



ENGINE TEARDOWN · CURRENT-STATE REPORT

WHERE YOU STAND RIGHT NOW.

BIKE198

bike198.com

WEBSITE

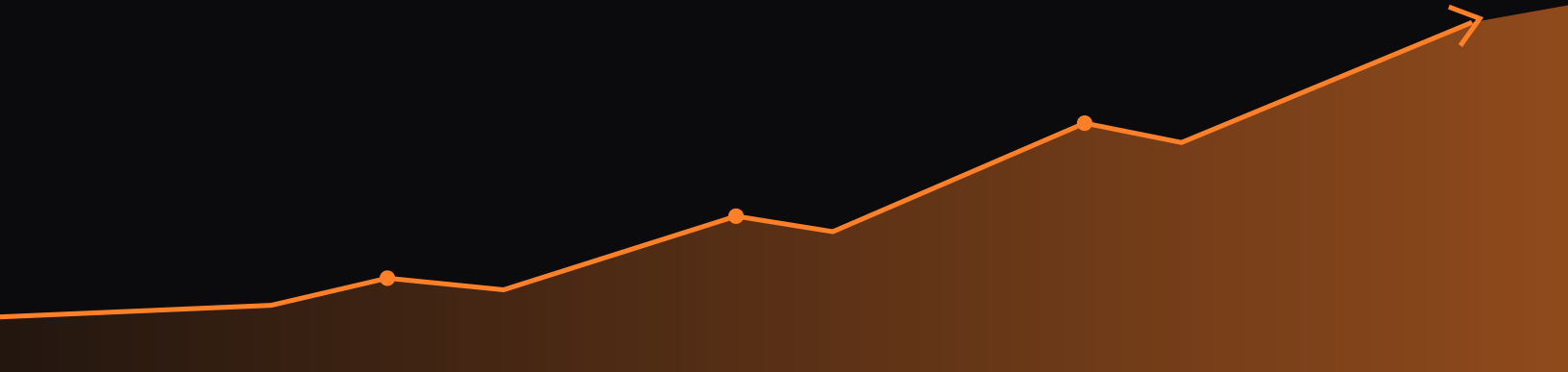
CONTENT

SEARCH

AI SEARCH

REPUTATION & LOCAL

SOCIAL



PREPARED FOR

BIKE198 (test run on Robb's own site)

MEASURED

October 20, 2026

Prepared by Robb Sutton, onenineety8



THE SNAPSHOT

43

OF 60 POINTS

BIKE198 is easy to find: half of twelve rider searches return it in the top ten, and AI answers cite two of its guides. What holds it back is consistency. Publishing comes in bursts, the latest reviews carry no trail scores despite the site's promise, and social and video have gone quiet.

OVERALL SCORE

43 / 60

COMPETITIVE, WITH GAPS

The basics work; specific gaps are costing leads.

WEBSITE



15 / 20

CONTENT



7 / 10

SEARCH



9 / 10

AI SEARCH



8 / 10

REPUTATION & LOCAL



1 / 5

SOCIAL



3 / 5

75

MOBILE SPEED

Google PageSpeed, homepage; 5.6 s to load

8

POSTS, LAST 90 DAYS

All Sep 14–23; none since

6 / 12

RIDER SEARCHES RANKED

Top 10; #1 for dropper posts

2 / 5

AI ANSWERS CITING YOU

Google AI Mode, not personalized

5.7K

FACEBOOK FOLLOWERS

Latest post September 18

11.3K

YOUTUBE SUBSCRIBERS

Last upload 11 months ago

■ WHAT'S WORKING

- 01 Ranks #1 for best dropper posts 2026, and appears in the top ten for six of twelve rider searches.
- 02 Google AI Mode cites the eMTB motor and budget mountain bike guides, and describes BIKE198 accurately by name.
- 03 Long, maintained guides: the dropper guide runs 2,344 words with a byline, an update date and an affiliate disclosure.

