

September 2 - Day Four - It Only Hurts When I Laugh

Weather, Weather Everywhere, Nor Any Place To Hide: In the riders' initial package was a small form. It asked the contestants to describe their funniest or most memorable experiences on the event. When Mary Sue Johnson turned her sheet in at the San Diego checkpoint, she had written, "There is nothing funny about the Iron Butt." Jesse Pereboom echoed her thoughts, but added "I'm having the time of my life!"

He may have changed his mind today. Leaving San Diego at noon guaranteed that the field would storm into the Mojave Desert at the height of the mid-afternoon heat. A casual glance at the weather charts of the southwest offered no hope: It was criminally hot. Even normally scalding towns were setting records. One rider, Robert Fairchild, bailed out of the rally in Gallup, NM. He had come through Yuma at a boiling 113F. It then became worse. He told Steve Chalmers that he couldn't take it any longer.

You can't blame Fairchild for a poor route choice. There are only three rational ways east from California: I-10, I-40, and I-70. You can't reach any of them without riding through a firestorm this weekend. For myself, I enjoy the heat. I'll turn on the electric vest at 70F and don't feel comfortable unless it's at least 90F. But I do recall that the one and only time I absolutely could not continue was on a day that was not as hot as it was in Arizona this afternoon.

Eddie James may be the only person enjoying the hellish weather. He made a wrong turn while in Death Valley and ended up riding through that nightmare twice. It was 118F.

There is expected to be no significant change in the weather over the next few days.

Animal, Mineral, and Vegetable Sightings:

Steve Attwood has surfaced. A deer drilled his Guzzi Le Mans in Oregon. He was uninjured and the bike may be repairable. He is believed to be trying for Florida, though he will have to ride to San Diego first. It sounds impossible, but if anyone can do it, Attwood can.

Not so fortunate was Skip Ciccarelli's Guzzi. A deer took the bike out on the first day. He was unable to obtain parts, including a headlight assembly, and has retired. What is it about Moto Guzzis that Bambi finds so irresistible?

Chuck Pickett squared off against an elk near Yellowstone Park. He reported that the animal, an adult the approximate size of a housing project, stopped in the road and turned to face him as he approached. They stared at each other for "three minutes," according to Pickett. It probably was more like ten seconds, though it must have seemed like ten hours. I have never been able to remember the difference between an elk and a moose. I know that one is psychotic and that the other is both psychotic and _mean_.

Tom Loegering came close to hitting an elk as it was skidding across U.S. 93 in Montana. How close? Tom said that it needed breath mints.

Perhaps it wasn't potentially as grim as if he'd been behind a truckload of pit vipers, but when the back door of the tomato truck swung opened and dropped a few hundred of them in front of Roy Eastwood, he decided that keeping his R1100RS upright through the slop was worthy of an award from the National Gyroscopic Society. We'll look into it.

When Jesse Pereboom pulled into a gas station in Oregon, his tank was attended to by "a hot chick." Jesse is 26 and, after a few days on the road, anything remotely female and breathing must look to him like "a hot chick." He said, "You gotta love those laws against pumping your own gas."

Jim Culp reported seeing a camel near Las Vegas. That admission may earn Culp, an attorney, a drug test when he returns to Salt Lake City.

Good News, Bad News, But Mostly Bad:

Happily, Steve Losofsky's leg was not broken by the rock that crashed through his lower fairing yesterday. He sustained a very bad bruise. His partner at Reno BMW, Jan Cutler, retrieved the limping Losofsky.

Unhappily, Ardys Kellerman broke her left ankle and wrist when she ran off I-40 into the median strip near Grants, NM today. Her K75 was demolished. She was admitted to Presbyterian Hospital in Albuquerque. The cause of the accident is unknown, but it was not attributable to speed. People in a car following her told the state police that she was doing a steady 65 mph on the deserted highway. She was feeling well in San Diego.

Cross-country record holder Ken Hatton, in 6th place after San Diego, is history. Apparently on the way to Florida by way of Mount Rushmore in South Dakota, a sprocket in his ZX-11 disintegrated. It is his third straight DNF on the rally. Hatton's retirement brings the count to seven down and forty-seven to go.

