



Michigan Sport Touring Report

February 2021

Editor – Rachel Durling

Tires, unbiased

By: Kent Niederhofer

Motorcyclists are a funny bunch, in no small part, because they have strong opinions about almost everything. This group, the MSTR, is well known for its avid, and in some cases fanatical, brand ambassadors – everyone knows “a BMW gal” or “a Ducati guy” or... well, you can fill in the blank because you get the idea.

Likewise, discussions on the best boots, helmet, engine oil, or tires can be polarizing but, in fairness, all are generally based on our individual experiences. To add to the fray, I thought I'd share a bit of my own experience as it relates to this last category, tires. You no doubt know that motorcycle OEMs usually work with tire manufacturers to develop a tire that meets their target requirements for a variety of performance characteristics – including cost (and I'll have more on this later at the end of the article).

Such is the case with my own bike, a 2019 BMW R1250GS, that I purchased about 20 months ago where the manufacturer offered two options as stock direct from the factory – the Bridgestone Battleax A41 and the Michelin Anakee Adventure. Both tires were newly introduced in 2019 with the A41 being a fairly comprehensive upgrade of Bridgestone's A40 featuring meaningful improvement across the full range of performance characteristics. On the other hand, the Michelin, the Anakee Adventure was an all-new tire with many

thoughtful features incorporated from other on-road and off-road tires in their lineup.

Upon taking delivery of said motorcycle, I wanted to better understand how well they'd wear given my mix of riding which, based on 2020 miles travelled, I would estimate to be 55% long distance touring, 40% canyon carving, and 5% off-road on a variety of unpaved surfaces (e.g. hardpack, dirt and gravel roads).

Evaluation Process

When this process began, my initial goal was to evaluate tires purely on their durability – that is, how long would a set of tires last before having to replace them. However, it dawned on me that riders purchase tires not just based on durability but many other factors including cost. Factors I consider when purchasing tires include traction (or grip), feedback, handling, noise, warm up, and stability – and so I did my best to evaluate BMW's R1250GS-spec'ed tires on this basis.

While data could be readily collected for durability, I relied more heavily on a “seat of the pants” assessment for the other characteristics. That said, unlike motorcycle magazine evaluations that might cover a couple hundred miles at best, my evaluation took place over the life of the tires and on all manner of roads, conditions, and riding styles including a few high-speed runs (purely for test purposes, of course).

Because I wanted to learn more about tire durability than simply checking the odometer mileage at the end of the tire's life, I chose to monitor the rate of wear to see if more of the

tread depth was run off during the break-in period or perhaps late in the tire's life. I did this by measuring the tread depth (in tenths of a millimeter) when new and then again at roughly 500-mile increments. At each interval, I made a total of 24 separate measurements – one each on the left shoulder, the centerline and the right shoulder starting at the valve stem and then at 45° increments all the way around the tire (i.e., $3 \times 8 = 24$).

The results of these measurements are shown in graphs that follow in the sections dedicated to the evaluation of each tire.

The Competitors

Bridgestone Battleax A41

As mentioned, the A41 is a meaningful upgrade to its predecessor, the A40, and in keeping with contemporary tire design practice, it features a dual compound with a higher durometer center for improved wear and durability along with a softer, lower durometer shoulder for improved grip under aggressive riding and cornering. Tread pattern and tire carcass flex was carefully analyzed to improve the contact patch under load. The result of the Bridgestone engineers' efforts was a 5% increase in contact patch resulting in a 9% gain in wet traction and a corresponding 8% reduction in wet lap time (under controlled conditions on their test track) versus their A40.

Marketed as a 90/10 tire, the Bridgestone Battleax A41 is definitely a street biased tire and, given the tread design, appears to be developed for something closer to a 95/5 riding mix. While the tire was absolutely superb during aggressive riding of the twisties, there were two upside surprises that I experienced. The first was associated with the level of performance in wet conditions – the tire showed no perceptible drop-off in traction, feedback and handling in the rain versus the dry. The second pleasant surprise was the fact that this street tire was actually quite stable where the pavement ended – on hardpack as well as dirt roads it exhibited admirable grip and good stability.



