



THE 23RD ANNUAL BIG BEAR RUN DRAWS IN 297 RIDERS

By Julie Angell, aka Yellowjacket

Photos by Jackie Nicholson and Julie Angell

It was hot as I entered the parking lot of the Big Bear Convention Center June 23, 2017. It was Friday afternoon before the weekend of the 23rd Annual Big Bear Run dual sport ride. Would temps in the mid-eighties and a fire burning northeast of Big Bear on Gold Mountain and Jacoby Canyon keep some riders away? We would find out this evening and early tomorrow morning when riders showed up for signups.

I wasn't riding this weekend because my riding buddy had issues with his bike. Instead, I was asked to write an article about the event.

If you're not familiar with the Big Bear Run, it's a little different from other District 37 Dual Sport rides. Sure, there is a hard way and an easy way. Since this event is part of the AMA-sanctioned National Dual Sport Series and the AMA National Adventure Riding Series, AMA membership is required. At the end of the year, a drawing will be held for a free Beta motorcycle and your name will automatically be entered for the drawing, just by entering the event. There is also an Adventure Bike route.

But the big difference is the Big Bear Run plaque. The plaques are earned by riders who complete the entire hard way route on Saturday, usually around 200 miles, and it's extremely difficult. Riders can start no earlier than 6 a.m. A different colored ticket is given to riders who reach each checkpoint throughout the day. Each checkpoint is open only during a certain time slot. If you're a slower rider and struggle on difficult sections, you're not going to earn a

plaque. At the end of the route, you present all your tickets to the check-in workers. If all the tickets are there, you have earned your plaque. You are also exhausted and your bike may be banged up. It's a real challenge.

You would think this would keep riders away. But no, many have earned multiple plaques and keep coming back for more.

By 6 p.m., sign-ups had opened and riders were anxiously standing in line, holding their GPS units plus their wallets and paperwork. Large maps of the hard way, easy

way, and adventure bike routes had been mounted on the side of a trailer earlier. Riders had looked at the routes and were commenting on where they thought they might have issues. Some riders were using a GPS for the first time and were asking riders standing next to them for help with their unit. Uh oh!

This is not the ride to show up to without having familiarized yourself with your GPS. Riders soon took off for dinner. Most were in bed by 9 p.m. that were staying in trailers and motorhomes in the parking lot. Some slept in the back of their pickup trucks. I bet those who were riding the hard way the next day were so anxious they had problems sleeping.

Riders were lined up very early in the morning, since the first checkpoint ticket was being given out in the parking lot of the Convention Center. This is to keep riders from leaving before 6 a.m. and missing the next checkpoint before they are set up on the trail. Usually the riders head out for