Scooter jockey Ed Otto told Mike Kneebone this afternoon that the Helix is having grave trouble with the blast furnace winds of west Texas. Calling from Fort Stockton, Otto said that he was barely able to manage 40 mph on I-10. If he can make it to Florida, a crew from the American Motorcycle Institute in Daytona will do a complete service on the machine.

Next:

Checkpoint #3

Fort Lauderdale, FL

Opens: 1800, Monday, September 4

Closes: 1900 (five point per minute lateness penalty)

Location: Burger King, Exit 25 on I-95

September 3 - Day Five - Go East, Young Man

Or north. Then maybe east, then south. Or something. What the hell? Just go to Fort Lauderdale. Take 75 hours to ride the straight route there from San Diego and make at least 850 miles a day. For that effort, you get zero bonus points. If you're rested, you could extend yourself to hit a large bonus site in Lebanon, KS, the former geographic center of the U.S., and for that endless, awful ride through the core of the Great Plains, you'll have to average 1,022 miles every day.

he riders who are truly in need of adult supervision will try for the biggest bonus of the third leg --- paying a visit to Mount Rushmore in South Dakota --- and will have to crank out just under 1,150 miles every day for three straight days.

No matter where you ride, you're looking at 100+ degree heat for 10 hours a day. And not a lot of sleep. And crummy gas station food. And the visions, occasionally degenerating into hallucinations if you don't pay attention to what your brain, or the remains of it, is telling you.

One of the incidental victims of the rally is the rallymaster himself, Steve Chalmers. He'd probably be better off without a telephone, but he is perverse enough to have one and when it rings, he answers. It's rarely happy news.

They're bogging down out there. The reports are few but discouraging. Just taking the straight-shot is looking like a closed checkpoint window in Fort Lauderdale to the stragglers. Ed Otto on the Helix scooter called rallymaster Steve Chalmers from Fort Stockton, TX at 1700 on Saturday. Two other riders were with him. They were depressed, expecting to be deeper in the heart of Texas than they were. With the speeds they were maintaining, they won't make it.

Leonard Aron on the 1946 Indian called Chalmers from Houston. The bike is holding up better than he is. He has discovered that the ordinary routines of daily road life have become a cryptic puzzle. It is Agonie de Butt, a common pathology. You stand at a gas pump eating a bacon cheeseburger with extra cholesterol. Suddenly you cannot recall if the burger should go in your mouth or get stuffed in the tank. Though he will be time-barred in Florida, Leonard's mood remains obstinately gleeful. He will try for Maine.

At least those sorts of calls are comprehensible. The ones from Rick Shrader, universally known as "Swamp Thing" as a tribute to his abrupt finish in the '91 IBR, can be positively disconcerting. Chalmers got one from Rick's wife today. She had just heard from The Thing and wanted to know if a couple of riders, including Steve Attwood, really had been shot.

"S-s-s-h-o-t?" Chalmers stammered in horror.

"That's what Rick heard," she said. "He wants to know whether it's true that the rally is cancelled."

Rick has never actually completed the event. He won't finish this one either. He was calling from New Mexico, roughly 1,000 miles short of where he needed to be.

I can commiserate with Rick, though. On the IBR the misinformation mill is broken if it is not running insanely amok. How a war correspondent ever gets anything accurate is an amazement to me. I used to look at Gunga Dan Rather reporting from Afghanistan and say, "There is no way that can be true." Sometimes it was; about as true, for example, as our report of Steve Attwood's untimely finish.

He'd banged a deer all right, but the accident was much more severe than had first been thought. He was hospitalized with a concussion, broken ribs, and a fractured collarbone. The oddity of it was that it was a low-speed crash, principally because he was limping toward San Francisco with a dying wheel bearing, the same problem that nearly cost him the rally two years ago. He had retired shortly after Spokane, realizing that he would be time-barred at the next two checkpoints.

Sic transit gloria Bambi.