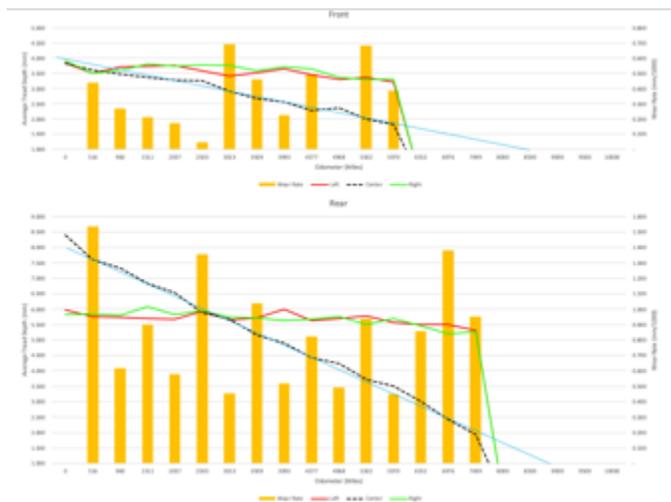
Bridgestone Battleax A41

Given that this was the first factory tire that I experienced when I took delivery of my GS, I had nothing else to compare it to but nonetheless I found the Bridgestone to be quiet and sure-footed on both dry and wet roads. It also provided excellent feedback with a very manageable and progressive transition to slip which instilled great confidence and provided abundant margin between “I’m good” and “I’m in trouble”.

This tire so impressed me that, even absent any other relevant benchmark, I knew this hoop was special as I had spent a good amount of time riding my 2009 K1300S on sport tires that should have given the A41 a run for their money in all performance attributes with the exception of durability – and that simply was not the case.

As expected, the tread at the centerline of the tire was the limiting factor in determining tire life and, interestingly, the front and rear wore out at about the same time. What may be less obvious is that the rear wore at a rate 3.9X faster than the front but could have lasted 8,500 – 9,000

miles similar to the front (Note: With a wear bar height of approximately 1.0 mm, both of these tires came off just a bit earlier than needed due to an upcoming MSTR ride).



Michelin Anakee Adventure

Michelin’s Anakee Adventure tire was developed as a successor to their popular Anakee III which had been fitted to many of the motorcycles in BMW’s popular GS-line including the R1250GS’s predecessor, the R1200GS. It too is a dual compound tire reflecting the same type of thinking found behind Bridgestone’s A41 with softer rubber on the shoulders for improved grip and a harder surface at the center for greater durability. Despite the fact that it is marketed as an 80/20 tire, it too has an upside surprise – that being how good it is on the road – so much so that it’s fair to say that it really holds up well against many sport touring tires.

Michelin has also imbued this tire with some unique features where evidence of the tire’s off-road capability is clearly visible by the deeply grooved tread found between the large blocks of chunky rubber. In addition, the grooves run in irregular patterns across the full width of the tire and widen as they approach the shoulder allowing excellent water evacuation as it’s cleared from the center to the sides.

Last but not least, the Anakee Adventure features Michelin’s “bridge block” design which provides the tire with greater cornering stability. These bridge blocks represent raised sections of rubber that buttress the blocks along the tire’s

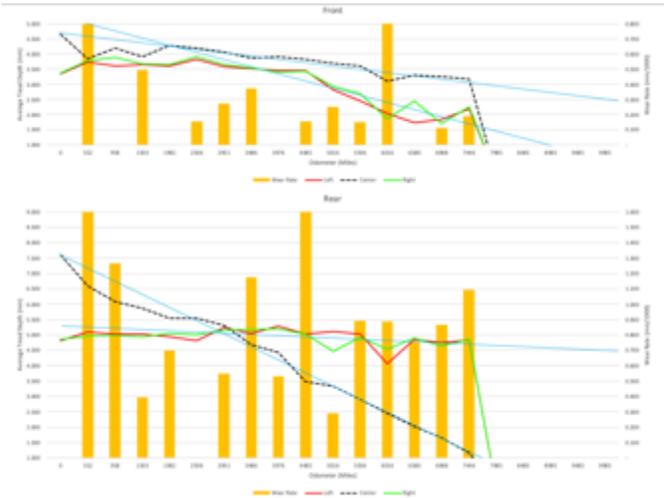
shoulder and therefore minimize block flex and the sensation of any tire shimmy.



