

Chris Conroy Interview, from a few years back.

There are very few companies that have a dedicated following. An obsession not only from owners but by everyone who claps eyes on the product. In motor sport this accolade is reserved for Ferrari with its distinctive racing red. In the bike world, the colour is turquoise, and the company is Yeti. What Mountain Bike and www.bikeradar.com contributor Marcus Farley talks to Yeti president and GM Chris Conroy about all things Yeti.

1) What gets you up in the morning?

A really strong cup of coffee and the promise of a good ride later in the day.

2) Do you ride to work, if so, what's your bike of choice?

I live about 25 miles from the factory, so I only occasionally ride into work. The ride in is easy – 2500 ft descent, but the climb home is a grind. I have a couple of custom bikes for commuting – my Road Project and a ti cross bike – both Yetis of course.

3) What's your personal bike of choice?

Tough call. One of the great things about working at Yeti is that I get to ride them all. I probably spend most of my time on the 575, but I have been riding more gravity lately so I have been riding the 303 whenever I can.

4) So, you bought Yeti, was it a dream come true and was it worth it?

This is my dream job. When we decided to buy the company, it was a big gamble. Steve and I literally put everything we had on the line to buy the company. We knew we had a great brand, we had great people, and a crazy desire to make it work. When your house is riding on it, you find a way...It was definitely worth it.

5) What's your favourite place to ride?

I have been fortunate to ride all over the world and whenever I am riding it seems to be my favorite place. As a Colorado boy, I am partial to our home turf – we have fantastic riding here. That said, I have to give a strong nod to Moab, Sun Valley, Idaho (some of the best singletrack in the world), the French Alps and, of course, Coed Y Brenin.

6) What bike are you most proud of developing?

We have developed a lot of bikes that I am proud of but I think the 303 is the most innovative and forward thinking. Steve Hoogendoorn was the brain child behind that project and he worked very closely with our team riders to create an amazing bike.

7) What's more important, podiums or feedback from people who buy your bikes?

They are equally important because they both keep us honest. Our racers (and product development guys) have high expectations and if we don't meet them, we don't get on the podium. Our customers have equally high expectations and we really like getting their perspectives on how our bikes are performing.

8) Zero loss suspension, what's it all about?

That's a big question and probably could be an article in itself. In the simplest terms, Zero-Loss is about going faster and looking at product design with a completely open mind. For the detailed explanation, check out our website.

9) Hardtail or full suspension?

I choose my bike based on the terrain. In Colorado, that usually means full-suspension.

10) Everyone seems to be going carbon, what are your thoughts on this development for mountain bikes?

Carbon can be a very desirable material for building mountain bikes, but it isn't the best material for all applications. We try to use carbon (and any other material or technology) where it's most appropriate and steer clear where it doesn't.

11) Where do you see MTB going?

Lighter full-suspension, particularly in the longer travel categories. We are already seeing a lot more integration of suspension, frame, and other components. I think that will increase in the future as companies try to push technology to the next level. I see our sport growing in non-traditional ways. We are seeing huge growth in junior participation in gravity events. They are entering our sport through gravity, rather than cross-country. I think kids will eventually be all-mountain riders, but their perspective on the sport will be from a gravity perspective and that could change the psyche of mountain biking a bit.

12) You have a close working and development relationship with Fox, how did this come about and what have you learnt from each other?

The relationship started on the race circuit. We share the same passion for racing and both feel strongly about using our team as an integral part of our product development efforts. Over the years we have learned a lot from each other. All of our bikes have shocks that are custom tuned for our suspension and when we come up with new suspension designs/theories, we get Fox involved early so we can make sure the suspension design and suspension work together, not as an afterthought.

13) Any new bikes for 2008?

We have a bunch of new bikes for 2008. Stay tuned... (check out the 08 page)

14) The 2007-2008 season - what are you hoping to achieve as a team?

I would like to see Jared Graves win the World Championships in 4x and have Justin Leov place consistently in the top 15 in World Cup DH. On the domestic front, I would like our racers to dominate the NMBS and Mountain States Cup series.

15) The Yeti tribe? what's it all about?

The Tribe is a bunch of Yeti freaks who are crazy about our brand and crazy about our bikes. They come from all over the world and share the same philosophies as we do. Each year we have a Tribe Gathering in the states to celebrate our loyal fans. The weekends revolve around epic riding, great food, and plenty of beer. We cap the event at 150 people each year, but it could easily be double that number. We also have a Tribe meet in the UK, which is organized by Andrew (yetifan.com) and our

UK distributor, Evolution Imports. We always try to get one or two of the Colorado Yeti boys out to the UK event.

16) Who's inspired you the most?

I have had the good fortune of working for/with some of the brightest people in the business. They all inspired me in different ways over the years. I can't name a single person who has inspired me the most, but I am inspired most by what I get to do each day – make great bikes and ride. It doesn't get any better than that...

17) What's the first MTB you ever owned?

Specialized Stumpjumper (1987 or 1988, I can't remember). I cut down the bars to a ridiculous 19" and the tires were 1.5". Things have changed a bit since then.