■ THREE FIXES TO MAKE FIRST

- 01 Back up the trail-testing promise. The 8 newest posts have no 0–10 score or first-hand notes, and cite other outlets' testing instead.
- 02 Publish on a schedule. 67 posts went up in December and January; there were none from July 22 to September 13, and none since September 23.
- 03 Restart video and social. YouTube's last upload was 11 months ago, and Instagram has 527 followers.

For a review site, the website's job is to earn a rider's trust fast and turn a visit into a subscriber or a click to buy.

MESSAGE CLARITY W1

 4/5

WHAT WE FOUND

- The first screen shows the logo, menu, a Subscribe button and the newest featured review.
- The heading that explains the site (Independent Mountain Bike Reviews and Buyer's Guides) exists but is hidden from view.
- On a phone, the first screen is the featured review with Subscribe still visible.

WHY IT MATTERS

A new rider from search decides in seconds whether this is an independent review site. The content shows it; the words don't yet.

What we'd do: Show the independent-reviews line under the logo on the first screen.

CONVERSION PATH W2

 4/5

WHAT WE FOUND

- Newsletter signup needs one field (email) and appears twice on the homepage, plus a Subscribe button in the menu.
- Guides carry affiliate links with a disclosure (16 on the dropper guide); the shop is linked from the homepage.
- Signups go to Substack, so the subscriber list and signup page live off the site.

WHY IT MATTERS

For a publisher, the conversion is a subscriber or a purchase click. Both paths are short and clear.

What we'd do: Add a newsletter signup at the end of each guide and review, where readers finish.

TECHNICAL HEALTH W3

 4/5

WHAT WE FOUND

- Google PageSpeed mobile: homepage 75 performance, 95 accessibility, 100 best practices, 100 SEO.
- Largest contentful paint 5.6 s on the homepage and 5.4 s on the dropper guide (target 2.5 s); layout shift 0.
- Image delivery could save about 315 KB; render-blocking files add about 1.1 s.

WHY IT MATTERS

Riders read on phones at the trailhead. Faster pages also rank and convert better.

What we'd do: Compress and resize the featured images and defer render-blocking files.

PROOF AND TRUST W4

 3/5

WHAT WE FOUND

- Strong trust pages: founded 2008, a How We Test page, and a promise that every score was ridden on real trails.
- None of the 8 newest posts shows a 0–10 score or first-person test notes.
- Recent reviews quote other outlets' testing, e.g. BikeRadar's first-ride verdict in the Scott Spark DC piece.

WHY IT MATTERS

Readers and Google both reward first-hand testing. A review that promises trail scores but shows none weakens the whole site's credibility.

What we'd do: Add test notes and a score to anything titled Review, or label it a first look or roundup.

PUBLISHING CONSISTENCY C1 4/5**WHAT WE FOUND**

- 8 posts in the last 90 days, all between September 14 and 23; none since.
- Over 12 months: 67 posts in December and January, then 0 to 4 a month, with none in May, July or August.

WHY IT MATTERS

Steady publishing builds rankings and returning readers. Bursts followed by silence lose both.

What we'd do: Publish two pieces a week on a fixed schedule instead of in batches.

BUYER RELEVANCE AND DEPTH C2 3/5**WHAT WE FOUND**

- Guides answer real buying questions in depth (droppers, eMTB motors, flat pedal shoes) and show update dates.
- Recent posts are 1,300 to 2,150 words with a byline, but are built from others' test results.
- 96 older posts were updated in the last 90 days, which keeps guides current.

WHY IT MATTERS

Depth is there. What separates a review site is the reviewer's own riding, and that is missing from the newest pieces.

What we'd do: Lead each review with your own ride notes; use others' findings as support, not the substance.

SEARCH VISIBILITY S1 5/5**WHAT WE FOUND**

- 6 of 12 rider searches show BIKE198 in the top 10, including #1 for best dropper posts 2026.
- Not found for best budget mountain bike 2026, radial tires or how to manual, though guides exist on each.
- Searching BIKE198 shows X, Facebook and YouTube first; the site is #8.