September 4 - Day 6 - Time on Their Hands

It shouldn't be that difficult, figuring out what Mickey is telling you. When the little hand points to 1800, you have to be at the checkpoint in Fort Lauderdale. If you're not there, you start losing five points per minute. When Mickey's little hand points to 1900 and your haggard face is not staring bleakly at checkpoint workers Dean (BMW Loco) Klein and Mike Kneebone, you have just been time-barred. So if you've ridden ten hours out of the straightest, quickest line from San Diego to grab that tantalizing 341 point bonus in Torrey, UT --- we won't even begin to discuss that you'll be sleeping out in the cold, raw mountains that night because the Torrey gas station, where you need a receipt, won't open until 0700 and the motel wouldn't open its doors to even Cheryl Tiegs after 2300 --- you're going to watch 295 of those points swirl down the storm sewer when you show up in Florida at 1859. Your bonus has gone straight to hell and you'll never get those ten hours of sleep back, at least not while it counts.

It could be worse. You could show up at 1901 and lose about eighteen hundred octobillion points, condemning you to the "also-ran" category and ensuring that e-mail will let people around the world know how you screwed the pooch.

Ask Ron Ayres, the hard-charger who was in second place in San Diego. Not only did he come within 120 seconds of being shut out in Florida after a 4,000 mile ride, he managed to lose all his receipts between San Diego and Abilene, TX because he didn't zip his tank bag. So much for those bonus claims. The way his ride is turning, he's probably fortunate that he wasn't arrested for littering.

Frank Taylor, third in San Diego, fared even worse. He tried to make Mount Rushmore, a journey that would have required his averaging almost 48 mph for 75 continuous hours, and came up short. Count him out of it. The only other rider in the field who tried for South Dakota was Ken Hatton. His bike perished in the attempt.

Swamp Thing Shrader is, predictably, orbiting somewhere between Mars and Asteroid B612. Knowing that he would never make Fort Lauderdale in this century, he concluded that he would cut his losses and head straight for the next checkpoint near Portland, ME. Better check those rules first, Thing. You still have to prove that you went to Fort Lauderdale, even if a week late, or they won't even look at your paperwork in Maine.

Also time-barred in Florida were Fritz and Phyllis Lang and Leonard Aron on the '46 Indian. They all insist that they will be attempting the northbound leg. Aron's bike continues to run, look, and sound better than he does.

Iron Butt horror stories are not usually balanced with serendipitous ones, but Chuck Pickett and Mary Sue Johnson took a fastball under the chin and came up smiling. Thinking they were running an hour behind schedule, they appeared at the Burger King checkpoint to discover that it opened at 1800, not 1700. I think it's Mickey's white gloves that throw people off. Maybe they need some sequins.

Surviving various catastrophes to move up several places were IBR veteran Eddie Metz, always a top-ten finisher, Marty Jones, Morris Kruemeke, and Eddie James. The latter overcame bashing his front wheel on curb, trying to domesticate a headlight bulb, and running out of gas for a delay of almost five hours.

He moved from eighth to fourth. With a few more disasters, Eddie could be in excellent shape by rally's end.

Motorcycle Consumer News' entry, the Honda Helix scooter with Ed Otto aboard, was swamped with curious admirers at the Florida control. Some 150 people had gathered to see the little engine that could. The machine currently leads, among others, a Gold Wing, Venture, ST1100, GSXR1100, and K75, bikes that have three to five times greater engine displacement than the diminutive putter.

At 1900 on the dot, the field headed for the Great Satan himself, Interstate 95, for the interminable ride north. Tick tick tick. It's the sound of time hurrying more rapidly and relentlessly than even Gary Eagan.

