

Jeremy Simmons: Going for Broke

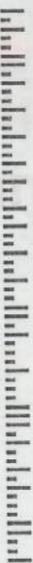
# SLED HEADS



# Get Lost!

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# GET LOST

BY RYAN HARRIS

WE FOLLOW ALONG WITH BURANDT'S BACK COUNTRY ADVENTURE TOUR



I'd say that Chris Burandt owes me a new watch, but he did loan me a turbo sled for the day, so I guess we're square.

Not that it was his fault directly, but I've worn that watch for years without incident. I guess I've never done something as sketchy and threatening to my limbs as trying to match Burandt's pace through a thick forest of evergreens on an M8 turbo. He, on his race-gas Boondocker M8 turbo, rides through trees at roughly the same speed that most guys race down trails. As the recordings at amusement parks say, keep your hands and arms inside the ride at all times... or you might lose your watch.

Based out of Kremmling, CO, Burandt's Back Country Adventures is a bed-and-breakfast guide outfit mixed with pro riding clinic. You can fly into Denver or drive yourself to Kremmling. Bring your own sleds or rent one of Burandt's RTRs (Ready To Ride), a decked-out Arctic Cat M8 fitted with a Boondocker pump-gas turbo, EZ-Ryde suspension, Vohk treatment and other mods. Just know that when you arrive, you are going to get schooled whether you signed up for the one-on-one clinic or not.



*Burandt improvises in a split-second to stay in control of his sled. Where others would turn out, you see this guy hopping around like a mad man, sometimes even pushing his sled to maintain momentum.*

... I was following Burandt's trail through trees between gaps that were so wide you could almost see daylight through them. If both skis made it through (which I'm assuming they did, because there was a faint sign of a track amidst the bomb site of tree limbs), the branches would almost clean you right off your sled. That's how I lost the watch. One second it was there, the next, it was gone. I really could have cared less at the time. I was more pleased to find myself still attached to the sled and shifting attention to the next 41-inch trunk-to-trunk gap I was headed for.

The funny part about losing the watch is that it happened "on the way" to the tough spots. Five minutes from the trailer and already I was bleeding, sore and missing parts and Burandt was just warming his sled up.

... Fifteen minutes later, he and I were sitting on a hillside watching the group fight their way through the bottom end. One trick you will learn from Burandt is to ride through technical terrain without taking the time to think about it. If you stop to size something up, you will lose your flow and bury it. But if you keep it pinned in order to stay on Burandt's tail, you'll most likely make it through, despite bouncing off of every tree and boulder like a pinball (hey, it wasn't my sled ...).

As we sat on the hillside, Burandt pointed across the drainage to a small point that jutted out above the trees, which were leaning tightly against the steep slope. It was mostly a cliff surrounded by enormous boulders, lined at the bottom and sides by mammoth trees. One of those places you pass by without even glancing up at it.

"That looks steep and fun," Burandt said.



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# GET LOST

"One of the two," I thought out loud. Burandt chuckled. He was serious. "This guy's nuts," I thought again, this time to myself.

Here's how the next 10 minutes played out: Burandt drops off the hillside and into the drainage. By now, sweep man Sahen Skinner had brought most of the other riders through the previous section and were now following us down. We worked through the trees, following Burandt as he looked for a line up and around the backside of the cliff. As we came around one particularly large tree, the line appeared to be blocked by a boulder roughly the size of a four-place enclosed trailer. There was just a little snow that covered the right-hand edge of the boulder. Without hesitation, Burandt blasted up over the edge of the boulder and was tail-walking up around the west flank of the cliffs, feet flailing around in his trademark style. He never stopped and there he was, ripping up a slope that had likely never had a sled on it before. We, on the other hand, hesitated and were now lifting bumpers and pulling skis.

It's hard to see the looks on people's faces when they're wearing helmets, but when Burandt finishes rounding up a group that has been lost, buried and otherwise stuck in the ghetto section of the forest and points them to another "fun spot," you can imagine what it looks like beneath all those goggles. Guys who wouldn't stop talking the whole morning are now speechless for some reason (whether they're actually at a loss for words or they've inhaled their balaclavas from panting so much).

Burandt focuses on tree riding. He seems more comfortable there, possibly because anyone can take a sled to the top of a steep, open hillside. But few can negotiate the same climb when you throw obstacles in front of you.

"This comes back to wanting to challenge yourself," Burandt says when asked about his love for life-sized car fresheners. "There are a lot of riders who don't necessarily care to challenge themselves and are perfectly content going to the same place, riding the same terrain and just having fun. Which is totally cool. But for all you competitive riders out there, the trees are where it's at!"

Burandt sharpened his riding skills by riding trees. "They challenge you in every way. Throttle control, sled movement, body positioning, line picking. Every facet of terrain riding. And the best part is you can choose the level of difficulty by the individual line that you pick. The lines are endless."

*Anyone who's out of gas, raise your hands.*

*Burandt rode most of the season with this point-of-view camera and most of the good footage wound up on his Burandt's Backcountry Adventures 2 DVD, produced by Slednecks and Compound Films.*