WHY IT MATTERS

Search is already the site's strongest channel. The gaps are topics where a guide exists but isn't ranking.

What we'd do: Refresh the budget, radial tire and manual guides around the exact searches riders use.

SEARCH FOUNDATIONS S2 4/5**WHAT WE FOUND**

- Unique titles, meta descriptions, one H1 and canonical tags on the pages checked; sitemap and robots.txt are clean.
- Two plugins output duplicate schema (Organization, WebSite and BlogPosting twice on each page).
- A second homepage at /home/ is set to noindex but still shows in brand results.

WHY IT MATTERS

Clean signals help Google pick the right page and show rich results. Duplicate schema blurs them.

What we'd do: Keep one schema source and use Review markup on scored reviews.

Riders now ask AI assistants which gear to buy. Being cited there sends the rider to you instead of a competitor.

AI ANSWER PRESENCE A1

 4/5

WHAT WE FOUND

- 2 of 5 rider questions cited BIKE198: Class 1 eMTB motors and budget full-suspension bikes.
- Not cited for best dropper posts, even though the guide ranks #1 in regular search.
- Asked for trustworthy review sites, AI Mode named Pinkbike, Vital MTB, The Loam Wolf, Flow, Blister, OutdoorGearLab and Singletracks.

WHY IT MATTERS

AI answers are becoming where riders start. Being on the trusted-sites list is the next step after being cited.

What we'd do: Add short answer-first summaries and clear picks at the top of each guide.

AI READINESS A2

 4/5

WHAT WE FOUND

- Asked by name, AI Mode describes BIKE198 accurately: founded 2008 by Robb Sutton, Atlanta area, 0-10 scoring.
- AI crawlers are not blocked, but there is no llms.txt file.
- Reviews are marked as blog posts, not reviews, in structured data.

WHY IT MATTERS

AI systems already understand who you are. Review markup and an llms.txt make the expertise easier to reuse.

What we'd do: Add an llms.txt listing the key guides and How We Test, and Review schema on scored reviews.

LOCAL PRESENCE AND REVIEWS R1

 1/5

WHAT WE FOUND

- No Google Business Profile; an online-only publisher usually doesn't need one.
- No reader reviews or ratings on Google or Facebook.
- The name is consistent across the site, Facebook, Instagram, X and YouTube.

WHY IT MATTERS

This check is built for local businesses and mostly doesn't apply to a publisher. Reader trust comes from testing proof instead (see Proof and trust).

What we'd do: No action needed here; put the effort into first-hand testing proof.

SOCIAL PRESENCE P1

3/5

WHAT WE FOUND

- Facebook: 5.7K followers, posting article links in bursts; latest September 18.
- YouTube: 11.3K subscribers and 106 videos, but the last upload was 11 months ago.
- Instagram: 527 followers and 218 posts; all four channels linked from the site.

WHY IT MATTERS

Video is where riders judge whether a reviewer actually rides the gear. A quiet channel loses that proof.

What we'd do: Post a short trail clip with every review, on YouTube and Instagram.

07
HOW YOU COMPARE

Three independent review sites that appeared most in the same searches and AI answers. Public numbers, measured the same day.

	BIKE198	THE LOAM WOLF	SINGLETRACKS	OUTDOORGEARLAB
Mobile speed score	75	39	50	66
Mobile largest paint	5.6 s	33.9 s	22.4 s	6.4 s
Published, last 90 days	8 posts	96 items	174 posts	902 pages updated (all sports)
Rider searches in top 10 (of 12)	6	3	1	2
Cited in AI answers (of 5)	2	1	2	2
Named as a trusted review site	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Instagram followers	527	149K	107K	18K

Speed from Google PageSpeed Insights(mobile, homepage). Publishing counts from each site's WordPress data or sitemap. Search and AI counts use the questions on the last page.

WHERE WE'D START

Ordered by what grows readers and clicks most for the least effort. Search is working; trust and consistency are where the next points are.

