



If You (Re)Build It, They Will Come (Back) The Restoration Of Zoar Moto Park

Part Three: The Work.

By Ed Abdo

It is hard to produce one word that best describes what happened between April

and September of 2023 to make the Zoar reunion and ride event happen, but “Magical” seems to be a viable choice.

After Jerome convinced me to do the project, I needed to figure out just how I was going to do it. Spreadsheets with information on equipment needs and approximate costs were made, and I came up with a date. The last weekend of September of 2023 seemed like a good choice and a long way away, but I knew inside that the 23rd and 24th would be here in an instant.

It must be understood that this was by far, not a one-man operation. The amount of work required to make this event happen would be all but impossible, which makes it even more special with the small number of people that brought the track back to life

once again.

I received many offers of help to get things going but most that sent me those offers had no idea of the scope of this undertaking as none had seen what was in store. Many that came up and saw just what had to be done, not surprisingly, only came up once or twice. I could not blame them at all as this was a monumental task. As it turned out, there were about two dozen volunteers that helped to get the track ready, but a few really came over and above helping. I had never met many of these volunteers and some of them came in to help at the precise time that they were needed without provocation, which is what made so much of the work in front of me magical.

The first person and one of the most important to come out of nowhere and just in time was a guy following the page that said he would be willing to help to start clearing the land and knew the area well as his family has a cabin near the track. His name, Dave Whitney. Knowing nothing



about Dave, I thanked him and said I would let him know, just as I did with scores of others that offered help as I was preparing to start working on the project.

On March 9th I went up to the track to get another good look from above with a drone. As I drove into the driveway, I received a message on my phone from Dave asking if I was at the track. That was weird as there was no way that I could see he knew I was there. I told him I was, and he said he would be up in a few minutes to take a walk around and chat.

A bit later Dave came up to look around with me. He explained that he does sitework and has experience in clearing land. We walked around talking, and I was becoming convinced I was in too deep. Dave said that most of his work is done on flat land, and it was obvious that there wasn't much flat land on this piece of property but with a large forestry mulcher the brush and many smaller trees could be cleared. I asked him how long it would take, and he said depending on the type of wood it could take up to a month to finish. He (and Jerome) recommended Baschmann Services; a place that rents the type of machine needed. He then told me that he could donate a full week of

his time towards getting the land cleared, which stunned me as I had never met this guy and here, he is offering to help get this project started. I rented the recommended equipment, an ASV135 Forestry Mulcher and Dave arranged to pick it up for me in early April. I also rented a bulldozer for mid April to start moving the larger items that the ASV would not be able to manage.

In the meantime, Jerome was first to start working to remove brush with his tractor along the old starting area. Josh Bylbie also stopped up with his tractor and started to tear down the collapsed buildings and picked up debris to pile up for burning. Then came Terry Armstrong. Terry walked around the property with Jerome, and I shaking his head and asked, “What have you gotten yourself into Ed?” I told him that it was Jerome's fault. Terry came up regularly with his Skid steer throughout the project and cut, cleared, moved, and piled brush.

The real work started on April 4th, Dave brought the ASV and the sales manager from the rental company, Bob, came along as well to check things out and make sure that the machine was OK as it was a brand-new unit. He and I talked about the

track and what I was up against. He said that when he rents these machines out, he wants to make sure of two things. 1: The machine is running properly and 2: The operator knows what he is doing as these machines are extremely dangerous in the wrong

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IMAGE DESCRIPTIONS

1. Track property in March of 2023 prior to the start of restoration.
2. Brush and tree growth after 40 years of vacancy.
3. Jerome removing the first piece of brush with his grapple.
4. Just a couple days after the start of clearing the track area.
5. Donna and her Grandson James stopped up to check on the progress often.
6. One bunch of hundreds of tires found while clearing the tracks land.
7. A small sample of the track area after clearing with the ASV forestry mulcher.
8. Jim Wilcox was first down the Hills of Zoar with a Dozer in 40 years.
9. Many piles of brush were burned during the clearing of the track
10. Troy LivEcche made me shake my head in wonder bringing back parts of the track that were impossible to do.
11. Buzz getting ready to remove more trees and brush on the “A” hill.
12. Jerome Krzemien, Justin Bradley and Burt Heinrech ran excavators.
13. Many trees were removed but some required Derek to come in and place them in their place.
14. John Baronich working his tractor cleaning up tons of debris
15. The south portion of the track after clearing and restoration
16. The north and east section of the track after restoration.
17. The west side of the track has some remarkable hills.



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7

8

Continued from previous page...

hands. The rotating head spins at 250 mph and it will throw a 14-inch diameter log 150 yards away if not properly handled! Dave got in the machine and asked me where to start. I told him to pick a spot as there was nothing but brush everywhere. Within 5



9

minutes Bob, looked at me and said, "He knows everything he needs to know to make that machine work at full capacity." At the time, I had no idea just what that meant. After a couple of hours, Dave stopped and

told me that the wood that he was dealing with so far was soft so it would mulch up nicely. Dave worked nonstop until dusk that day. I was meandering around while he was mulching still trying to figure out how to get this done. Meanwhile, Dave just tore into the property, finding hundreds of tires on the property which at times would get stuck in the powerhead slowing things down a bit. We used eighty gallons of fuel that first day and between 85 and 100 gallons every day after until he was done with the machine.

Although I rented the unit for a one-month period, after 7 full days, most of the brush was removed, and you could walk around the entire property including much of the woods where the BMX track was. At the end of that first week Donna came up to look around to see what was going on and was just as amazed as I was with the work Dave got done in such a brief period of time.

After Dave was done, my brother-in-law Jim Wilcox, at 82 years of age jumped in a bulldozer and was the first person in over 40 years to take a machine up and

down the steepest hills on the track to clear downed trees and brush that could not be cut with the mulcher. He also shaped most of the track while following my lead to recreate the original configuration from the 1973 track layout. When Jim was off the dozer, I would go all over the property to push the brush that Dave had cut into piles to burn. I am certain that there were no less than 50 huge piles of debris that Greg Ballachino helped me to burn while clearing the property.

81-year-old "Uncle Al" Schwabel came by almost daily cutting trees and moving brush bringing his own memories to light from his own racing in 1973 at Zoar. I couldn't keep Al away as he was excited about seeing the results from the resurrection of the track.

Troy LivEche came in with another bulldozer and made me shake my head multiple times as he brought back sections of the track that I had given up on. Buzz Noel was foolish enough to help me with manual work over the course of the 6 months of the project. He came by almost daily and cut and moved brush with me. Burt Heinrech, Jerome, and Justin Bradley came in with excavator expertise to help divert water in



12

13

various areas around the property.

Derek Opferbeck took time out of his busy schedule to remove trees that were just WAY too big for me to deal with. John Watson brought up his Kubota tractor and not only helped with it, but was also generous enough to leave it there for me to use to work all over the track. Ken Lillis came by often to help move tires, cut trees, and brush hog acres of land.

John Baronich brought up his tractor numerous times to pile and clean up brush and debris as well as taking ownership in turning a brush and tree filled area that once was the BMX track into a park like setting that replicated the original track to

perfection. Reynold Wierzba came by with his tractor and with Jerome, did some final track prep after I had tilled it with their Harley rakes.

Those mentioned here as well as so many others, in just under a six-month period brought the motocross and BMX tracks at Zoar Moto-park back to life for a reunion and ride that would prove to be a remarkable and memorable event. The final

part of the Zoar story, the actual event, will come next.



14



15

16



10

11

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