Michelin Anakee Adventure

While I had the unfortunate experience of “testing” this tire’s decent performance in deep mud and soft dirt following an off-road tumble into a ravine, it was its on-road performance that impressed me the most as its ability to approach the A41 in dry weather road grip was not expected.

As can be seen in the below graphs, the Anakee Adventures had a comparable life expectancy with the front good for 9,500 miles but the rear at its wear bars at about 7,800 miles. What may be less obvious save for the most astute readers is that it was the front tire’s shoulder that was the limiting factor as opposed to the centerline tread.



Tire Comparison & Conclusion

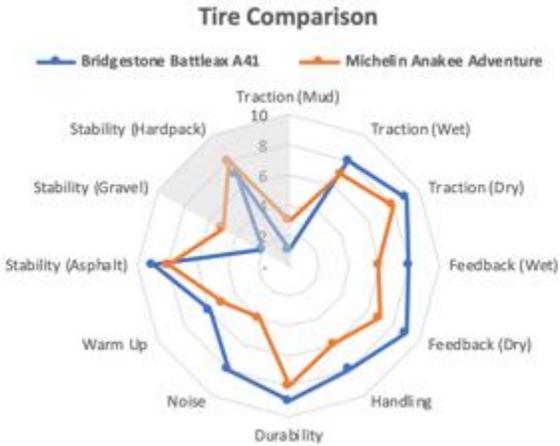
Like most test comparisons, and rightly so, the reader always expects the writer to declare a winner and while I would have liked to pick a “best tire” in this comparison as well, it simply wasn’t possible. Why do you ask? Well, that’s because the two tires that BMW has chosen to offer on their R1250GS are designed for somewhat different purposes.

There is no question that between the two offerings, the Bridgestone Battleax A41 is the better sport touring tire for riders who want the ability to also shred some pavement. It simply demonstrates superior performance in virtually every on-road performance category that matters for the sport touring rider (emphasis on “sport”).

That said, the Michelin Anakee Adventure doesn’t give up much on the road when compared to the A41 but provides the added benefit of demonstrating capability over surfaces that one would never consider taking your Bridgestone-equipped GS through (see gray area of spider map). As a result, your choice of tire depends on what you intend to do with your bike and I for one can strongly recommend both!

- Traction* *How well the tire grips on different surfaces; low grip would result in slip*
- Feedback* *How well the tire provides the rider with an awareness of what it’s doing; in particular w.r.t. break-away*

- Handling* *How well the tire responds to rider inputs resulting in the motorcycle to respond as intended*
- Durability* *How many miles can be ridden before reaching the wear bar on either tire anywhere on the traction surface (i.e., shoulder or center)*
- Noise* *How loud the tire is while riding asphalt based on worst case which can vary based on conditions (e.g., angle of lean, run-in, etc.)*
- Warm Up* *How quickly the tire reaches operating temperature based on grip, feedback, and handling feel*
- Stability* *How predictable and true the tire tracks based on rider inputs on different surfaces*



Wait... There’s More!

I mentioned in the first paragraphs of this article that I’d share some other insights gained while researching tires BMW has specified as factory-available for my R1250GS. During the course of those investigations, I had an opportunity to discuss tires at length with a customer representative from Bridgestone’s technical support organization.

What I learned is that motorcycle OEM’s work very closely with tire suppliers in the development of tires that are to become OEM-spec offerings for their bikes. Requirements for all of the variables discussed in this article – in addition to the cost element – are defined and trade-offs between attributes evaluated.