DAYS 1 TO 30

MAKE REVIEWS MATCH THE PROMISE

- Test notes and a 0–10 score on everything titled Review, or relabel it.
- One schema source, with Review markup on scored reviews.
- Show the independent-reviews line on the first screen.
- Image compression to bring mobile load under 3 seconds.

DAYS 31 TO 60

PUBLISH ON A SCHEDULE

- Two pieces a week, every week, instead of batches.
- Refresh the budget, radial tire and manual guides for the searches they miss.
- Answer-first summaries at the top of the top ten guides.
- Newsletter signup at the end of every post.

DAYS 61 TO 90

SHOW THE RIDING

- A short trail clip with each review, on YouTube and Instagram.
- An llms.txt listing the key guides and How We Test.
- Every new piece shared to Facebook the day it goes live.
- Re-measure with this rubric and compare.

BUILT FOR YOU, THEN RUN MONTHLY.

A plan built around this baseline and run every month: the site, the content, search and AI visibility, and the channels around it. The next report uses the same twelve checks, so progress is measured, not described.

THE SEARCHES WE RAN

These are the exact questions used for the search and AI scores, so the same test can be run again later.

GOOGLE SEARCHES

SEARCH	YOUR BEST POSITION	WHO RANKED FIRST
best dropper posts 2026	#1	BIKE198
best trail bikes 2026	Not in top 10	OutdoorGearLab
best eMTB motors 2026	#6	ebike-mtb.com
best budget mountain bike 2026	Not in top 10	Garage Gym Reviews
radial mountain bike tires	Not in top 10	The Loam Wolf
best flat pedal shoes for eMTB	#4	eMTB Forums
how to manual a mountain bike	Not in top 10	REI
ebike bikepacking guide	Not in top 10	Cyrusher
Deity Highside review	#8	Singletracks
Magura Race Pro review	Not in top 10	Singletrack World
Scott Spark DC review	#8	Bike Magazin
RockShox Super Deluxe Genie review	#9	The Radavist
BIKE198 (brand name)	#8 (site); X, Facebook, YouTube first	X (@bike198)

AI ANSWER QUESTIONS

QUESTION	NAMED YOU?	WHO WAS NAMED
What are the best dropper posts for trail riding in 2026?	No	Cited BikeRadar, eMTB Forums
Are radial mountain bike tires worth it?	No	Cited Schwalbe, BikeMag, The Radavist, Singletracks, Reddit, YouTube
Which eMTB motor is best for a Class 1 e-mountain bike in 2026?	Yes	Cited BIKE198, Upway, Pinkbike, Bikometry
What's the best budget full-suspension mountain bike in 2026?	Yes	Cited BIKE198, OutdoorGearLab, BikeTrekker, Switchback Travel, BikePerfect
What are the most trustworthy mountain bike gear review websites?	No	Pinkbike, Vital MTB, The Loam Wolf, Flow, Blister, OutdoorGearLab, Singletracks
What is BIKE198 and who runs it? (brand check, not scored)	Yes	Accurate: founded 2008 by Robb Sutton, Atlanta area

Searches and AI questions were run on October 20, 2026. For a publisher, being cited as a source in an AI answer counts as being named.

THIS IS THE **BASELINE.**

Every number in this report was measured on October 20, 2026 with the same twelve-point rubric we use for every company. Run it again in 90 days and the changes are measured, not described.

HOW THIS WAS MEASURED

- Measured from the outside, the way a reader sees you: the public site, Google, Google AI Mode, Google Maps, Facebook, YouTube and Instagram.
- Publishing counts come from the site's own WordPress data.
- Searches ran as ordinary web searches; results vary by location and device, so treat positions as directional.
- AI questions ran in Google AI Mode with personalization turned off.
- Twelve criteria, scored 1 to 5 against fixed definitions; 60 points total. The local-presence check is built for local businesses and is scored as written.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

- Start with the three fixes on page 1. They are yours either way.
- If you want help running them, Robb can show what that would look like.
- Re-running the same checks in 90 days shows what moved.

Marketing run like a sales operation.

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