THE TOP TEN AT CHECKPOINT #3:

1	Gary Eagan	BMW K1100LT	9,263
2	Eddie Metz	Honda Gold Wing	9,117
3	Marty Jones	Kawasaki Voyager	9,108
4	Eddie James	BMW K1100RS	8,920
5	Morris Kruemeke	Honda Gold Wing	8,789
6	Boyd Young	BMW K100RS	8,557
7	Ron Ayres	BMW K1100LT	8,487
8	Rick Morrison	BMW R100RT	8,458
9	Eugene McKinney	BMW R1100RS	8,426
10	Ron Major	Honda ST1100	8,413

Others of note:

14	Jesse Pereboom	H-D FLHT	8,167 (top H-D)
20	Karol Patzer	BMW K75C	7,931 (top lady)

Checkpoint #4: Reynolds Sportcenter, Gorham, Maine (near Portland)

Open: 1800, Wednesday, September 6

Close: 2000

Contact Scott: 207-929-6641

September 5 - Day 7 - Throwing Dice

In 1987, when I was young and stupid, I spent about six months plotting the fastest way around the country, trying to hit all 48 states in under 11 days. A few days before my scheduled departure, a friend mentioned casually that I could knock off 300 miles by taking Road A instead of Road B somewhere out in Nebraska. Well, I thought, maybe it was the only mistake I would make. It wasn't. Somehow I got through the trip in one piece, however, wrote a long story about it, and decided that it was yet another entry on the increasingly long list of trips I never wanted to do again. But it did partially atone for all the

years I'd spent busting my butt on a bike to no good purpose whatsoever. I'd gotten into motorcycling when I was in college to make money and meet lots of women.

The Iron Butt boys and girls --- well, the average age of the starters was 46.3 --- are being tempted to do what I did, though the pressures on them are considerably higher. They have to make checkpoints. I didn't. And I averaged a slothful 750 miles a day. In Florida the bottom man still running was doing better than that, the median rider was averaging 921, and Roy Ayres, at the top, had been hitting 1,150 every day for nearly a week.

The temptation to bag each of the contiguous states comes in the form of a bonus in excess of 3,000 points. Rallymaster Steve Chalmers sprang it on them as the final surprise of the driver's meeting. More than a couple of eyebrows were raised. Months before the rally began, attorney Eric Faires suspected something like this was coming, which tells me that the O. J. prosecutors could have used his talents. Studying various computer mapping problems led him to believe that it would be out of his range.

But it might not be out of the question for some other riders. It has been known for some time that Morris Kruemcke, Eddie James, Gary Eagan, and Martin Hildebrandt (a German citizen who speaks better English than you do) have been eyeing the enormous bonus. Obviously, grabbing that brass ring can turn the rally standings upside down. In 1991 a mere six points separated the top three riders at the end.

Kruemcke can do it; he made no secret of his considering it soon as Chalmers announced it. Eagan obviously is capable, as his first place position at all three checkpoints to date conclusively proves. Eddie James, with his erstwhile riding companion, Lyle the (stuffed) Bear, could probably nail all 48 and some of the Canadian provinces, if he doesn't do something insane along the way. Even if Hildebrandt could make it, the party is over for him; he is currently mired in 36th place.

Former repeat Iron Butt contestants themselves, Chalmers and Kneebone know that the rally is not won by riding at triple-digit speeds for 23 hours a day. It is a battle between a complex series of bonus trade-offs and a fading capacity to analyze them intelligently. There is normally only one route that will produce a maximum leg score and yet provide at least a minimum amount of rest for the energy to continue. It has never been easy to calculate; this year it's worse.

In 49 B.C. Julius Caesar camped at the edge of the Rubicon river in northern Italy. On the other side, daring him to cross, were the disgusting Cisalpine Gaul, whose descendants would fail to win a single war of any consequence in the 20th century, though they did build cathedrals of some interest in Paris and Chartres. Caesar stared back at them, irritated.

His orders from the Roman Senate were unmistakable. Don't do it, they'd said. "Cogito, ergo sum," Caesar responded, which loosely translates to "I'll roll the dice." And he did. History does not record what the dice total was, but on the steps of the Louvre they're still talking about what happened next.

Is there a Caesar in the Iron Butt field? I wish I knew.

