



His razorsharp sprint victory on the first day of the 2012 MTB Adventure was movie material. The rest of the weekend he defended his overall lead and returned to Ulanbaatar looking good in yellow. Mature and completely in charge. Earlier this month he did the same on the roadbike in the Tour of Poyang Lake in Jiangxi. At the age of 20. Altansuckh Altanzul entered the Chinese amateur cycling scene by storm this year. The big question on everyone's lips: who is this guy?

Nordic Ways:Who are you?

Altansuckh Altanzul: I come from Mongolia and used to be a university student, but I quit my studies to focus on my bike riding.

When and why did you decide to become a bike rider? Do you prefer MTB or road bike?

In 2008, I started exercising on the bike, riding with National Honored Athlete Ulzii-Orshikh Jamsran's support. Usually, I do my exercises on the road bike and I prefer it over the MTB.

You only turn 21 at the end of December. Did you expect to have a chance to win the Genghis Khan MTB Adventure?

I did not expect to have a chance to win the Genghis Khan MTB Adventure, because on my team (CCN Mongolia) I was just number three for this race.

The Genghis Khan Festival has become a classic on China's amateur sports calendar and will be organized already for the 7th time next year. How do you feel about this?

We are Mongolian people so we participate in this contest, which is named after the greatest emperor of my country (Chinggis Khaan in Mongolian language), by considering it with significant value.

What do you like the most of the Genghis Khan Festival weekend?

I most like the 100km long distance race, which is held on the third day of the Genghis Khan MTB.

How did you experience your race in 2012? Was it more difficult than you expected?

In 2012, my race experience was very well, but yes, it was more difficult than I expected.

What was your strategy for the race? How often do you train per week and how many kilometres do you ride per week?

My strategy was to support the team leader, Tuguldur Tuulkhantai, in the race. I ride approximately 500km per week, but it is impossible to ride in the wintertime, because the winter weather is very cold in Mongolia. The temperature reaches – 30C to – 40C.

You won the race on the first day by coming back to the leaders halfway, and then beating them in the sprint. A fantastic way to win a race. Could you tell us how that first day went for you?

It was very rainy and slippery on the first day. Before the start of the race, our team coach Tommy Tumendemberel advised us to watch and study the opponents in the race, because there were some top riders. Under the given strategy, I beat the rivals in the finish line using my full strength.

Your teammate Tuguldur Tuulkhantai had a problem with his chain on the first day and lost 14 minutes, but then won the next two stages in impressive fashion riding solo. Was he too strong on day 2 and day 3, or did you let him ride on purpose, knowing you had many minutes of advantage over him?

Due to the fact that our team Leader Tuguldur Tuulkhantai lost 14 minutes on the first day, the general plan for the team was changed. As such, I was given the task to win the overall classification and Tuguldur was required to lead in the second and third stages to exhaust the other opponents to support and save my strength. It worked, the opponents tried to beat Tuguldur in the races of the second and third days and then they got tired. Tuguldur's winning and my winning is the same for me and my team, because we are one team.

What other races have you won or been on the podium?

In Mongolian domestic contests, I have won several times. At present, I have not achieved this

in other international races, as I started my sport career just few years ago (*this Q&A was conducted before Altanzul won a stage and the overall of the Tour of Poyang Lake in southern China early December, kvdv*)

Winning a tough 3-day race at the age of 20 against some of the best amateur riders in China is a superb achievement. What is your ambition in cycling for the next years?

My ambition in cycling for the next years is to raise the rating and status of the Mongolian riders again in Asia. In the 1990s, the Mongolian riders dominated in Asia and in the world of amateur cycling.

How does the Genghis Khan MTB race compare with other mountainbike races you have done in your career?

The Genghis Khan MTB race in Inner Mongolia is easier than the Mongolia Bike Challenge race, which is organized in Mongolia. The Mongolia Bike Challenge is the one of the world's top MTB marathons.

The Mongolian team dominated the Genghis Khan Festival in 2012, including the women's races. What is the secret of your team?

The secret of our team is hard training.

How popular is cycling in Ulanbaatar? Is it a big sport?

Cycling was popular in Mongolia until the year of 1990 or the abolishment of the socialist system of the country. Since that time, it has not been popular due to lacking of funds. The sport of cycling requires much funds.

A few years ago, some Mongolian riders were going to Belgium to take part in cyclocross races. Former road world champion Johan Museeuw was involved in the project. What happened in the mean time? Are you interested in cyclocross?

I am not interested in cyclocross. I know that Belgium supports Mongolian bikers very much. World Champion Johan Museeuw assisted Naran. Z, who is the coach of Attila Team of Mongolia. I belong to another team of Mongolia. Joel Casey, a citizen of Belgium, now also operates a shop named Bicycling World in Ulaanbaatar.

Can you watch cycling races on TV in Ulanbaatar? Do you have any riders you like?

In Ulaanbaatar, I watch Tour De France, Giro d' Italia and Vuelta a España, which are the largest stage races in the world, on TV with Mongolian translations. I like cyclists such as Alberto Contador, Bradley Wiggins and Lance Armstrong.

How do you feel as a Mongolian coming to China's Inner Mongolia region? Is there a big difference?

As for the language, the customs and the culture, there was no difference, but I felt the law is strict.

Will you take part in 2013 and defend your title?

Yes, I will take part in the 2013 race.

Which advice would you give to people who want to take part in the Genghis Khan MTB Adventure?

I would like to tell the people who want to take part in the Genghis Khan MTB Adventure, you will feel the scenery and experience pure nature, virgin land and grassland of Inner Mongolia. This race is professionally organized in a safe environment.



Altanzul heading the peloton at the start of stage 2.



Outsprinting Feng Kuan Jie, Wang Lei and Eric Felbabel to win the first stage of the 2012 race