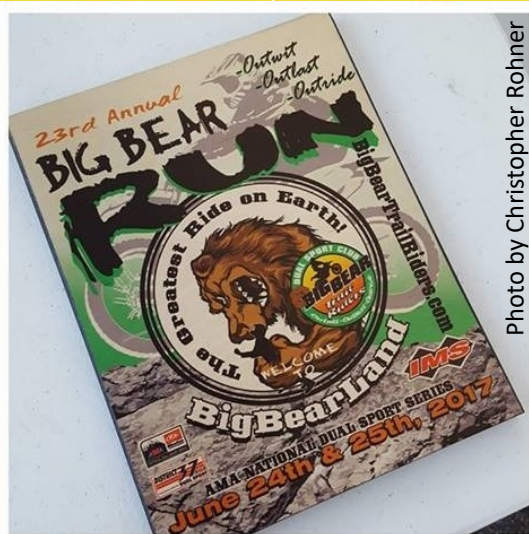


Photo by Christopher Rohner

FIFTY-SIX RIDERS EARN PLAQUES

1. Andy McAnally
2. Ely Woody
3. Brandon Patton
4. Matt Moffitt
5. Kevin DeJongh
6. Lior Elbaz
7. Jason Saunders
8. Ted Hayashida
9. Mike Brady
10. Joel Leighton
11. Brent Wonnacott
12. Rick Samuelson
13. Greg Bruning
14. John Keifer
15. Gabriel Siapin
16. Aaron Pfister
17. Tom Walker
18. Garry Cassidy
19. Emilio Valsecchi
20. Aaron Fitzsimmons
21. Josh Fout
22. Greg Kurtz
23. Chris Rohner
24. Jim McGrath
25. Marty Haak
26. Thorne Parker
27. Chris Sanders
28. Richard Wehmeyer
29. Matt Hove
30. Dan Harper
31. Jason Kott
32. Mike Smyth
33. Zeke Kott
34. Brian Begin
35. Tom Knapp
36. Garrett Nanos
37. Brandon Betuk
38. Luke Takahashi
39. Nick Vazquez
40. Bill Blocker
41. Steve Grieb
42. Frank Zugovitz
43. Ryan Baillargeon
44. David Foor
45. Anthony Dotto
46. James Curry
47. Kevin Biegler
48. Terrance Shedden
49. Cody Shires
50. Paul Medina
51. Christopher Busenlehner
52. Rodney Ketcham
53. Robert Ritter
54. Bryce Topp
55. Chris Buscaglia
56. Aaron Willming

Gold Mountain first thing. That rocky hill climb seems to weed out the men from the boys, and it helps spread out riders. Since the fire was burning in that area, the Big Bear Trail Riders (BBTRs) had to alter the route on June 19 when the fire started. The route headed west instead along Highway 18 and then took Snowslide Trail (2N13) to Green Valley Lake. As you can imagine, 297 riders can create a LOT of dust. A fireman who lives in Green Valley Lake had to post on the Green Valley Lake private website that the resulting dust cloud in town was not smoke from the fire, but from dirt bike riders trail riding nearby!

Since there was nothing to cause the riders to get spread out from each other, the result was that the first real obstacle they hit, Redonda Ridge, caused a pile-up. Riders were coming in at lunch with reports of 50 riders stacked up on Redonda Ridge. Some said there were so many riders on Redonda, that riders were turning around and giving up.

Rochelle Perper had already conquered Redonda Ridge with the help of another rider. (She said she thought he just wanted her out of his way.) While on White Mountain, her bike overheated and just wouldn't start anymore. She coasted all the way to Big Pine Flats, and her bike finally started again. She took the bailout back to the parking lot. She is determined and I hope to see her one day earn a plaque. Keep trying, Rochelle!

Quinn Cody decided to make the trip up to Big Bear for the annual BBTRs dual sport event because he had a few items he needed to test on his KTM 1090 Adventure bike (including his body) before heading to the Red Bull Romaniacs hard enduro in Romania in July. He left at 7 a.m. on the hard route. He was passing riders until on White Moun-

tain he hit a rock that went through his skid plate and cracked his engine case. That ended his ride.

When lunch time came around, the riders were due back in Big Bear for lunch and gas. By then, another challenge had appeared. The fire had caused rolling blackouts and the gas stations had no power, so they couldn't pump gas. Riders started coming in stating that the gas stations on the west side of town couldn't gas them up! The BBTRs were directing them to go east and try the gas stations there.



Redonda Ridge, Photo by Miguel Burgi

Some riders had brought full gas containers and their own food in their RVs so they could get in and out quickly, so they didn't have issues. However, I foresaw riders coming in and grabbing any gas containers they saw and taking the gas, but that didn't happen. Fortunately, some of the riders that came in that had broken down or were too tired to continue the second half of the hard or easy routes were letting other riders take their gas, so that was helping matters.

Finally, the blackouts lifted and the gas stations started working again, so the problem seemed to solve

itself. Whew!

I spoke to a few of the riders who came in during lunch. Some were getting in and out quickly, and some were throwing in the towel.

