

Team Gorilla Grit 3 Ride Report

We are better than our finish last year, or at least I thought that in 2019 when it was all over. Last year we finished the 1400-mile GRIT1, but it was not the gold finish we aimed for. Compounding small mistakes produced a situation that 100% effort and 17-hour riding days could not overcome. Many lessons were learned and pulled from other's experiences; the most important garnered from the sage advice of Dave Wonderly. 1. Full commitment is required. 2. Travel light. 3. Always keep moving. We had never ridden in Idaho nor had any of us camped off enduro bikes, but I knew we were coming back.



Fred and Andy had no clue.... yet! Our 2019 Gorilla Moto team consisted of: John Sedberry (@gorillamotov), Fred Goldberg (@motofred320), and Andy Nichols (@frogan207). Due to a recovering knee injury, Fred would not be able to go this year. Andy, having nothing to prove and caring less if he ever tried a GRIT again, signed on for the sole reason of not letting me go by myself for safety reasons. Once and a while the retired Master Chief comes out and as Andy agrees, he says; "Alright. It's on.... But we are not going there to F#%k around...." Lol.

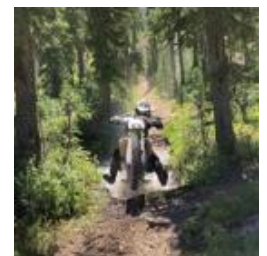
Prep Work:

Last year, Andy made me a Pimptastik command center for the 500. It had loads of cool features and 2x powered GPS's. Within minutes of last year's start, it was useless as our GPS files were corrupted. This year I would focus on navigation with simplistic backup. Andy worked the mechanical prep, and both intensified our cardio training via running biking and moto



Day 1.

Boiled down, the mission is simple. Ride 12 hours minimum every day and if you start falling behind go longer. If you're ahead of schedule keep it that way. Something can and will go wrong that drains the clock. We started camping in Stanley 2 nights before as all hotels were booked, so from the dirt to the dirt we went. Day 1 was great. We hit the special test in the meadows (marshland). Neither one of us knew what to expect, but I sank up to my tank in the very first hole and we both said "Oh S#!t" realizing that it was a completely flooded expanse with no path to go by. A few close calls and some laughs later, we sailed up the fun rocky climbs and met Greg, a mountain biker who had just rode up the other side (now we felt humiliated). Turns out, he is good friends with a riding buddy of ours Seth Jarsky who had relocated to Boise. SMALL

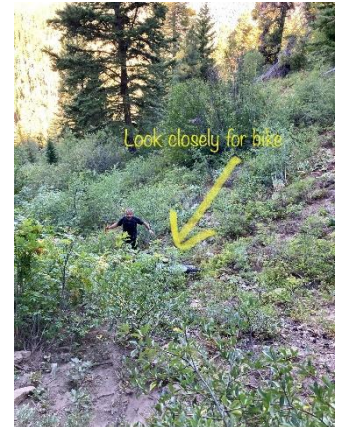


WORLD. We hit Pine by 5pm, met Shane who donated a hand saw after we had misplaced one on the trail (lost). A massive shout out to him and his crew as they have personally cleared over tons of trees from trails in that area. (THANK YOU) Still early, we started into day 2 trail ending up ½ thru the Idaho City special test...lotta whoops not a lotta fun.



Day 2.

Everyone has their day in the barrel. Today was Andy's day. We started out on schedule and were knocking out the miles. On a seemingly less dangerous trail, while negotiating an uphill switchback, Andy's bike flamed out. Sliding backwards with his front brake unable to hold the slide, he ran out of talent. The back wheel slid over the edge of the precipice. As the rear wheel dropped, it started a backwards cartwheel of the bike over his head. As doom was striking, the funny thing is that he had enough time to have the inner monologue of "Is this shit is really happening???!!" He held on to the bars for the first backwards flip trying to limit the damage only letting go as the bike started its sliding journey down the hillside. (The very STEEP hillside). Forty feet later, his 501 came to a rest upside down caught by a couple small bushes. We ran Sena bike comms, but as it turns out, we were charging them at that moment. From Andy's perspective: As John's bike went into the distance it was time to start the recovery. Cutting trail on a downward slope for an hour gave us a supposed way out. John came back after negotiating several very challenging climbs (twice lol). The recovery trail ended up a moot point. His knuckles dragging notwithstanding, one of the reasons he is called "The Gorilla" is his farm boy crazy strength. With a simple glance, he pointed up hill and after an hour we were back on our way.