September 6 - Day 8 - Iron Men, Iron Butts, and Iron Bears

The BMW K1100RS aimed by the stuffed bear, Lyle, with Eddie James riding along for comic relief, jumped from fourth to first place at the Gorham, ME checkpoint today. This raunchy animal, tattered beyond human powers of description, moth-eaten and patched, and looking as if it is something that cat wouldn't even want to bring in the house, has ridden steadily from the start. The stuffed bear is having a good ride too. With an amazing 4,749 bonus points on the Florida-to-Maine leg, James shot past a faltering Gary Eagan, consistent Marty Jones, and wiry veteran, Eddie Metz. James' bonus total for the leg was second only to the staggering 5,000+ posted by Tom Loegering on an R1100GS.

James was reported to be looking as well as could be expected after more than a week of 1,000+ mile days. Instead of taking the bonus gold mines in West Virginia on his way north, he apparently opted for an easterly route that included passing over and through the Chesapeake Bay bridge-tunnel to Maryland's eastern shore. There he had a full night's sleep before pressing on to Maine. He said that he has given up the quest for the 3,000+ 48-state bonus.

In an article for Motorcyclist Magazine following the 1993 IBR, I wrote, "Before the [end of the event], there would be an atomized universal joint, seized valves, croaked carbs, oil seepage to challenge the Exxon Valdez, and two charging system failures that threatened to turn the motorcycle into an electric chair. AND THAT WAS JUST ONE BIKE!"

The rider on that Hell Hound was Tom Loegering, who, despite adversity that would prompt an angel swear like a sailor, had risen steadily to third place in the standings at the next-to-last checkpoint before a final mechanical failure knocked him back to seventh place overall. Many consider his ride to be the most remarkable story in Iron Butt history.

And he's doing it again, but this time on a bike that won't break. His BMW R1100GS, one of the world's most awesome dual-sport machines, took him to an absurd array of bonuses from Florida to Maine, including a bizarre excursion to the tip of Cape Cod. It is a dual-lane road that barely rises to the level of a highway, and had to have been packed with clotting mobs of Labor Day tourists. Yet he did it, and rocketed from 15th to 3rd place in the process.

Gary Eagan, the leader at the first three controls, went in the tank. He told checkpoint workers in Maine that he "thinks" he is having bike trouble. Now I can understand how a woman might think she is pregnant, but isn't bike trouble something that is pretty much a binary proposition? I mean, either there's trouble or there's not. Some insiders detect the scent of either a sandbag or a burnout in the air. Eagan missed Delaware and New Jersey on his ride north. In his continuing quest for the 48-state bonus, he said that he will backtrack to pick them up on his way to Salt Lake City for the rally's finish late Saturday afternoon. We'll see.

Winner of the longest-distance-travelled-to-the-start award, Germany's Martin Hildebrandt, arrived in Maine with 7.5 hours to spare and believes that he can indeed manage all 48 states. Late arrivals, but avoiding the dreaded miss, were Brad Hogue, Karol Patzer, Garve Nelson, Doug Stover, and the MacAteers. Taking a miss were Mary Sue Johnson, Chuck Pickett, and Rick Morrison, who sheepishly admitted that he'd gotten greedy, tried to grab some bonuses in New Jersey, became helplessly lost, and dove from the Top Ten to 39th position. Each of them is still running and hopeful of making the final run back to Salt Lake City.

And what of the hapless wanderer, Rick "Swamp Thing" Shrader, who continues to orbit in deep space? On the morning after the Maine control closed, rallymaster Steve Chalmers sent an e-mail to Mike Kneebone. "You'll love this. I just got a call from Jean Shrader and she said, 'Rick won't make the checkpoint in Maine.' When I explained to her that it was yesterday and not today, she seemed quite surprised." Thing, with another DNF under his Iron Butt belt, now is on his way to the finish at his customary speed of Warp 9, probably with his anti-Klingon shields fully deployed.

exan Morris Kruemcke did worse than Eagan on the leg, but his dive may not be telling the whole story. If he can make the 48-state bonus, as he has planned to do from the start, he could find himself in an enviable position, such as first, in another three days.