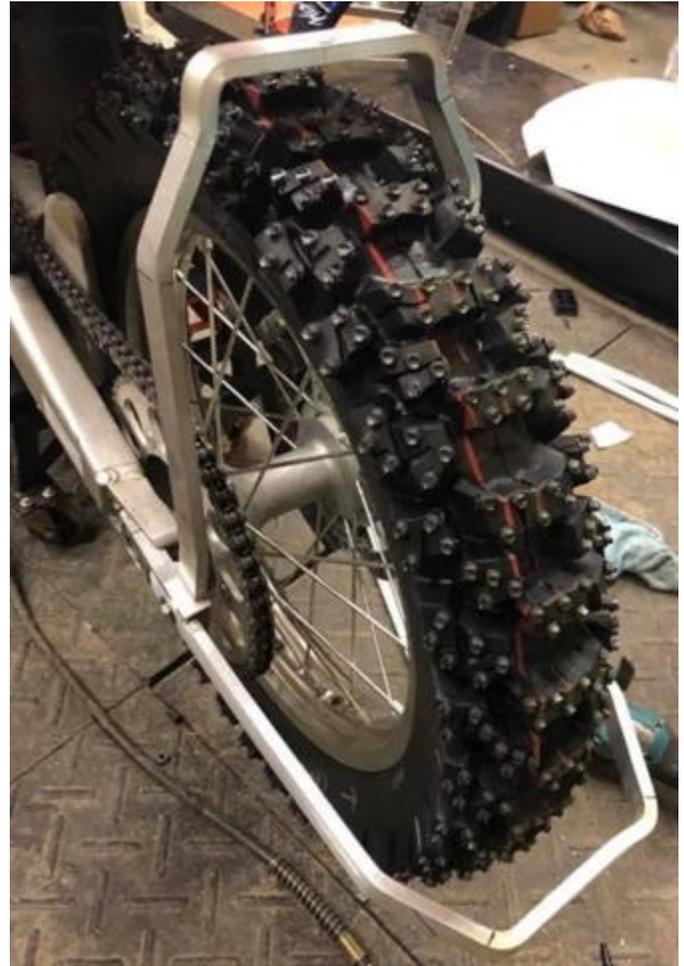
And while the make and model of the tire developed between manufacturers is then offered in the aftermarket under the same name, it may differ significantly in terms of its performance capability. It turns out that the OEM tire has a letter designation on the sidewall identifying the OEM whereas the aftermarket tire lacks this designation. Because the aftermarket tire is substantially less cost sensitive, performance parameters defined by the OEM are often exceeded because of high performance materials that can be enriched (e.g., silica).

So, the lesson learned is that your aftermarket tire is likely to outperform the same OEM tire all other things being equal – and that’s part of why they cost more!

Ice Studs

By: Randy Hodder

Well, 2020 is now in the books and the temperature has dropped enough to make the ponds and lakes freeze over in southern Michigan. This allows the studs of ice to come out with their outlaw bikes to see who’s the fastest around a TT road course on some top-notch purpose built highly modified 450 dirt bikes. They come from all over the state for bragging rights but more importantly camaraderie. Typically, some of the best specialize in pro flat track or pro motocross and ride single tracks. Ages vary widely from teenagers to 60+. Some of the key modifications to these bikes include lowered suspension, purpose built tires with screws, cams, ported heads, high compression pistons, calipers and rotors, VP fuels, and remapped ECU to name a few. There are many different types of tires to choose from but those in the know choose 1.5” Canadian screws with a 3/8” heads screwed to a MotoZ knobby that has an extra thick liner with an extra tuff tube. Those tires have proven to be the ultimate grip for lean angles and corner speed but @\$800 a set they’re not cheap. Another nice mod is to mount it to a 3” wide rim on the rear +\$500.



Wouldn't want to get my foot tangled up in THAT! Literally will saw logs and legs in half. Kill switch tethers and fenders are HIGHLY recommended!

All that traction is nothing without some protection with custom fenders for when the bar banging begins. And guess what, that tire has the smaller 1/4” AMA legal screw heads and not the “cheater” 3/8” Canadian heads. I prefer cheaters.

One of the “coolest” mods is when they run the radiator coolant thru the handlebars to keep their hands warm, some include thermostats and others have a simpler design that includes just a ball valve for when your hands get too hot. Your hands get really cold at 70mph and 25 degrees while constantly grabbing the frozen clutch and brake levers without heated grips.



There is an event that takes place in January on White Lake that lets some of Michigan's finest showcase their talent (weather permitting) and 2021 had the perfect conditions.

Okay, I'm going to do some name dropping but Craig Picket, Wes Westesson, and Pat Buchanan typically ride together to test and push each other to the next level while anybody that thinks their somebody try to tag along and keep up (not me). Craig and Wes were training for AMA National 3-hour steel shoe fund endurance race in Wisconsin (see link). Pat seemed to be fastest that day, but he runs the cheater screws and Wes and Picket run the smaller AMA legal screws for training.



