

2009 Iron Butt Rally, Day 8
Monday, August 31, 2009

A very brief riders meeting was held at 4 a.m. this morning at the Doubletree Hotel in Santa Ana, California. At the beginning of the meeting, Michael Kneebone read the names of the top ten riders, highlighting the big jump in the standings for Matt Watkins, who moved from 40th to 6th, Ken Meese, who rose from 38th to 8th, and Bob Lilley, who moved from 22nd to 10th. He also highlighted the big jump in standings for Nancy Oswald, who moved from 47th to 16th and is now the highest ranking woman rider. Nancy's impressive Leg 2 performance was in spite of the fact that she lost a number of points at the scoring table for some bonus blunders.

After Kneebone announced the top ten, I announced that the "finisher" level point target for this leg will be 40,000. Riders were admonished to pay close attention to their paperwork on this leg because the combination of the rest bonus, the gas bonus, and the two call-in bonuses are good for over 10,000 points.

The Leg 3 Bonus Listing

As shown in the figure below, the Leg 3 bonus locations are spread over an incredibly wide area. They are as far east as the Upper Peninsula of Michigan and as far north as Eagle Plains in the Yukon Territory. There are a number of additional bonuses in Canada and several bonuses in Alaska. There are also many bonuses along the West Coast. The coastal and northern locations would offer welcome relief from the broiling temperatures riders experienced yesterday on their ride into Santa Ana. Some riders experienced afternoon temperatures of up to 116° F. A number of riders were literally fried when they arrived at the Checkpoint.

The Leg 3 Bonus Locations



Unlike the bonus listing for Leg 2, the Leg 3 bonus listing contains numerous bonus locations that are out of reach for all but the strongest riders. There are a total of 43 bonuses above 1,000 points, the largest of which has the appropriate bonus code “MAD.”

Historical marker 22,577 points Anytime
 5 miles north of the Eagle Plains Hotel
 Eagle Plains, Yukon Territory
 N66 26.546 - W136 42.890



Take a photo of the historical marker.

Category: Murder, escape.

The mad trapper Albert Johnson gunned down RCMP officer Edgar Millen near here in February 1932. He himself was then shot and killed. The five-week ordeal, transpiring in the dead of an arctic winter, was one of the most arduous manhunts in the history of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

Date: _____ Time: _____ Odometer: _____ Code: MAD Approved: _____

With a minimum of side trips to reach a few bonuses along the basic route, scoring the 22,577 point bonus in Eagle Plains, Yukon Territory involves a 5,533 mile ride. Since there are 99 hours from the time the bonus listing is handed out until the check-in window at the finish, the overall average speed required is 56 mph. That might be possible for a rider that doesn't require any time to plan a route or sleep. But, assuming 4 hours of route planning and just 4 hours off of the bike on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday night, the average speed required for the remaining time is almost 67 mph. Given the roads involved, that's extremely unlikely. In addition, more side trips, adding even more miles, are required to score enough points for a win. Any rider who left for Eagle Plains this morning wasn't thinking clearly.

After dismissing Eagle Plains, the next biggest bonus is 7,921 points for a photograph of “Gay Bar” in Gay, Michigan. It's on the shore of Lake Superior in the Upper Peninsula and it's a damn long ride, beyond the capabilities of many riders. However, a number of the other 1,000+ point bonuses are available along the way and the top riders will have to seriously consider whether to base their route on a turnaround at Gay Bar.

For middle of the pack riders and those hoping to become finishers, a route to Spokane via the Upper Peninsula of Michigan should be out of the question. However, there are a multitude of other route alternatives that include many of the 1,000+ point bonuses. Riders with above average routing skills will also be looking to develop a mega-point route without going all of the way to Michigan.

I'll provide more detail on the route options in subsequent reports.

Gay Bar 7,921 points Anytime
925 Lake St at 2nd St
Gay, Michigan
N47 13.638 - W088 09.865

Take a photo of the Gay Bar business sign.

Category: Crimes against nature.

Until relatively recently in British and American criminal law, homosexuality (and almost every other sort of sexual activity not undertaken for the purposes of procreation, whether within or without the bonds of marriage) could be, and occasionally was, punished as a "crime against nature."

