

Gorilla Moto's Grit One Ride Report



About a year ago I read on Dave Wonderly's accomplishment of riding the Grit route, I had never heard of it but was excited to pursue it. I called the two guys I had no doubt would be down to get it done; Fred Goldberg, a top rate handyman with multiple NETRA enduro championships to his credit, and Andy Nichols, a retired Navy SEAL with East Coast racing experience and an ISDE rider who currently works for Forceprotector Gear. In addition to their racing backgrounds they have ridden many multi-day adventures with me throughout Baja. Strong dudes both in mind, body and skills. I was the weak link with limited mechanical skills and just under 8 years since I first threw a leg over a dirt bike. Hardcore planning started about 3 months before go time, and we all were training 4-5 days a week shedding unneeded body weight. Our gear got plenty of attention as we measured out our prospective gear weights in efforts to minimize them. We tried multiple variations of the pack out and decided with a split approach of 1/3 on the bike 2/3 on the back. We wanted to chase the Gold finish, so planning revolved around traveling light, camping and keeping pace.



Day 1: 15.5 hours 285 miles. On the morning we launched from Jackpot, we realized that our GPS files had been corrupted on the download so although the track names were in the Garmin the tracks were missing sections or just not there. 7am on start day, we defaulted to downloading a program on our phones and corroborating the shapes of the tracks on our phones to the back-up Stage Overview Nav Cards as our new way to navigate. A few hours later, during the hottest part of the day, (96 deg) there were some additional issues with tracks showing all one color and phone batteries dying. Searching for the track, Andy slid down a very steep hill requiring

him to bull-dog his bike down. Immediately after that was the first Special Test that had a tricky climb. After helping extract a bike from a loop-out and push bikes up the hill he was overheating on the very first special test hill. A quick dunk in a creek brought his core temp down, but it was a rough start for the team to say the least.



We missed a few turns and ended up riding an extra 50 miles to get back on track. We pulled into our first stop at 10:30pm with the gas station closed, but the bar was open. We would not find out until later how the struggles of the first day would compound as the ride progressed trying to get back on track, thrown off for the next 3 days as early starts were not possible. If the average GRIT 1 day is 12-13hr and gas closes at 8-9pm and opens at 8-9am you need to be rolling around 7 or 8am to make it before close once behind its late finishes every day. Gas is critical and the decision was made for us. We made a few new friends at the pub and we took the advice of Darryl running up the road and camping at a remote hot springs. We bathed in mineral pool till after midnight.

Day 2: 13.5 hours 166 miles. Forced with a late start after waiting for the gas station to open, we were determined to have a better day. Our navigation was dialed at this point and except for the occasional missed turn, it was no longer an issue the remainder of the ride. The first full day of Single track was epic, getting used to the side hills of Idaho by learning to focus on 15 feet in front of you while ignoring the 200 feet below. Around mid-day, we experienced our first log jam and pulled out the Big Boy saws and reopened the trail. It took roughly two hours to clear this tree, but our



spirits remained high. It was a small taste of what was to come. At one point, I was assisting Fred whose back tire barely came off the trail. While lifting the bike it started to slip again and I instinctively I grabbed a red-hot muffler that would put a burn on my palm the size of half dollar.



At some point during the day, Andy's rear shock's pre-load adjuster (X-Trig) broke. It would back out at an unpredictable rate making challenging trails more so with a bike he could not steer.

He worked out a system to quickly make adjustments each hour to maintain control. We rode on and dropped into Lowman around 10pm. The day one delays continued to play their part, and again the gas station and everything around it were closed. This



was a sporting finish for the team. On fumes and without enough gas to make it to town on the road, we risked it and descended the large hills coming into town well into dark coasting with the engine off as much as possible coming down the mountain because we were trying to extend our range. When we got to town, we had just enough in the tank to skirt 5 miles south and set up camp. Low on water, and with no gas, it was going to be another late start for day 3 waiting for the station to open.

Day 3: 13 hours 220 miles. After an 8am gas up and a quick breakfast, we were moving by 8:45am. It was much later than we wanted, but once you're behind it is very hard to catch up. We rode some fun trail and we were pushing to make McCall.

We made a tactical error at this point.

Knowing we had been behind with late starts we opted to not do the Mt. Spine with deep river crossing and picked up another blue trail to replace it. This would cost us as the trail we picked had 4 trees blocking the way in different spots. We tried to go under trimming as we went but were denied. We cut one then realized time was ticking so we started lifting bikes over the 4 ft obstacles. HEAVE HO!! Eventually, we hit the 20-mile trail south of McCall. This was EPIC!! It was so flowy, fast, fun, and beautiful. We did not want this one to end. Arriving in McCall, we still had 2-3 hours of daylight, so we pressed on to Patrick Butte. Arriving at the first trail, we got deep into the bush with downed trees all around with no way to get through. The sun was setting, so we back tracked to Hazard Lake and set up camp.