Former National #1 flat track champion Stephen Vanderkuur (STUD) showing some proper form. Notice the left heel position and right elbow! This guy normally sets a fearless pace. He couldn't make it this year, but it is an older picture I took that I just had to share.

If you ever want to give it a try shoot me a text and I will line you up with Bret Vandyke's bike lol, which is Pat Buchanan's old bike!

<https://youtu.be/jtRmZfWWOMY>

<https://www.steelshoefund.org/>

<http://steelshoefund.org/3hour.html>

A special thanks to **Kent Niederhofer and Randy Hodder** for their articles and pictures featured this month.

Remember... All published articles earn a free breakfast, entry into the year-end newsletter drawing AND your fellow members and the newsletter editor will appreciate your articles. You will also earn points toward the **2021 MOTY Awards!**



MSTR Heads Up

Here is a listing of some of the upcoming local events and meetings within the next few months. If you know of a local motorcycle event in Michigan or Ontario the MSTR would be interested in send Rachel Durling an e-mail to Communications@mstriders.com with the details.



MSTR EAST and West “Breakfast” Meetings

We will be combining our east and west side meetings for the winter months. Our meetings will very likely be Zoom meetings due to ongoing Covid-19 concerns throughout the winter months. Please check your email for Mailchimp announcements for updates and links for the Zoom meetings.

Our February MSTR “breakfast” meeting will be on February 27th, 2021 at 9am on Zoom.

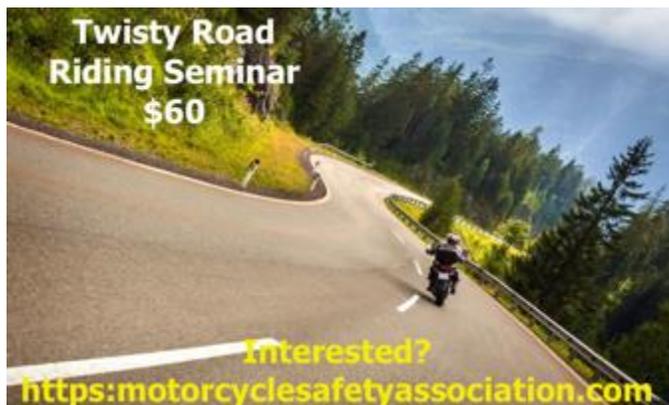
Our March MSTR “breakfast” meeting will be on March 27th, 2021 at 9am on Zoom, unless the weather cooperates and we are able to meet outdoors at an area park.

Twisty Road Riding Seminar Updates

By: *Bill Webb*

webb@motorcyclesafetyassociation.com

Reminder to those who have already taken the Twisty Road Seminar...one training slot in each seminar is held back for those who have taken the seminar previously who want a free refresher. That list is created on a first-to-request basis. Therefore, if you want to retake the seminar in the spring, send me an e-mail.



For those not familiar with the Twisty Road Seminar program, it was started in 2019 by formation of the Motorcycle Safety Association, a non-profit corporation that has since been determined to be a charity under Section 501(c)(3) of the I.R.S. code. More information

about the program and what others who have taken the seminar have said about the program can be seen at:

<https://motorcyclesafetyassociation.com/>

If you are interested in signing-up, you can learn more about the program at the website link above and you can sign-up online at:

<https://motorcyclesafetyassociation.com/sign-up-for-training>

It is advisable to sign-up now if you want to attend one of the first available seminars as persons are enrolled on a first-to-register basis.

If there is enough interest a riding seminar may be offered at one or more MSTR riding events – contact Bill Webb if you're interested.

Because of the Motorcycle Safety Association's charity status, Amazon has agreed to donate ½ of 1% of the Amazon purchase amounts people make. Your participation in this program is without cost to you. It is a simple two-step process, first go to:

<https://smile.amazon.com/ch/84-3799306>

where you acknowledge the amount above will be donated to support the Association—without cost to you. Then when you make future purchases, you need only bookmark or start typing: **Smile**.amazon.com instead of Amazon.com and ½ of 1% of your purchases will be donated to the Association. This no cost to you way to support the program will certainly be appreciated. If you sign up on this Amazon program, please drop me a note and let me know. Thanks.