The Honda 250cc scooter, against all odds, persists in ferrying Ed Otto from point to point. As in each of the previous three legs, the Helix has gained ground in the standings, on this round beating such hot shoes as Eagan, Metz, and Kruemcke. They said it couldn't be done. Hell, _I_ said it couldn't be done.

Finally, on a day when Iron Men (and women) are not far from our thoughts, we should not forget an inspiration for all of the contestants. A simple "Thanks, Cal" will do, I think.

Standing	Maine Name	Bike	Position			Maine Total	
			WA	CA	FL	Points	Points
1	James, Eddie	BMW	11	8	4	4,749	13,669
2	Jones, Martin	Kawasaki	9	9	3	4,544	13,652
3	Loegering, Tom	BMW	19	15	15	5,109	13,263
4	Eagan, Gary	BMW	1	1	1	3,719	12,982
5	Ayres, Ron	BMW	3	2	7	4,479	12,966
6	Metz, Eddie	Honda	5	4	2	3,674	12,791
7	McKinney, Eugene	BMW	33	14	9	4,337	12,763
8	Pereboom, Jesse	H-D	30	13	14	4,579	12,746
9	Major, Ron	Honda	14	20	10	4,314	12,727
10	Eastwood, Roy	BMW	13	18	17	4,406	12,476
11	Brooks, Harold	Honda	22	21	18	4,390	12,401
12	Stockton, Michael	BMW	21	17	12	3,992	12,319
13	Faires, Eric	BMW	41	33	16	4,138	12,263
14	Kruemcke, Morris	Honda	6	7	5	3,436	12,225
15	Donovan, Kevin	Honda	34	24	19	4,130	12,123
16	Keating, Keith	BMW	17	46	24	4,314	12,046
17	Young, Boyd	BMW	10	12	6	3,462	12,019
18	Hogue, Bradley	Honda	12	11	11	3,454	11,852
19	Clemmons, Jerry	Honda	24	23	13	3,212	11,491
20	Haak, Horst	BMW	35	34	22	3,667	11,455
21	Rowland, Hank	BMW	36	35	21	3,667	11,455
22	Otto, Ed	Honda	43	36	26	3,751	11,442
23	Smith, Gregg	Yamaha	29	26	27	3,751	11,432
24	Culp, Jim	Honda	26	30	23	3,291	11,026
25	Fickess, Ed	Yamaha	16	28	30	3,273	10,852
26	Searcy, Dennis	H-D	42	27	25	3,040	10,765

27	Thommes, William	H-D	44	38	29	3,000	10,604
28	Murphy, Michael	Honda	37	29	31	3,013	10,578
29	Elberfeld, Charles	BMW	38	25	32	3,013	10,513
30	Patzer, Karol	BMW	28	31	20	2,453	10,384
31	Mello, Kevin	BMW	46	40	35	3,000	10,381
32	Hildebrandt, Martin	Honda	47	44	36	3,000	10,350
33	Kerslake, David	Suzuki	27	32	38	3,000	10,336
34	Ransbottom, Robert	BMW	50	41	40	3,000	10,156
35	Stover, Doug	Honda	45	37	34	2,343	9,761
36	Nelson, Garve	Honda	49	47	39	2,270	9,545
37	McAteer, Ron&Karen	Honda	48	45	37	1,930	9,280
38	Taylor, Frank	Yamaha	7	3	41	2,750	8,501
39	Morrison, Rick	BMW	15	10	8	0	8,458
40	Johnson, Mary Sue	H-D	25	16	28	0	7,657
41	Pickett, Chuck	Honda	32	19	33	0	7,432
	Shrader, Rick	BMW	2	5	out		
	Hatton, Ken	Kawasaki	8	6	out		
	Kellerman, Ardys	BMW	23	22	out		
	Aron, Leonard	Indian	39	39	out		
	Lang, Phyliss	H-D	51	42	out		
	Lang, Fritz	Honda	52	43	out		
	Fairchild, Robert	Honda	54	out			
	Losofsky, Steve	BMW	4	out			
	Gottfredson, Gary	BMW	18	out			
	Attwood, Steve	Guzzi	20	out			
	Loegering, T. Jr	BMW	31	out			
	Bush, Brian	BMW	40	out (film crew/only to Calif)			
	Honemann, Bob	BMW	53	out			
	Ciccarelli, Skip	Guzzi	out				

