

Lou Turicik, July 2022.

Deal's Gap, North Carolina is home to some of the most hallowed pavement on the planet. The world famous Dragon throws 318 corners at you in a scant 11 miles. The challenge is relentless and thrills unmatched. Typical Dragon slayers fancy all sorts of high performance exotica, both two wheeled and four. Except for one weekend in July when Reliability Rally rolls in to town.



Some of the bikes are 10 footers, the rest are 20 footers. All of them were purchased for \$1000 or less.

A welcome cookout greets the Reliable Riders Friday evening, coming in from all corners of the Eastern US. An obligatory rev or two after unloading only adds to the fun atmosphere. The rules are simple, buy a bike for \$1000 or less, fix it up, and wheel it out to take on our 400 mile touring weekend. Always motley, always interesting, the field includes barely running survivors, completely mint custom builds, and everything in between. Some riders had a little buttoning up to do while we chowed down hotdogs, wings and cheap beer.



Last minute tweaks or desperate measures? We find out Saturday morning!



Saturday, ride day 1. Eager riders scarfed down muffins and strong coffee. After a short safety brief, the groups were off to tackle the Cherohala Skyway. Smiles were everywhere as speeds came up and a few dawdling cars were dealt with. This magic stretch of road is draped over 51 miles of smoky mountain vistas and goes exactly nowhere. Perfect!



The return trip took us to Fontana Dam, one of the largest hydroelectric dams in the Eastern US. While admiring the feat of engineering, the RR had its first bike casualty of the trip. Rocky's clutch cable gave up, putting his BMW out of order. Cables have the highest body count in the history of the RR, ending more rides than any other part.



Rolling into Fontana Dam



Cables take no prisoners



Saturday's ride ended with a run up the DRAGON and our "acceleration test" a 1/8 simulated drag race timed via phone app. A crowd favorite event featured a first ever tie. Colin G. and Austin C. threw big hammers with their high power machines (V65 Sabre and GSXR750) ticking in at 7 seconds flat.



LOTS of horsepower



Having a Blast on the dragon

The party was just beginning! Deal's Gap Motorcycle Resort hosts Fiddies 4 Life pit bike racing, which was the perfect capstone for day 1. During race intermission, we held our second contest, the slow race. A trio of entrants from New England brought a matching set of ex-Shriner parade bikes, complete with matching fez hats! Dave, Jeff and Ben put on a slow race clinic, making everyone else look like mere mortals.



Little Bikes. BIG Racing!



Slow race domination



Sunday, ride day 2. The ride groups are beginning to gel, just in time because Sunday's ride has serious miles to cover. After dodging the tourist traffic in Cherokee, we began to climb, setting our sights on the peak of the Blue Ridge Parkway. After a quick snack and some photos, it was time to seek out some more twisty roads.



Found the top!

Misery always rears its head at some point during the RR. Early afternoon on Sunday the skies opened, causing a quick scramble for rain gear and fresh determination to press on. There was one final on-road contest to be completed, the fuel economy run. All riders topped up their tanks for a soggy cruise back to RR HQ.



Smoky mountain summer storms



The miles ticked on and the skies began to lighten, just in time for a thrilling swoop through “moonshiner” route 28. Fuel economy scores are quickly forgotten when the road gets this good. James W used a disciplined hypermile strategy to squeeze 108 mpg out of his tiny CBR250. We are left wondering if he had any fun on moonshiner 28.



Lookin' Cool. Sippin' Fuel.



The Podium! Dave E, Dan G, Jeff B.

Hot pizza and cold beer welcomed our ride groups returning to Deal's Gap RR HQ. The riders recharged after a 233 mile day while the votes and points were tallied. Consistent performance is typically rewarded at the RR and that again rang true. Dave E's Shriner themed Suzuki GS250 reigned supreme, winning overall, strongly bolstered by also taking the rider's choice victory. Dan G took second with his trick-beyond-belief Nighthawk 250, also soaking up the most votes in the “best custom” category. Finally, in 3<sup>rd</sup>, co-Shriner Jeff B performed solidly across all events.

Another fantastic Reliability Rally in the books. Everyone returned safely and enjoyed a unique camaraderie hard-earned on our low budget bikes. Huge thank you to Shinko Tires, Butler Maps and Rhino USA for supporting Reliability Rally with some great products and giveaways.

All this fun supports a great cause. After every event, the RR staff donates a portion of the proceeds to the Neighborhood Resilience Project, a community outreach program in Pittsburgh, PA that supports kids and families in vulnerable communities. Super RR 2022 was able to donate \$900. As we say: feel good about breaking down!

It was a pleasure meeting all the reliable riders new and returning, and leading the fabulous pink ride group. Cheers and we'll see you at the next one!



**CONTEST WINNERS**



**OVERALL**



**ACCELERATION TEST (tie)**





**CONTEST WINNERS**

**FUEL ECONOMY**



**BEST CUSTOM**



**SLOW RACE AND RIDER'S CHOICE**





**SHINKO TIRE PRIZE**

