

March Mudness 2014

By DangerDave

Yep, Wednesday, I arrived just after noon with crappy Ohio weather on my heels. As our small early-in group packed up to ride, I kept saying, "Long johns, fellas, long johns!" It was 55F with just a hint of a sprinkle starting. The sky didn't look too threatening at the time, so I left off the rain gear. Nobody said, "Rain gear, Dave rain gear!" I led the way down the Steps trail and into the woods above WW road. The sprinkles got harder and harder, but still not too bad. I thought I could make it down to the road before dawning my water diversion clothing.

Too, late! When the rain first started soaking through my coveralls into my pants, I stopped and jumped off. And down she came! Fumbling with my rain gear in a downpour, becoming soggy inside and out is one thing I wish to avoid in the future. Over the next four hours, the temp dropped nearly 35 degrees. We finished our 25+ mile ride getting pelted by bits of ice. Needless to say, I was cooooooold! A hot shower and a snifter of wine led me straight to bed.

The first light of dawn, Thursday, revealed the worst...



At least three inches had already fallen and more was blowing sideways. Thursday was going to be a hoot! Ignitions, throttles, and brakes were frozen. I used the heat gun on my Grizzly in several places.

Dusted, scraped, defrosted, and bundled up, we ventured forth to ride, none-the-less. To Mike's Choice, via Ashland and trail 80 was our goal. We messaged Punisher (our late arrival) and rode off into the snow, knowing the trails would be challenging. Most of the trails were covered by 4-5 inches of untouched white powder. Finding the actual trail was trial.

At the turn to 80, we took a break, mentally preparing ourselves for the Choice. Five Grizzlies and four SxS's.



At this point the sun began to peek out, giving us some hope for better weather. Regardless, the wind still blew and the air was frigid. The slow crawl through Mike's Choice was probably the

longest we had ever endured. Thankfully, BobT and his crew had spent a lot of time clearing downed trees through here. The place looked like a war zone for embattled forests. Dozens of trees had not endured the harsh winter well, blocking or diverting the trail at every turn.



It was during this trek that Wacker started having issues with his Grizzly. No, not the Grizzly! 😞 We nursed the sickly Grizzly down to Bramwell, where we gassed up, ate up, and pondered Wacker's fate.



As we lost one rider, we gained another. The Punisher (Jeff) arrived. He had ridden all over the county, searching every trail, until he found us sitting in Bramwell. We made arrangements to rescue Wacker from his dire straits, and with a hearty farewell, we returned to the trails.

The return to the cabin led over the Spillway, across the ridge to descend into Soggy Bottom and back out again.

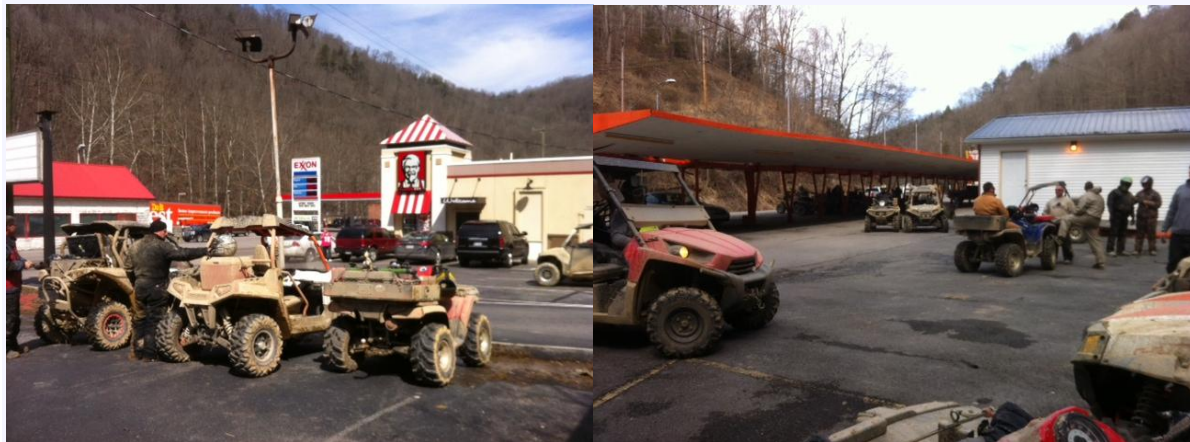


Back at the cabin, dinner was (as usual) a feast! I had one of Kevin's sloppy Joes, one of Chris's delicious cheeseburgers, a fine Caesar salad from Lee, followed by a big plate of his tasty spaghetti. I don't know why I even bring food (except waffles). There's always way too much to eat! With a belly-full and a snoot-full, and with the wind howling outside, we stumbled to bed.

Friday morning found us with temps rising. What began in the 40's would end the day near 60F. Sunshine was plentiful and the mood was jolly. We totaled 22 riders (count them if you wish---below). With that kind of turnout, like a great lumbering beast, the going was sometimes rather slow. Even so, we made our way across the muddied landscape towards Welch---and a fine choice of lunches. At Charley Reed Junction, we lined up for a group (quad) photo. My first successful panorama with my iPhone...



From here, we split into the KFC's and The Sterling (depending on lunch preference). We ate heartily, rested a spell, and climbed back up the mountain in the warm sunshine. What a difference a day makes.



We worked our way over trails leading to the Indian Ridge System. At some point along the way, Jeff took a big log to the radiator. The water logged branch punched through the front of his bike and shoved his radiator off its mount! The offending stick left a baseball-sized indentation in his cooling system. The really amazing thing is that it didn't leak a drop! Dungied into place, Jeff

completed the ride without incident...and the rest of us, too. In spite of a little fracturing toward the end of the day, we all managed to stay together for the ride. As someone once said, "Like herding cats!" These cats were tamed!

The lively "shenanigans" that occurred that night I leave for others to tell. My part involved eating steak, drinking wine, and preventing a pyrotechnic nightmare related to a drunken Brig. What happens on the mountain...

As is tradition (lately) we enjoyed a delicious waffle and sausage (thanks, Brian!) breakfast on Saturday morning. A bleary-eyed Lee left early, embarking on his six hour drive. I sent the rest of the guys off to ride, then cleaned up, packed up, and headed home.

Needless-to-say, I made it home safe and sound, happy that I had parked *my* truck well away from Brig and his errant fireworks! 🙏