Date: _____ Time: _____ Odometer: _____ Code: GAY Approved: _____

The quality of the routes developed this morning will undoubtedly be affected by how well-rested each rider was. Earls and Owen both passed the I.Q. test and got into Checkpoint 2 well before the opening of the window last night. Scoring went more quickly than in St. Charles and both Jeff and Jim had time for a good night's sleep.

In contrast, Eric Jewell pulled one of his typical, down to the wire finishes and received 80 penalty points for being just over 3 minutes late. He looked like dead meat on a stick, but Eric has an uncommon ability to continue performing efficiently under stress. Eric also has a potential advantage on the last leg; he's riding a Honda and Earls and Owen are on bikes with a less impressive reliability record in Iron Butt Rallies.

Although more than 5,000 points separate the top three riders from the rest of the pack, this is a very long leg and there are some very good riders that could close the gap if either Earls or Owen or Jewell have less than perfect rides.

The Home Stretch

Although almost everyone will be trying for the best finish possible, riders near the top of the pack could coast to Spokane with an easy ride and still be recorded as finishers. But for most of the field, a solid ride is required to secure finisher status and a fairly hard ride is required to get into the bronze, silver, or gold medal category. Careless paperwork mistakes will be costly, if not heart breaking, at the scoring table. Mechanical failures will be more immediately painful.

In a post to the Long Distance Riders list (www.ldriders.com) Donald Jones recently described his painful last leg in the 2007 Iron Butt Rally when his sidestand failed and his motorcycle fell to the ground. The local towing company that AAA road service had contracted with refused to deal with his problem. Donald described the impact of his situation as follows:

The emotion hit me, 9 days of hard riding, 16 months of prep work laying there in a heap, I sat on the parking lot curb and started crying and couldn't stop. My rally was over.

Almost everyone who has ever ridden the Iron Butt Rally can relate to the frustration and pain Donald described. The Iron Butt Rally can sometimes be enough to make a grown man cry. It's hard for those who haven't attempted this feat to appreciate the emotional investment that these riders have made. We are hoping for a minimum of heartbreak on the home stretch, but experience tells us not everyone will have a problem-free leg and, as reported below, two more riders are already out of the rally.

Two More Riders Are Out As of Today

Neil Ward dropped his KLR while returning from the Bristlecone bonus earlier today. Although Neil and the bike are apparently "okay," Neil has decided to withdraw from the Rally.

Derek Dickson reports that he lost traction in some gravel while bonus hunting in Utah and went down. He was able to ride to the nearest emergency room to be checked out where it was confirmed that he has a broken clavicle.

Dave Biasotti is Still In the Rally, At Least for Now

After a previously reported final drive failure in Cripple Creek, Colorado, Dave Biasotti was able to make it to Checkpoint 2 due to the combined efforts of several individuals. Although the local BMW dealer was an extreme disappointment, BMW of Atlanta owner Bob Wooldridge coordinated the effort to get Dave back on the road via long distance. Matt Parkhouse volunteered his home and expertise to get a new final drive installed. Chris Lawson took the time to hand-deliver the new final drive obtained from Foothills BMW in Denver. Dan Huber stepped in when MoTow failed to respond in a timely manner and got Dave's R1150RT towed to Matt's home where the repair work was done.

Hopefully, all of this effort will be sufficient to get Dave to the finish in Spokane. However the new final drive already appeared to be leaking by the time Dave got to Santa Ana last night.

An Update from the Medical Centers

Scott LaShier is more banged up than we had hoped. He suffered a broken pelvis and two collapsed lungs when his ST1300 went down in the median of I-40 yesterday after an apparent tire failure. The good news is that Scott has no head or spinal injuries and a full recovery is anticipated.

Bill Rauschenberg continues to make progress and his wife Diane is most grateful for the continued support from the Long Distance Community.

Tomorrow

The first Call-In bonus is tomorrow, from noon to 11:59 p.m. Pacific Time. I will also provide some additional details on the bonus options.

Tom Austin

August 31, 2009

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