Brandon Betuk, from United MC, lives in Oregon now. He has about seven plaques. He has driven down to earn another one. I informed him about the gas situation and he pointed to a gas container. He has a KTM 300 EXC, so he brought his own mixed gas. I asked him about the dust. He said the fast guys are ahead of him, the slow guys are behind him, and he's gotten a good line all day. Lucky him!

Wayne Harris from Racers Under the Son MC had to quit at lunch. He got a few holes in his clutch cover on Redonda Ridge and his rear tire was covered in oil. His fork seal was also leaking. It was his first year trying for the plaque. He rides a KTM 450 MXC.

David from Pasadena is here for his first go at a plaque. Unfortunately, a rock got caught between the brake pedal and the case and heated up the rear brake and blew the seals 10 miles in. He drove his truck down to Chaparral and bought the part to fix the problem. Now he's going to ride the second half of the hard section for fun on his KTM 500 EXC. He may ride tomorrow's route too.

Shane Johnston, who tackled the easy route in the morning, was ready to call it quits. "The easy way isn't so easy," he said.

At 1:20, dark clouds rolled in, cooler weather appeared, and it started raining for about 10 minutes. Yay!

At 2:33 p.m., we were very surprised to see the first hard way finisher arrive. Andy McAnally, a firefighter on a 2017 Husqvarna 501, said he didn't stop for lunch and cleaned all the hard sections on his first try. This is his second plaque.



1st finisher, Andy McAnally

He rode by himself and said 38 Special was the hardest part. He started at 6 a.m. and was about 20 riders back. At 3:30 p.m. the second rider, Ely

Woody, arrived and won his first plaque. Both his hands were blistered badly. He stated 38 Special was the hardest section. He said he was buzzed by two F18 fighter jets on White Mountain. He soon got on his bike and rode home to Apple Valley. He's one tough guy!



2nd finisher, Ely Woody, with Jim Nicholson

At 3:35 p.m. the third rider, Brandon Patton, came in. He lost his GPS with 120 miles to go, and had two flat tires within 50 miles. This is his fourth plaque.

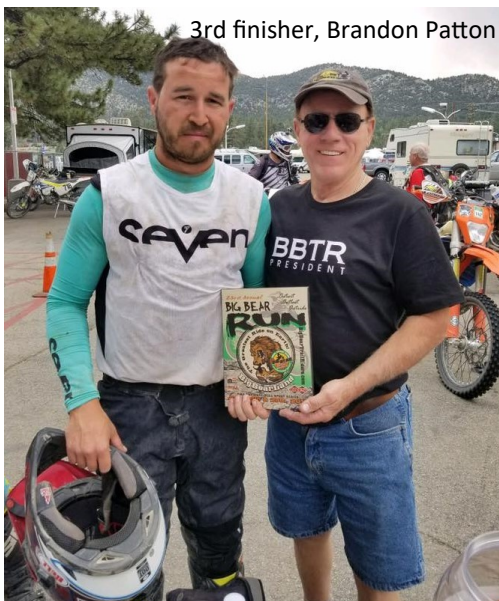
At 3:35 p.m., the fourth rider, Matt



Ely Woody's hands

Moffitt, rode in on his KTM 500 EXC and received his first plaque. He said he saw a big rattlesnake on White Mountain. He stated 38 Special was the hardest part.

At 3:42 p.m. desert racer Kevin DeJongh, the fifth rider, arrived riding a KTM 250 EXC and received a plaque. He said his father was still out there riding the hard ways. He also stated 38 Special was the hardest part.



3rd finisher, Brandon Patton

At 4:40 p.m. the sixth rider, Lior Elbaz of Lior's Moto Ride in Corona, came in for his third plaque. He said the hardest part was the length of the route.

At 4:40 p.m. the seventh rider, Jason Saunders, rolled in for his second plaque. He stated 38 Special was the hardest section.

At 5:03 p.m. the eighth rider, Ted Hayashida, came in for his first plaque riding a KTM 450. "I didn't fall at all," he said, "and I didn't stop."