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The section in the notes about the hill that will challenge your cooling system and body is accurately depicted. "Luckily", we hit that in the hottest part of the day. When we reached the top of that sun exposed section doing the S'Idaho shuffle with our inside feet, Andy's clutch was faded, and my bike reeked of radiator fluid as it was close to tea kettling. The bikes would have to cool off on the downhill side. While lying in camp that night, I mentioned to Andy that if we keep pushing, we had a chance for a four-day finish, and I would not "make" him go on the GRIT2 and Tour of Idaho. Little did I know that the Master Chief came out again and our stops were shorter, and any time I thought of longer rest or stopping for a nice to have sandwich etc. the whip cracked!

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Day 3.

This was my Day in the barrel, specifically the morning. There was a long red trail that went along a creek for quite a distance with lots of steps and narrow rocky obstacles. Slipping bikes and lots of bike lifts later we continued to grind but the energy was drained as the hotter than normal heat of the day approached. The very rocky climb out was challenging for both of us, but we managed to rally in the following hours picking up the steady pace and clicking off the all-important trail miles. An unexpected fun thing happened in the morning as we met up with a nice guy named Ron from New York who was just enjoying the singletrack in the area. He tagged along with us for a few miles up that gnarly red trail. He is planning his GRIT3 run. Good luck Ron!



Day 4.

Days 2 and 3 were long but enjoyable in many spots. Our gas stops were always gas and go so we were able to eat into some of day four's mileage. We basically had half of day 4 and all of day 5 left at 12:30 ish. Banging out all the trail miles available was more important to us than when we finished. A four-day finish is cool, but as everyone knows one or two more fallen trees, bike issues, injuries etc. and it is instantly a different ride. We decided to just keep it moving, not think or care what day we finished and see how it goes. With apprehension from last year's attempt on scoring, we made a phone call to Joe just to double check. He kindly assuaged us, advising us not to skip Cinnabar. Patting us on the head and sending us on our way, we lit off. Full of confidence, we instantly made a nav error going instead in the direction of the bonus loop. Oopsie! Having a laugh and doubling back, we eventually found ourselves at the start of the Cinnabar Special Test. Looking back at the post that followed our ride, Andy and I absolutely loved the play by play and how everyone follows along the adventure. We laughed at how many guys knew exactly what things were and what rock we must have just traversed. We basically knew that we were in Idaho and on one of Joe's Red Trails which, at some point promises to administer a swift kick to the bollocks. Cinnabar starts out normally enough but when things get interesting we were surprised at how steep and technical it was. (We affectionately call it "Cinnabun" because of how sweet it is).

By “dinner time”, we had made it to some of the final blue trails on our route as we chose to start and finish in Stanley. There is a blue trail that has many many deadfalls, water crossings, and loads of both round rollers and sharp rocks. For whatever reason, Andy had decided to take another ride on the struggle bus for a couple miles expending too much energy on some of the obstacles. We were both tired and realized that things were getting sloppy, so we tightened up our intervals of checking on each other. For me in the front, Andy will come along and help if needed. For Tail End Charlie, he is hanging out without backup should something go wrong. Literally idling in 2nd gear around an outside sidehill turn, a bush hid a stump on the uphill side. His knee hit it and without time to correct, spit him down the (luckily short) hill into the creek. A short time later I called and did not hear anything. I rode back and yelled are you ok, and after all these years I’ve never heard Andy say no regardless of how ridiculous the predicament. I hear “Nooooope” and look over the last rise for another (and hopefully the last) good laugh. Andy’s bike was four feet down the hill facing backwards. Underneath the bike and with gas pouring out of the vent hose all over him, he had lifted the bike off himself up hill and mostly corrected the situation. We worked together to get the bike the last few feet and we were off again with the situation showing how close things can go in the wrong direction in less than an instant. The final blue trail was glorious with great views and a super fun flowing ribbon of single track. Together, we had found an energy boost and were both on the pegs and having a blast. The conclusion of this trail put us on a 5-mile magenta dirt road back to the barn. With a simple fist-bump we rode away knowing that our finish was close at hand. I have a million great memories from this adventure, but one that continually sticks in my mind is riding side by side (literally into the sunset at times) on the pegs with Andy as the 500’s churned out the last few miles. Without knowing the scores and at that time not really caring, it was simply about two dudes digging deep and having the adventure of a lifetime on dirt bikes. We arrived in Stanley a day earlier than our hotel reservation so spent one last night camping before shower time.

Thank you Joe Smith for your hard work and all the people here on R’idaho (and who live in Idaho) who came before us. Your hard work clearing trail kept our tree cutting to a minimum and our fun factor to a maximum.