MSTR 2021 Rides

Please check the MSTR website for an updated list of the rides and events for 2021. If you are interested in volunteering, please send an email to the address below. A complete list of events is on the Events page of the MSTR website (www.mstriders.com).

Note: MSTRider membership is required to attend a MSTR riding event. We will not be able to add your name to an event sign-up list unless you are a current MSTRider or until your New MSTRider Form or MSTRider Renewal form and fee are received. Go to www.mstriders.com, then navigate to the Resources page and scroll down to the **New MSTRider Form** or the **MSTRider Renewal Form**.

MoArk Adventure 13.5

April 14th to 17th, 2021
Missouri/Arkansas



This ride is a “curve-chaser’s” delight. It’s three days of riding with 1,000 tire-shredding miles in the Ozark’s to start out your riding season. Check your tires for tread prior to this ride, the roads here will chew them up aggressively. Many riders have shown up with “I think” tires and ended up buying expensive tires mid-ride and losing a day of riding. If in doubt, get new tires.

This ride begins in Farmington, MO. We’ll meet there for dinner on Wednesday, April 14th. There will be a mandatory point riders meeting at 8:30pm then a mandatory riders meeting at 9:00pm to sign waiver and put riding groups together. On Thursday morning you can choose one of three routes from Farmington to

Mountain Home, AR. We’ll then be staying Thursday, April 15th and Friday, April 16th in Mountain Home. On Friday we’ll be riding on some of the best roads in Arkansas which are south and west of Mountain Home. We return to Farmington, MO from Mountain Home on Saturday, April 17th, arriving mid-afternoon and then prepare for the ride or trailer trip back to Michigan.

To join us for MoArk 13.5 get your name on the sign-up list by sending an email to Ian as shown below. Event information including hotel information, a rider package and GPS routes will only be provided to those who have signed up.

Event Organizer: Ian Orr
Email: mclorr1198@gmail.com

mr2

Michigan Renegade Mountain Ride
May 9th to May 14th, 2021
Waynesville, NC



There will be two days of travel and five days of riding on some of the best motorcycle roads in the US. We stay at one location and, each day, choose from any one of 20 different routes. Most MSTRiders will ride 1,000 to 1,500 miles so be sure to have good tires with lots of tread.

The ride begins in Waynesville, NC at the mandatory rider’s meeting at the hotel on Sunday, May 9th at 8pm to sign waivers and put riding groups together. The rider’s meetings continue each evening until Thursday.

The hotel's remote location ensures a quiet and relaxing stay. Participants can bring or purchase food to make their own onsite breakfasts and dinners or drive/ride 5-10 minutes to one the many restaurants in Waynesville. There is an onsite BBQ grill available for our use. About one week before the event starts, we'll select one warm and dry evening to have an onsite group cookout. Those who want to join in can either bring their own food for the cookout or pick it up at a local grocery store.

To join us for **mr2** send an email to Ian as noted below. Event information including hotel & local restaurant information, Rider Packages and GPS routes will only be provided to those who have signed up. Be sure to make your hotel reservations early.

Event Organizer: Ian Orr
Email: mclorr1198@gmail.com

MSTR Newsletter & Website

The MSTR Newsletter and Website (www.mstriders.com) belong to you, the riders. They both can only be as good and as interesting as you make them. If you have something to say about a ride, your bike, perhaps a trip you are planning, whatever, send it in for the newsletter and/or website to:

Rachel Durling:
communications@mstriders.com

For Your Information

Regarding politics; the MSTR does not and shall not support any political party. Political discussions are not allowed during MSTR meetings or events.

Regarding human rights; the MSTR does not and shall not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, gender, gender expression, age, national origin, disability, marital status, sexual orientation or military status in any of its activities.

You are free to have whatever political views you desire, but please leave them at home or on Facebook. Please don't bring them to the MSTR.

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MSTR Photo Gallery

The MSTR maintains a Smug Mug photo gallery (<https://mstriders.smugmug.com/>) to allow riders to upload and download pictures of various club events. Upload and download passwords are sent out to participants for each event. Click on the above link or visit the MSTR website and select the MSTR Photo Gallery link to check out all the event pictures.





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