



## Loving the trail

Although the Sappi plantations where the Mr Price Karkloof Classic takes place are blessed with many natural assets, some of the most exciting trail features are man-made. To the untrained eye, the gully through which The Gauntlet now runs would have appeared as an unsightly, eroded area that would be impossible to ride, but trail builder Hylton Turvey saw it as an opportunity to build something that is loved and feared by riders from all over the country.

To allow you to appreciate it fully, Matthew Drew got Hylton to tell us how he went about the process.

### Planning

When assessing an area with a view to building a new piece of trail, bear in mind the grade of trail you want to build. This rugged gully had Black Diamond written all over it. The steep and high ridges offer the perfect terrain to build a roller-coaster style trail, connected with wooden bridges.

### Building

Before you shovel any earth, you need to mark the trail properly using flags, so that you can stand back and see exactly where it is going to run. I used a long roll of tape to mark over the ridges and to ensure that the bridges in each gully were running straight. The terrain offered a variety of lines, but my decision to create a Black Diamond trail had an influence on my final choice. Knowing that the area gets a lot of rain, I also took soil erosion into consideration and tried to minimise this impact as much as possible.

I decided to run the first line straight over the three smaller ridges, each connected by a wooden bridge, with exits flowing into berms that would switch the rider back toward the gully. This created a nice “U” shape. By doing this, I used the top part of the gully to its full potential and created a more sustainable and enjoyable trail. Building bridges in the dips of the gullies serves two purposes; lifting the trail above heavy rain and water surges and maintaining the rider’s rolling momentum between the ridges and switchbacks.

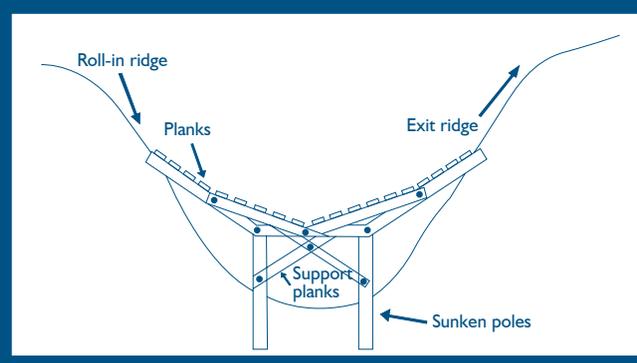
### Bridge construction

For the bridge, I used a half-pipe construction style. This ensures good flow and prevents the jerky effect that a flat bridge would produce. Evenly spaced poles are dug into the ground to support the bearers with 1,2-metre planks used for slats, and four-inch nails give strength to the structure.

### How to ride the Gauntlet

Riders should only contemplate riding a Black Diamond obstacle if they have the required skills. If you are uncertain, it’s best to watch

### HALF PIPE BRIDGE



more advanced riders tackle the obstacle first or hire a skills coach to assist you. There are three key considerations: speed, line and braking. This is definitely an obstacle where the mantra *speed is your friend* applies!

### Riding the roll-in

Having the right speed as you approach the drop onto the bridges is important. Avoid braking here, as this can cause you to go off your line. Approach the roll-in at a moderate speed, in an attacking position (bum off seat) with your elbows out and knees bent to keep your balance and weight even on your bike. Have your weight slightly on the back wheel to avoid going over the bars, then let the bike do the rest.

### Cornering berms

The corners on Gauntlet can be tricky. Maintaining enough speed is very important to ensure that you keep your balance, so avoid braking as you approach the corners. As you go through the corner you have to drop into the ridge again. Position your feet parallel on your pedals, keeping your elbows and knees slightly bent. This allows you to push your bike into the corner. Drop your weight slightly towards the direction of the gully, keeping your eyes focused on the exit of the berm. Your body will naturally move towards where you are looking. Just remember that berms are designed for you to keep your speed through the corner without having to do much braking.

### On the web

See footage of Hylton riding the Gauntlet on [vimeo.com/28810029](https://vimeo.com/28810029) (fast-forward to 2:47 seconds into the video if you are in a hurry). For more on the Karkloof trails and Hylton’s work, google *Keeping the Trail Alive* – episode two, parts one and two.