September 7 - Day 9 - Out of Sight, Out of Their Minds

Now the riders have disappeared again. Leaving the control in Gorham, Maine and bound for the finish line in Salt Lake City, they have scattered with the wind and are lost to us except for an occasional radar sighting. For all practical purposes they might as well be astronauts behind the moon. We can't hear them. We can't see them. For nine days they have been on the road in a contest that has taxed them close to their considerable limits. As exhaustion sets in, they are beginning to make rookie mistakes, jeopardizing their chances even to finish.

Iron Butt strategists, watching from the easy comfort of the sidelines, are at a loss to explain some of the bonus selections on the Florida to Maine leg. Tom Loegering, who bagged the most and vaulted into third place, bypassed a relatively easy but valuable bonus at the top of Maine in favor of some smaller bonuses that were not only harder to snare but worth less as well.

"I know I rode to some strange places when I ran the Butt in '91 and '93," rallymaster Steve Chalmers said, shaking his head in wonder. "But not like these guys are doing. Maybe one of these days I'll figure why they go where they go."

Chalmers believes that the seductive call of the massive 3,343 48-state bonus has led some of the top riders down the primrose path. In their fever to step into each of the contiguous states, they are riding right past bonuses that, in their totality, are worth more than they will obtain if --- and as each hour passes the "if" grows larger in geometric leaps --- they manage to touch each of the Lower 48.

Steady Eddie Metz went to one bonus in West Virginia but didn't do two others in the vicinity. Gary Eagan nailed 14 states on the road north, but inexplicably missed New Jersey and Delaware. Morris Kruemcke did the same thing. Are these riders, who have left most of the field in their wake, fading, or are they simply trying to lull their competitors into a false sense of security? No one knows.

As expected, the bonuses on the final leg dwarf those of earlier legs. If a rider could make Blaine, WA in the extreme northwest part of the country, nearly 2,500 points could be swept up. It would require averaging 60 mph for 71 hours with a provision for just 16 minutes of sleep along the way. Good luck on that one.

More realistic are the three alternate routes to the finish line. The southern route has a few decent bonuses, but the total mileage does not seem worth the effort. The northern route via Michigan, North Dakota, and Montana is somewhat more inviting, offering bailout provisions for anyone trying for Blaine.

But the key is in Colorado. There are six bonuses worth more than 2,200 points, five of them within hour's ride of Denver. The rider who goes there, I predict, will win the rally.

Unless something else happens.

The finish line:

Opens: 1700 hours MDT, September 9

Closes: 1900 hours MDT, September 9

Location: Quality Inn (airport)

Address: I-80, Exit 113, ten miles west of Salt Lake City

September 8 - Day 10 - Riding Home

Late Friday afternoon, with just 24 hours remaining in the rally, Mike Kneebone said, "They've been calling Steve Chalmers and me all day. I think they're all fried. They won't say it, but it's pretty clear: They think we're Mommy and Daddy and they want us to tell them to come home." In its final hours this edition of the Iron Butt Rally is reverting to form. In 1993 Steve Attwood walked away from the field, but his finish is not typical. Most rallies are lost, not won, in the closing hours by exotic mistakes that can be explained only by a psychiatrist. In the '91 IBR the difference between first and third place was six points. Ron Major was the beneficiary of crushing, unbelievable errors by two other riders mere hours from the rally's conclusion. It could be true in 1995.

One day Eddie James, who held a tiny 16 point lead over Marty Jones in Maine, will explain to his grandchildren why he decided to visit Reading, PA for 117 points. Of the 34 possible bonus sites on the Maine to Utah leg, none --- I repeat, none --- is worth fewer points. He'll tell them how much time he lost riding through the awful, mountainous state roads instead of steaming west on an interstate highway at flank speed toward Colorado where the real bonus locations were. He may mention that he left his camera, and the Polaroid photo that was proof of his visit to the worthless bonus site, behind. He'll tell them, but they won't believe it.