Day 4: 17 hours 210 miles. We woke up to frost and Fred lit a fire in an attempt to dry wet gear. Moving a little slower, we were off to try the other trail. This trail drops you into Riggins and is ridiculously awesome for many reasons. You start on an atv trail, that quickly becomes horse trail, then your straining to see a trail, till finally you can't find the trail. We would go on it for 100 yards lose it, find it, hit repeat. You



climb up to the peaks via sharp switch backs and across green meadows till you reach the descent of 40+ switch backs on what was the steepest descent I have seen let alone ridden on a trail. 85% of them we were off the bikes swinging them around manually while trying to not look down. We are not sure what trail rating this one has but if you're not expert I would avoid it and if you are expert, I would not miss it.



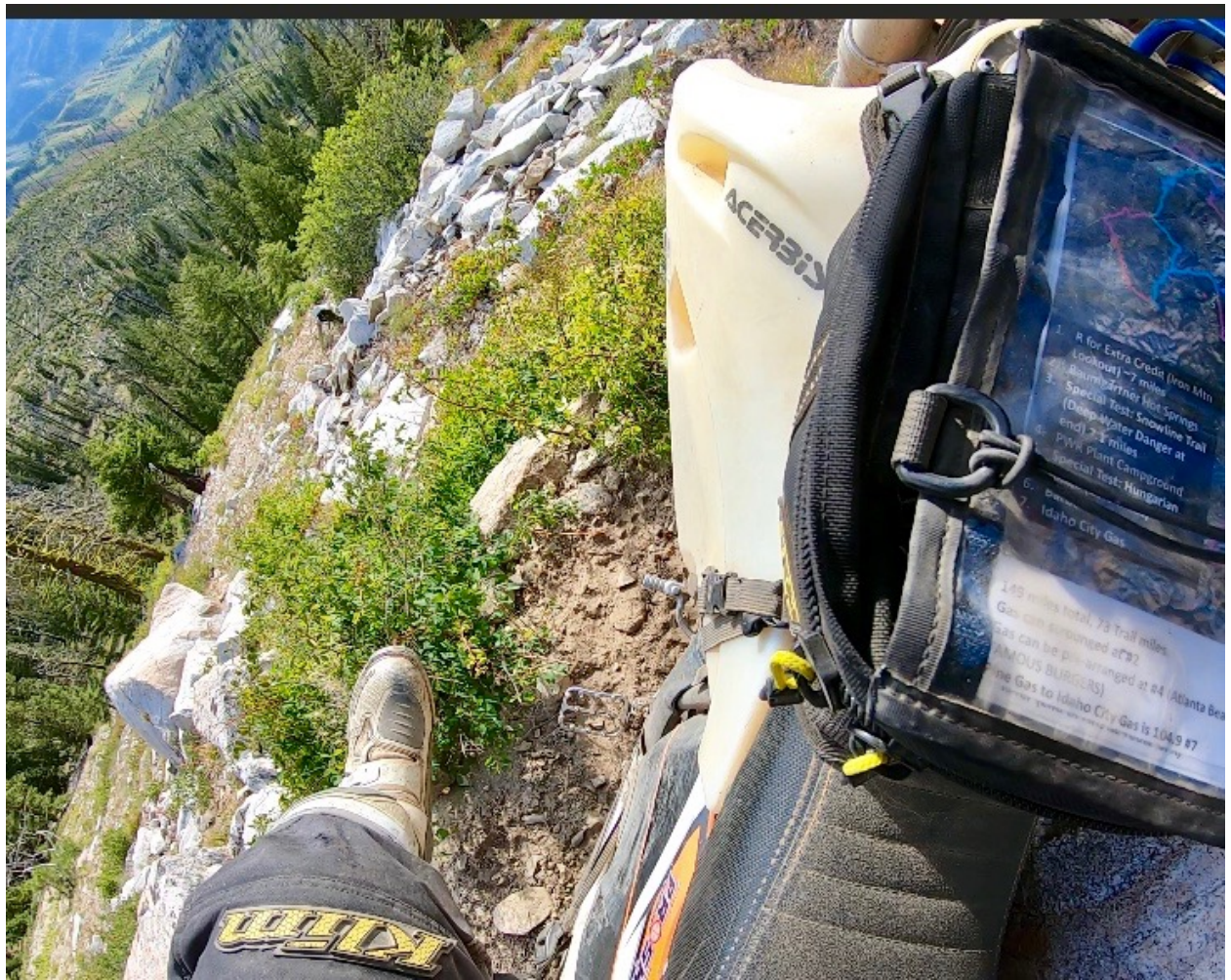


This decent took five hours to go 10 miles closing in on Riggins which is probably 20 miles from where we started. At some point in the day Fred had a bee fly into his helmet and give him a good sting on the side of his head. Fred is as hard as woodpecker lips and, he didn't say much about it and just kept twisting the throttle. During another ascent later in the day Andy took a stick to the nose. Blood ran down his face covering his jersey and pants for 45 minutes or so. We never stopped as I never knew it (typical Andy) but it looked like Mike Tyson had his way with him when we finally stopped to check the map. Our end point for the day was in Pierce, and the gremlins of day one were showing themselves as we were behind again. I should mention at this point I had a tip



over in a creek where the bike found neutral and when I went to put my foot down ended up upside down smashing my Moto Minded Baja Design headlight case.





