head tube that welds with the upper tube forming a reinforced and stiff joint.



Let's go back to the rear end. Actually three elements are eye catching: the first are: precision-cut dropouts, Post Mount fitting of the rear disc brake and a small connector that stiffens the frame. The second one is upper right tube of the rear fork that has a disjoint. What for? Well, Rudy Fat 29+ frame allows mounting belt drivetrain! Very popular in the U.S., it is a common drivetrain found in 29ers and fat bikes.





If you happen to worry about the amount of place for fatty tire and mud, I am in a hurry to announce that Rudy Fat can easily accommodate one and the other. And even in such a situation rear wheel turns easily.

At the end of the story of the miraculous frame comes a stiff carbon fork, which is the same “beast” as the two semi-fat Surly Knard 29x3.0”. It has a length of 485mm, which is the equivalent of sagged front suspension with 100mm of travel. It got widely spaced powerful legs joined by a massive crown. In the tested model manufacturer installed a standard QR 9mm dropouts. A common disadvantage of this solution is the less stiffness of the wheel-fork joint and undesired micro-movement of the front wheel as a result of the braking forces. However, I must honestly admit that sooner a cactus grows on my hand than the hub slides off the hooks. Everything is mega-mega stiff.



That's all about a wonderful titanium frame.

Certainly, in addition to testing the bike in a real world you are as much curious about the weigh of so unusual parts - frame, wheels, inner tubes, tires, and the whole bike. The skeleton weighs just over 2 lbs. This of course is not a world championship result, but Rudy Fat 29+ is not a light race bike, but a tank in the skin of bicycle.

Tires... a thankful topic. Surly Knard 29x3.0 " is nothing but a piece of rubber conveyor belt. Test set consists of two versions - more expensive, folded, with 120TPI casing and cheaper with steel bead, and 27TPI casing . As a result, the "PRO" model is clearly lighter - 1022g while Knard "Eco" weighs like an anvil - 1213g! Effective width on the Norhtpaw rim is almost 78mm, and an effective height is close to 65mm. Nicee :)



Mean wheels are built with high quality components. The basis is very strong set of hubs from Hope and oversized Northpaw duo with internal width of 40mm (sic), which are perforated in order to cut the mass. Spokes are quite simple - butted DT Competition. As a result, the front weighs 1240g (with brake rotor) and the rear 1699g (with rotor and Shimano XT cassette, 11-36). In ordinary 29ers such set of wheel is defines as high end anvil, but in the case of our Rudy it is relatively light. And above all, it is an unbreakable pair.





Heavily perforated rims are very difficult to convert to tubeless system, and so for the "ease" of life, Michael Travers offers a classic inner tube. But do not count on the low weight, because here we have two thick and heavy rubbers each weighing 400g! No pain, no gain!



Components...Oh yes, they represent same high end quality and style as the whole Rudy Fat. It seems that the first owner of Rudy is a truly follower of minimalism. Onboard you will find:

- Shimano ZEE crank set plucked from the factory cogs. In their place, is mounted a Polish accent - Absolute Black 32T cog
- Shimano XT rear derailleur operated by the XT shifter.
- gold 10sp chain from KMC
- mentioned earlier, 10 speed Shimano XT cassette

Such a tank as Rudy Fat can be effectively slowed down by only decent set of hydraulic brakes, meaning Shimano XT BR -785. I do not know the person who ever complained about this model. The rest of the bike is equipped with eye catchy components:

- titanium 700mm wide handlebar with laser engraved logo Travers Bikes,
- seat post, stem, seat clamp and bar end are CNC machined by famous KCNC .
- support for the ass is provided by a Ritchey sports saddle,
- excellent comfort for the wrists provides a pair of red ESI "Chunky" silicone grips.

Neatly and attractively.



Here I am obliged to mention that innate sense told me to replace the KCNC mast with Thomson Elite seat post (you can see it in the photos). Well I did, because my heavy ass generated merciless popping in yoke of KCNC post. Better safe than sorry..

And so titanium beast stood in front of me in all its glory ... and terrifying weight **12.54kg!**

I know you have had enough of reading about such mundane matters as derailleurs, titanium tubes. After all, the meaning of life is driving a tank. Give me a moment to breath and in the meantime a short sneak peak of what awaits you in the next chapter of pure MTB fun.

