

The 2013 Iron Butt Rally: Day 8

Setting the Table

As was noted earlier in these reports, Tom Austin, who arranged the bonuses for the rally's second leg, envisioned that there would be two basic routes from Pennsylvania to California in the allotted two and one-half days. One would lure the rider into following the path of the Pony Express from St. Joseph, Missouri, to Sacramento, California. Thirty-four stops for photographing a building, monument, sign, or other evidence of the site would be required along the way; all but one would be available to the rider during daylight hours only. If successful in bringing home every one of the 34 individual bonuses, the rider would receive an additional combination bonus of 10,500 points. The second possible route was far easier: ride to the top of Pikes Peak for 8,666 points and pick up everything else you can along the way.

When he had completed his first draft of potential bonuses, Austin sent it to Jim Owen and Jeff Earls for review and comment. *You guys are the pros from Dover in the routing business. What would you do with this package?* Owen liked the Pony Express route. Difficult, with many constraints, but big, big points. He even came up with a twist, running up to the Black Rock Desert near Gerlach, Nevada, for 1,899 points. Austin hadn't thought of that one.

Earls was more conservative. Take Pikes Peak and don't risk knocking yourself out of the event. His advice took on additional weight when Austin reminded Owen that the last dozen Pony Express bonuses lay on U.S. 50 in western Nevada and California. "Did you consider," Austin asked, "that most of it is a two-lane highway through the mountains and that the riders are likely to be in heavy traffic at the end of the July 4th weekend?" Owen admitted that he hadn't thought of that. Maybe Pikes Peak was safer.

Time would tell. It always does.

A Simple Truth from Days Gone By

Early on we could see that the Pony Express route wasn't going to be popular. Most of the riders were wandering around in varying stages of disarray during the morning of the first day, dropping down onto I-70 and aiming for Colorado. If they had been serious about going after the 10K combo bonus, they should have headed straight for St. Joseph. We noticed only one rider doing that, Eric Jewell. He plinked away at the express stations in Kansas and Nebraska until the sun went down Friday evening and we all went to bed.

Early the following morning Tom Austin called. "It looks like Eric Jewell has given up on the Pony Express route. He should have gone northwest from Julesburg,

Colorado, to Fort Laramie. Instead he's heading southwest toward Denver." If Jewell was bailing on the Pony Express, he might either be tiring or worrying that hitting all 34 spots was unrealistic. At least two other riders, Tim Pawlowski and Bob Lilley, had been popping the express sites as if they were ducks in a shooting arcade. There was only one reason for Eric to break off to the southwest: he wanted Pikes Peak. By mid-morning he had it.

Late Saturday afternoon Austin called back. "I don't believe this. Look at Jewell's Spot track." I did, and I didn't believe it either. Eric had turned east toward Fort Laramie. "He's back on the Pony Express route," Tom said quietly. "Could anyone else be doing this?" We divided up the top dozen riders and checked their tracks. None of the ones on the express route had gone to Pikes Peak. "If he can pull this off," Tom said, "he'll have the lead in Sacramento."

"Let me look at one other thing," I said. I pulled up the master Spot links and clicked on a name. "Good Lord," I said. "We've got another one. Matt Watkins has Pikes Peak and he's just turned off toward Fort Laramie." Tom asked if he'd been hitting the Pony Express stations. I did a quick scan of the Spot history. "Every one. Matt's just seven minutes behind Eric right now."

"No one thought of this," Tom said. "Not me. Not Jim or Jeff. Pikes Peak? Sure. Combo bonus? Maybe. But *both* of them? Where did this come from?"

"We used to have a saying back in the days when I was doing automobile time-speed-distance rallies," I said. "*Every leg has a true and correct course, even if the rallymaster doesn't know what it is.* You're not the first choreographer to be stunned by his dancers. You won't be the last."

Westbound and Down

Tim Pawlowski was on cruise control, so far ahead of the rest of the field that at eight in the morning on Sunday he found himself steaming toward the Black Rock Desert and the 1,899 bonus. He was hours early at the finish, having run Jim Owen's preferred route, and for his great run and its 10,500-point combo bonus he would fall three places to 7th overall in the 2nd leg standings.

Bob Lilley was also tracking Owen's route and had the Pony Express combo locked up. He photographed the 33rd express marker at the Sacramento State University campus at 6:15 p.m. The 34th and final stop on his endless pony ride was six miles to the west in downtown Sacramento. He didn't go there. For reasons that Bob will spend the rest of his life wondering about, he turned instead to the northeast to pick up two bonuses in Roseville and Auburn worth 854 points and lost 10,752 points in the trade. He arrived at the finish three minutes late, but 50th overall instead of 5th.

There were other errors almost as heartbreaking. Robert Bolger rode to the top of Pikes Peak, took the obligatory photo, and received no credit for his effort. His motorcycle did not appear in the shot. I know what you're thinking here. You're thinking, "That is *exactly* the sort of thing that Mark Crane would do." And you're right. It is. And he did. Another 8,999 points down the proverbial drain for the endlessly screwed Crane.