After a quick burger in town, we were off. We pushed over and under more trees and across side hills until we got to this nice little town around 930pm. The Boys rigged my light with a bungy and a stick as we gassed up chewing a couple of beef sticks focused and determined to push on to Pierce. Fred's bee sting was really getting to him and he decided to have a couple Benadryl which made the next 3 hours very tough for him staying awake and not crashing due to the hallucinations. We went to a mark on the map that said rudimentary camp site, but we only found a logging road. We were tired as it was now 12:30am so we connected two FPG ThermaShields from bike to bike and slept underneath directly on the gravel roadside. Andy awoke a few hours later to a coyote/wolf fight not more than 100 yards away. Fred and I had brought 40deg bags and quickly discovered on this ride you need at least a 20deg. Andy had a nice 32 deg bag whose zipper failed on night one and could not close it up at all. He just jackhammered all night every night. With temps during the night ranging between 25-30, we had to laugh at the craziness/stupidity of the situation and made jokes while our teeth chattered.



Day 5: 11 hours 165miles. We broke camp went to town for gas and to fill gas bladders as today was supposed to be extra-long. My MSR bladder had lost a cap so I picked up an old Windex gallon container filled with gas while the boys strapped their MSR bladders to their bikes. Andy's bladder had lost the nipple to it, so he used Steel Stick to seal it back up. 30 miles down the trail Andy realizes his gas is gone as the straps holding it snapped. He backtracked a few miles and has no luck. We had to change the game plan to a shorter day out of fuel concerns and if pushed to tell the truth we

were tired from the 17-hour day before and were ok with that. When we reached Avery.... Soo good the town is right on the river and the couple that own the general store and gas station also own the rooms. He is currently building a nice restaurant and bar as well as renovating the rooms. He mentioned that he is supposed to take the stop from Wallace on the BDR next year when renovations are complete. It was the 5th night of the trip and we felt after 4 nights in the dirt we had met our sleep in the dirt goals. Time for sheets, heat and a shower; felt good.



Day 6: 14.5 hour 160 miles. Ready to ride by 7am finally refreshed and looking to an early start. My blister had busted so we glued it with crazy

glue wrapping it with duct tape and we were off. The 40-mile section from Avery to Wallace was super fun. We got to Wallace and thought we would grab a quick bite. As it turns out we rolled snake eyes after sitting for 45 minutes our waiter tells us they are about to start cooking our ticket... Angry that we gave away our early start with too much time already wasted we asked them forget it and started the next leg. The boys ate a chocolate muffin quickly. As I started to inhale mine, I noticed at the last



minute that it was covered with mold! We were all super pissed for a moment, but it turned out to be some good ammo for comedy. For the rest of the trip whenever anything went wrong it was that guy with the moldy muffin's fault! Later in the day and at some point, during the decent of Granite peak, Andy's forks began to not function correctly. Somehow, they acted "hydro locked" with the first four inches of travel not working with something clearly broken inside. You pushed them down and they didn't return. Perfect for solid granite! LOL.

He did not say anything and just got on with it. It was a fun day that should have been a little bit shorter but toward the end there is a section where you ride up the river as the road is washed out. Turning on my GoPro, I got a little ahead of myself and raced up the river. Suddenly I swabbed the bars and went down with my leg



pinned under the bike, and the bike partially under water. Luckily the airbox was dry but I broke a few parts that took a couple of hours of precious daylight to diagnose with trail repairs...my bad. As you are approaching Gold Creek Lodge you start to notice how burned in the single track is. It is a fun area and once arrive at GCL you are in a wonderland in the middle of the forest. There is a bar, restaurant, full garage and rooms set up to cater to DIRT BIKERS! We can't say enough about this place and their staff. Mike and the crew are amazing. We plan to go back some day. I would make this stop mandatory as it is too much fun to pass.

Day 7: 8 hours 130 miles. After an excellent breakfast at GCL and Mike gassing up our bikes, we lit out for the next stage determined to make the border. We rode the Blue Trails and decided at the start of the day we would ride the harder route at the end for the better pictures and to finish out strong. As we passed through Bonner's Ferry, we stopped at my truck that we had shipped to our hotel. I picked up my passport as I accidentally had left inside, and we got back on track. Getting back into the woods, apprehension was in the air as we knew that the Pack River crossing was coming up.



We crossed it without incident and proceeded to the final climb. We had read that Danquist was a nice trail and it was indeed very enjoyable. Emerging on the short and final stretch to the border, we reached it quickly. The entire week we had been talking about getting to the border, what it would be like, getting our selfies of the welcome to Canada sign, and maybe even some Canadian cheerleaders. In the end, there was only silence and the end of the road. There were just three good friends who had dug deeper than they ever had to accomplish a goal and became closer because of it. With a silent and simple nod of our heads to each other, we rode back down the hill forever changed by this wonderful lifetime adventure.