At 5:03 p.m. the ninth rider, Mike Brady,

rode in for his first plaque with a broken helmet and bent handle-bars. He stated, "38 Special was the hardest part. The ride was fantastic! Thank you."

At 5:10 p.m. the tenth rider, Joel Leighton, arrived and earned a plaque. He said, "Redonda Ridge was all backed up."



4th finisher, Matt Moffitt

There were many riders coming in all afternoon who weren't able to finish the hard ways. They were beat. Greg De Avila said, "I'm so smoked right now, I don't have words. I'm so humbled. I tried for the hard way. The heat was so bad, I was cooking. I missed one check." Poor guy. I feel really sorry for him.

Then, there were riders coming in with smiles on their faces, despite their exhaustion. Matt Pantalone stated, "The best part was the dust. The worse part was...none. The ride was great!"

A total of 56 riders earned plaques, and most were exhausted. They went to clean up or take showers before the evening ban-

quet and rider give away portion of the evening that would start at 7:30 p.m.

5th finisher, Kevin DeJongh



At 6:30 p.m., Kelly Randall and Gabby Sanchez finished the easy way. They had left at 6:30 in the morning. The 140-mile easy route was similar to the hard way route, but without the black diamond trails added. I had introduced them to each other the evening before. Kelly was with her husband, who was going for a plaque and Gabby was with her boyfriend, who was also going for a



6th finisher, Lior Elbaz



7th finisher, Jason Saunders

plaque. Kelly is from Tucson and rides a Kawasaki Super Sherpa. Gabby is from Big Bear and rides a 2016 Husqvarna 350. They were a good match speed-wise, and really enjoyed riding with each other. They said the easy way had its challenges, but they are both good riders and were able to handle the route.

By 7:30 p.m., it had cooled down and the riders and their families were starting to eat their delicious dinners of pulled pork or rosemary chicken. What a surprise to find that Larry Huffman, popular longtime supercross and speedway announcer, was present. He went on stage and kept the riders riveted as he spoke about former racers like Steve McQueen, Bob Hannah, and Rick Johnson.

After that, Miguel Burgi of the BBTRs started giving away sponsor-donated prizes to the riders. I think all the riders left with something.

I want to give a special shout out to Thorne Parker. He earned his 13th Big Bear Run plaque, and 12 of those are in a row! Congratulations to you, Thorne.



8th and 9th finishers, Ted Hayashida and Mike Brady

Honorable mention goes to Rick Samuelson. At 62 years old, he's still earning plaques! He was the 12th rider in and said he had to deal with cramps all day. One of the sign-up ladies said she'd give him some Midol.

The hard luck award goes to Jimmy Nicholson. (Some of you may remember he was the first rider in last year.) He arrived in soon after Andy McAnally. When Jimmy came in at lunch, he had gone over the bars on John Bull and broken his GPS mount. His friends fixed it with duct tape. He crashed four times all day. Then he got to 38 Special and he just couldn't make it to the top. He was so deter-

10th finisher, Joel Leighton





Kelly Randall and Gabby Sanchez

mined, he parked his bike and started walking up the hill to get his ticket, but then realized he had a half mile to go and it was too far, so he gave up. When I spoke to him, I found out he hadn't eaten all day. That will do it! Eat something next time, Jimmy. (Gil Busick says he gets the pussycat stamp. Some will remember what that means from the District 37 Dual Sport Sept/Oct 2009 newsletter.) To those of you who tried and just couldn't finish the hard way, there's always next year. As you found out, it's im-

portant to keep both your bike and body running together. You've got another year to work on that. Remember—Outwit, Outlast, Outride is the Big Bear Trail Riders' motto to earning a plaque!

Kudos to the Big Bear Trail Riders for pulling off another well-organized event.

From the many volunteers who help lay out the course to the signup workers, checkpoint workers, GPS workers and others who cover behind-the-scenes details, you all did a fantastic job. We'll see you again next year!



Thorne Parker (with Kent Fyfe) earns his 13th plaque