Sal Terranova didn't take a hit that big with his various penalties --- 188 for doing a rest bonus wrong, another 150 for fumbling part of a call-in, and a final 975-point ding for being 65 minutes late --- and was happy not to have been time-barred. He'd been battling a bad valve stem in his front tire. A Good Samaritan with a wrecking truck took Sal in, fixed the tire, and sent Sal on his way. But the Samaritan had botched the repair, for soon Sal's odo cable was in heaven. More Good Samaritans took the bike under their wings at the finish line and promptly replaced the cable. A test drive in the parking lot to check the work went beautifully, right up to the point that the bike smacked a curb and crumped onto its side. It is driveable, we're told, and the odo now works. The machine just doesn't look quite the way it did earlier in the day.

Some riders managed to get through the trip from Pennsylvania without such drama. Derek Dickson, Wendy Crockett, and Alex Schmitt all took the conservative approach favored by Jeff Earls, roughly maintaining relative position. Others in the top ten from the first leg also held ground.

Matt Watkins had been dogging Eric Jewell for two days since they'd left the first of the Pony Express bonus locations in St. Joseph, Missouri, late Friday afternoon mere minutes apart. I write this from Annapolis, Maryland, and have not had a chance to talk with either of them about the odyssey. Did they know how close they were? Did they suspect what the other was planning? Did they realize they were in the process of making history? I don't know.

For a few tantalizing minutes yesterday I did see their tracks on my computer screen just after dawn in the northeast Nevada desert. Jewell was charging north on U.S. 93 and would bear left at Lages Station. Watkins was southbound on U.S. 93A, heading for the same intersection. It was like watching the flight paths of aircraft in a control tower. Blink. Would they see each other? Blink. And then with a screen update their positions reversed, Matt to the south of Eric, and instead of converging they grew farther apart. It was utterly riveting.

They remained within each other's reach until the very end, coming to the checkpoint minutes apart. Each had put away both the combo bonus and Pikes Peak, a route that the best minds in the game had believed unreachable. Forget the Pony Express. What we're watching now is Jewell-Watkins Express.

Addendum: 7/8/2013 8:05 p.m. EDT

We have just learned that at approximately 1:00 p.m. PDT this afternoon Eric Jewell was involved in a single-vehicle accident as he entered the Golden Gate Park on Park Presidio Drive in San Francisco, California. He suffered an injury to his right ankle in the low-side accident. He at first thought his front wheel might have run across a patch of oil or anti-freeze but the police who investigated the incident were unable to find any material on the roadbed that would have caused or contributed to Eric's fall.

It is uncertain at this writing whether he will be able to continue in the rally. He hopes at a minimum that he will be able to make it to the finish in Pennsylvania by Friday morning. In seven previous tries he has never once failed to complete the event. The rally staff and Eric's many friends unite in wishing this incredibly accomplished competitor a quick return to the saddle of his bike. This is truly sad, shocking news.

We also report the withdrawal of Keith Keating this morning. He was still suffering the residual effects of severe dehydration from crossing the desert in the past two days. Mark Crane also withdrew this morning, so far down in the standings that any hope of a competitive finish for him was not to be. Nahum Sloan also found the going not worth further effort and has abandoned the rally.

This is the Iron Butt. There are days like this. We hope that tomorrow will bring better weather, tail winds, and clear highways. Sometimes it doesn't, but we press on anyway. It's what we do.

Bob Higdon

Current Standings (updated)

Place	Rider name	Bike	Leg 2		Leg 2 points	Total points	Position change
			miles	Total miles			
1	Eric Jewell	HON	3513	7694	32790	51986	7
2	Matt Watkins	YAM	3668	7030	33346	51531	11
3	Derek Dickson	YAM	3372	7107	26731	47382	-2
4	Wendy Crockett	YAM	3385	6697	26118	46194	-1
5	Alex Schmitt	HON	3155	6611	25684	45844	-3
6	Ken Meese	BMW	3480	7041	25865	45175	0
7	Tim Pawlowski	YAM	3335	6682	25270	45158	-3
8	John Coons	BMW	3360	6927	25010	44825	-3
9	J. P. Mountain	YAM	3266	7606	25817	44753	0
10	Craig Brooks	BMW	3096	5871	24830	43476	0

