

## Reaching new heights

Baker High School grad Jason Hardrath is the fastest climber to summit all of Washington state's 100 tallest peaks

By **ASHLY WINCHESTER**  
For EO Media Group

Baker High School alumnus Jason Hardrath has climbed his way into Pacific Northwest mountaineering history by scaling all of Washington's 100 tallest peaks in 50 days, 23 hours, 43 minutes.

The feat took him through 869 miles of Washington state's mountain terrain while accumulating over 411,500 feet of elevation gain.

This list of 100 peaks is commonly referred to as the "Bulger's List," and just 82 climbers — most taking four or more years — have completed the list since its first finisher in 1980.

Regarding fast finishers, the previous record for this feat of endurance, tenacity, and mountain prowess had stood for two years at 13 1/2 months.

Hardrath, a 2007 BHS graduate who teaches school at Bonanza, near Klamath Falls, was drawn to the mountains after a car accident in 2015 stole his identity as an Ironman triathlete. Not being able to run, he took up climbing. He built his mountain skills and knowledge base over the years since the accident, taking on bigger and bigger objectives, which eventually led him to discovering the Bulger's list.

"I wanted to do this to test myself, I wanted a challenge, I wanted a grand adventure," Hardrath says, "I wanted to answer the question, both for myself and the PNW mountaineering community: What can be done on these 100 peaks if the person just doesn't go home until it's finished? I also had this deep drive to be authentic to my students when I tell them to dream big, chase those dreams, and don't let setbacks get you down."

Those who are familiar with the terrain in the North Cascades have been stunned by not just Hardrath's athletic ability, but also the amount of planning that had to go into such an undertaking.

"(Jason's) logistics (transportation, routes, food, gear, electronics, etc.) were as mind-boggling as (his) physicality," said John Roper, the first to complete the Bulger's list.



Jason Hardrath on the summit of Mount Storm King, gesturing toward Goode Mountain. The Northeast Buttress of Goode features a classic climb of about 2,000 feet of exposed rock climbing.

Nathan Longhurst/Contributed Photo



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Considered the most difficult peak to climb among Washington state's 100 tallest, the southeast spire of the Mox Peaks, simply called Hard Mox by most climbers, involves the iconic chimney pitch that Jason Hardrath is climbing here.

Since finishing, Hardrath is taking some hard-earned rest time, but is looking forward to getting back out in the mountains.

"It is never just about the end with these things," he said. "Yes, I was racing a clock until the final step from the final peak, but it was about fully experiencing every peak, every bushwhack, every challenge out there. It was about being in the moment, both with the testing moments and the glorious ones. I truly feel I poured

ut the best I could bring to these challenges along the way. I feel a deep satisfaction of hard work, well done.

"This was exactly the sort of thing that a kid who couldn't sit still growing up in Baker City was supposed to find himself out doing," Hardrath said. "I am proud of this effort, but excited to get back out playing in the mountains on the next adventure."

Hardrath's record was verified through live satellite



Nathan Longhurst/Contributed Photo

Jason Hardrath standing on the summit of Sinister Peak. Land closures forced him to approach Sinister from a nontraditional route that involved considerable off-trail navigation.

check-ins, GPS data, and geo-time-stamped cellphone photos demonstrating his visits to each correct summit. The record has been accepted by [www.fastest-knowntime.com](http://www.fastest-knowntime.com) and the Bulger's List Finishers group, who plans to honor his effort at their yearly finisher banquet at "The Mountaineers" Complex based in Seattle this November.

Along for the ride was production company WZRD Media, which is in the process of creating a mini-documentary about

Hardrath's achievement. The film should be released this fall, and might appear in the well-known Banff Mountain Film Festival. The short film's proposed title is "Journey to 100."

Find and follow along on Jason's adventures on Instagram [@jasonhardrath](https://www.instagram.com/jasonhardrath), or on his website, [jasonhardrath.com](http://jasonhardrath.com).

Ashly Winchester is a freelance writer and avid outdoors-woman. Find her on Instagram: [@ashly.winchester](https://www.instagram.com/ashly.winchester).

## Messing with Texas

Fishing in a state that prides itself on independence



**LUKE OVGARD**  
CAUGHT OVGARD

**F**ORT STOCKTON, Texas — Few states have the accepted reputation of independence quite like the great state of Texas. After all, it was the only U.S. state to exist as its own nation before joining our own.

Of course, that reputation of independence is a bit tenuous if you dive a little deeper.

Mexico abolished slavery in 1829 — except in the colonial territory of Texas, where it remained legal for an additional year. Texan officials fought to change this, and refused to enforce the new law when the temporary stay ended in 1830.

In the five years that followed, slavery was not legal but was still widely practiced in the region.

The Mexican federal government was too focused on quelling internal rebellions and building tensions with European powers that would eventu-



Luke Ovgard/Contributed Photo

The author poses with another longtime nemefish he finally defeated in Texas, the gray redhorse. Despite being spawned out, this fish broke the world record by more than half a pound.

ally lead to the First Franco-Mexican War to really end slavery in Texas. Eventually, they got around to addressing it, tensions built and in 1835, Texas declared independence from Mexico,

building a provision guaranteeing the "right" to own slaves into its new constitution.

Seeing an opportunity to wrest Texas from its southern rival, numerous



Luke Ovgard/Contributed Photo

I did it, folks. My last American catfish, the headwater catfish.

opinion leaders in the United States encouraged American citizens to aid the rebellion. Some notable American figures joined the Texans, including James Bowie (of Bowie knife fame) and Davy Crockett (you know, the guy from the song).

Though the doomed men of The Alamo headline studies of this conflict in the American classroom, the Texans actually won, thanks in large part to the fact that several other

Mexican regions were simultaneously fighting the unpopular government for independence and numerous native Tribes battled for their continued existence in the Mexican Empire.

Only Texas succeeded, becoming the Republic of Texas in 1836. It would stand as that famed lone star for less than a decade before joining the United States in 1845 and precipitating the Mexican-American War. Texas would win

handily, aided by the full force of the Union.

### Legacy

This legacy of independence and the maverick nature of Texas is visible all over the state and is especially visible in its towns, roads, bridges and natural landmarks, many of which bear names like "Freedom Springs," "Liberty Hill" and "Independence Creek."

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