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## Dragon Slayers Arise!

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Yesterday dawned under picture-perfect blue skies in Robbinsville, North Carolina, as our Hull of a Tour riders joined together in a unified mission: Seek and destroy that elusive beast known as the Tail of the Dragon.

For those unaware of the local lore and legend, The Tail of the Dragon is a mythical monster that stretches itself for 11 god-forsaken miles, from Deals Gap, North Carolina, to Chilhowee, Tenn. It sports 318 thrilling curves and switchbacks that twist and scale along its treacherous haunches. Dragon slayers come from all parts of the world to test their prowess and skills against this mighty demon. A tree of shame is planted at Ground Zero with many a motorcycle part nailed to its trunk, a sobering reminder and testament of the dragon's ability to unleash its unholy power and humble even the bravest and most skilled road warriors.

More than 30 enthusiastic Hull of a Tour participants, including former Chaparral sales manager Gary Beck who came from as far away as Illinois, joined forces with other like-minded boaters and bikers to take on the gauntlet. Of special note, our group included five dragon virgins who were each given an extra dose of encouragement and instruction from more seasoned riders prior to participating in this fabled contest of man (or woman) vs. beast. One of the coolest things about the tour is the open sharing of tips and techniques; I learn something new every day of the ride.

Prior to launch, we gathered together at the foot of the dragon for a final cheer and group battle cry. The adrenaline and excitement were palpable!

Unlike all other tour rides where the group remains tightly connected at the hip, battling the dragon is strictly and exclusively a solitary experience. Everyone must muster up his or her strengths, skills and courage to face this indomitable force of nature.

As history has proven with countless accounts, one small misstep along the way can bring down even the most fearless and experienced warrior.

As is our tour practice, we shared a few key strategies in advance for slaying the beast to help prepare our crew for maximum success.

First, riders must be sufficiently skilled, well prepared and confident for the task at hand. This isn't a job for the faint-hearted or ill prepared.

Second, we highly encouraged dressing for success to include full body coverage. Helmets are required in North Carolina and Tennessee, but boots and jackets are important components in the recommended armor.

Third, riders must stay in their own lane, preferably in the right half in order to prevent potentially deadly line-crossing into oncoming traffic. Mastering your speed and control at all times is critical.

Our group represents the full gamut of experience level. We have riders with more than 250,000 miles under their belts, and relative newcomers with sufficient skills but significantly fewer hours in the saddle. We advised our crew to ride according to their own comfort and skill levels. While some speed demons push their skills and luck to the limit, our tour strategy always takes the corner on maintaining conservative speeds and practicing safety. The dragon simply isn't the place for show-offs.

Fifth, focus is paramount to achieving success. That includes maintaining a safe distance between other riders, moving over to allow faster riders to zip by (even though it is a no-passing zone), plus avoiding hard brakes and sudden jerky movements.

Sixth, dragon slayers must exercise extreme caution and must remain vigilantly focused on the road, avoiding any and all distractions. While other bikers, sportscars and trucks are obvious concerns, other unexpected and unwanted road obstacles may include deer, wild boar, turkeys, bobcats, snakes and even the occasional bear.

Seventh, we recommended that all our riders have a safety inspection and maintenance performed on their bikes prior to joining the tour. Tires need to be in sound shape along with ensuring well-oiled and compliant mechanics. The dragon's lair is not the place you want to break down.

Our tour leadership chose to ride the dragon mid-week and in the early morning hours for good reason. With minimal traffic, we virtually owned the mountain. It was awesome!

This collective strategy paid off handsomely as the 2019 Boaterz n Bikerz of America Hull of a Tour riders who chose to challenge the dragon all rose to the occasion, slayed the beast in style and rode out on a flame of victory. Woot woot!

After a brief stop for fist bumps, more winning pictures and the purchase of commemorative Dragon slayer t-shirts at the local Harley store, our happy crew set off to celebrate with a feast on the waterfront hosted by our friends at Malibu Boats, followed by an afternoon of amazing boating activities. This event, coupled with our return ride to the Iron Horse headquarters via the spectacular Cherahola Skyway, deserves its own blog and will be featured tomorrow.

Thanks so much for joining us on this epic adventure and sharing in our victory today. There are two days left and we're looking forward to squeezing out every moment of fun and excitement.

**Hull of a Tour 5: *The Dragon's Roar*** is powered by Evinrude/BRP and sponsored by Sea Tow, Malibu Boats, Emerald Coast Marine Group, Boogey Lights, Born to Ride Magazine, Jim Krueger Photography and Kenton Smith Marketing.