11	Eric Bray	BMW	3113	6512	24745	42785	5
12	Greg Rice	HON	3076	6613	23778	41998	2
13	Tonie Cowen Jon Good/Ande	YAM	3093	6514	23154	41709	-2
14	Bergmann	BMW	2901	5666	22652	41181	-2
15	Daniel Roth	BMW	3029	5995	23276	41070	4
16	Anthony Osborne	YAM	3127	6179	24210	41033	13
17	Todd & Diane LeClair	HON	3101	6421	23363	40669	8
18	Perry Karsten	YAM	2895	6188	22595	40619	-1
19	Kevin Lechner	HON	3133	6079	22508	40596	-4
20	John Frick	BMW	3003	6203	22896	40522	1
21	Rex LeGalley	HD	3153	5997	24426	40443	20
22	Philip Weston Gerhard Memmen-	YAM	3070	6273	23457	40279	8
23	Krueger	BMW	3052	6224	23321	39888	10
24	Rusty Bachman	YAM	2856	5881	23710	39525	25
25	Greg Lenentine	YAM	3062	6548	21737	39158	-1
26	Mike Heitkamp	KAW	3008	5911	23390	39037	28
27	Jeremy Loveall	BMW	2883	5386	21272	38746	-4
28	Rob Nye	BMW	2968	6678	22320	38746	6
29	Shuey Wolfe	HON	3152	6762	20984	38615	-9
30	Tim Masterson	BMW	3100	6034	23436	38600	33
31	Tom Loftus	HON	2985	6191	22006	38034	9
32	Steve McCaa	KAW	3138	6132	22211	37797	24
33	Connie Gabrick	VIC	2828	5376	21512	37793	4
34	Marc Beaulac	HON	3100	6196	22927	37730	34
35	Ian McPhee	BMW	2935	5774	21782	37549	15
36	Richard Snyder	BMW	3003	6306	20619	37461	-8
37	Pat & Greg Blewett	HON	2842	5778	21324	37296	5
38	Roger Allen	BMW	2861	5741	21103	36983	6
39	Kathleen Allen	BMW	2868	5752	21078	36958	6
40	Kevin Sawatsky	YAM	3050	6017	20990	36933	3
41	Jim Abbott	HON	3176	6715	22952	36911	33
42	Allen Hatcher	BMW	2941	6236	21350	36804	19
43	Peter Hogan	YAM	3065	6166	21186	36760	14
44	Annette & Shane Cudlins	YAM	2946	5639	20595	36668	-5
45	Kendall Anderson	Mot	2987	5570	20563	36383	3
46	Eric Vaillancourt	YAM	2893	5594	21088	36101	20
47	Don Stadtler	HD	2827	5705	18200	35806	-25
48	Michiel Kerkhof	HD	3244	6442	21085	35699	21
49	Rony Baenziger	BMW	2859	5789	19945	35622	4
50	Bob Lilley	BMW	3491	7710	15537	35137	-43
51	Tony Hudson	HON	2828	5274	19419	35103	1
52	Matt Wise	BMW	3013	6561	21721	35041	25

53	Colin Goodall	YAM	2887	5318	18046	34997	-26
54	Kurt Worden	KAW	2926	5203	19426	34944	4
55	Mike Riley	KAW	2920	5416	19408	34896	4
56	Bob Rippy	BMW	2828	5444	18756	34588	-10
57	Alex Ciurczak	BMW	2805	5576	17513	34227	-25
58	Mark Starrett	YAM	2775	5579	19076	33571	12
59	Brian Walters	BMW	3192	6048	15368	33390	-41
60	Dianne Fox	BMW	2681	5056	17862	33343	0
61	Paul Peloquin	YAM	3425	6263	16922	33193	-23
62	Bobby Fox	BMW	2680	5058	17862	33151	0
63	Howard Entman Pat Ford & Becky	YAM	2859	5503	19809	33009	16
64	Martinez	HON	2716	4969	17883	33002	1
65	Betsy Young	BMW	2758	5190	17803	32934	-1
66	Cliff Wall	HON	2838	5270	18831	32548	9
67	Steve Bennett	YAM	2965	5656	18454	32456	5
68	Jeff Miller	HON	3040	6169	18894	32262	8
69	Joe Green	YAM	2833	4947	16553	31376	-2
70	Sal Terranova	HON	2359	5295	15387	31033	-15
71	Byron Scott Jones	BMW	2934	5468	17629	30885	7
72	Dave Legnosky	HON	2747	5043	18443	30728	13
73	John Bailey	KAW	2958	5806	13702	30519	-42
74	Robert Koeber	HON	2987	5987	14003	30362	-38
75	Robert Reid	BMW	2984	6201	17335	29786	8
76	Chris Purney	YAM	2547	5280	17141	28748	12
77	Kevin & Lynda Weller	BMW	2868	5609	12673	28499	-30
78	Doug Tessoro	BMW	5026	7368	16391	27398	14
79	Sam Liles	BMW	2898	6032	16259	27283	12
80	Phil O'Connor	HON	2735	5197	11217	26906	-29
81	Jerome Byrd	HON	2864	5040	15119	26892	6
82	Dave Bourdeaux	HON	2796	5350	10373	26752	-47
83	Sanjay Dixit	BMW	2891	5518	12249	26208	-10
84	Keith Keating	BMW	2737	5916	15486	25866	10
85	Robert Bolger	KAW	2825	5116	11799	24917	-5
86	Mark Crane	BMW	3546	7074	11973	23816	0
87	Donald Jones	HON	2780	5323	9323	23745	-16
88	Scott Thornton	YAM	3079	7111	6632	23586	-62
89	John Stanforth	KAW	2896	6383	10518	22952	-5
90	Jerry Runk	KAW	2985	6382	7094	18581	-1