Morris Kruemcke wanted a Rhode Island bridge in the middle of nowhere. He must like bridges, because there sure wasn't any other reason to lose so much time for 291 points. Of course, for 10 points less he could have hooked the Rodeo Hall of Fame lying just 100 yards off I-25 in Colorado Springs. Having sacrificed so much for so long for the 48-state bonus, he admitted to Kneebone Friday morning in a telephone call that the hope for that has probably dried up like yesterday's tears. At that point Morris was several hours behind Ed Otto and the Honda scooter.

That remarkable duo was last heard from on Friday night. They were holed up in a motel in Grand Island, NE. Eddie had planned to get five hours of sleep and run the last 800 miles to Salt Lake in 14 hours. That is not a minor league ride for a touring bike. But for a 250cc scooter and its gutsy pilot, it is merely the conclusion of an impossible story, one that seems destined to come true. Eddie and the Helix have more fans around the country crossing their fingers than they ever could have dreamed possible.

Meanwhile, there is almost a complete blackout surrounding the rest of the front runners in Maine. Marty Jones, nipping at Eddie James' heels, was believed to have captured the mother lode of bonuses near Denver by mid-day Friday and may have headed to Yellowstone Park for more. If true, he is superbly positioned and could be the man to beat. He has run a flawless rally.

When the sun drops over the yardarm tomorrow afternoon, it will begin to sear the riders' eyes as they plow west. Mentally they will calculate the hours remaining, the miles yet to go, and their chances of sliding into the narrow time window that opens at 1700 MDT. They will return to the motel parking lot that they left 264 hours and so many, many miles ago.

They know the way home. They just have to get there. Somehow.

September 9 - Day 11 - On the Flight Deck, the Fat Lady Warms Up

It was a scene from a grade B movie. The grizzled admiral, Steve Chalmers, stood on the bridge of the aircraft carrier, which looked remarkably like a motel parking lot in Salt Lake City, wondering where his pilots were. Beside him was his adjutant, Mike Kneebone, trying unsuccessfully to hide his anxiety. He knew that some of the planes would not be returning from this mission. Gastonia, North Carolina Gold Wing pilot Jerry Clemmons was the first to touch down on the deck. He slowly unbolted himself from the bike, smiled wanly, and said, "I ride a lot. Back home everyone knows me for doing big miles. But these guys whipped my butt."

He took his evidence towel out, the shocking pink one with his rider number stenciled prominently on it. For 11 days he had hung the towel on signs and photographed it as proof of his having visited a bonus site. Now he simply wiped his face with it. For pilot Clemmons the ordeal was over.

Neurosurgeon Mike Murphy came in next. He had a photo of his towel draped over a police car in North Carolina. It was a joke. He'd run the entire event without having been stopped.

They began to appear with increasing frequency just after noon. Tennessee's Eric Faires, looking too relaxed after what he'd been through. Canada's Roy Eastwood, driven away from a gigantic bonus in northern Michigan by gale-force winds. Virginia's Harold Brooks, taking a straight shot from Maine. Mississippi's Eugene McKinney, rising from 33rd at the first checkpoint to 7th place in Maine.

At 12:30 the first of the true aces, Tom Loegering, popped out of the sky on his fearsome BMW dual-sport R1100GS, a dirt bike with an attitude. In heroic fashion he had just crushed another leg and instantly became the man to beat, only to be later disqualified for using a doctored identification towel in several photo-bonuses. One who could do just that, customs agent Marty Jones, showed up next. He too had grabbed a fistful of bonuses on the final leg. Would it be enough?

Keating, Thommes, and Fickess arrived. "I saw Gregg Smith doing push ups at a rest stop on the Ohio Turnpike," the latter said. "It was raining. I said, 'What the hell?' and just kept riding." Fickess had just passed a man who, before the day was out, would make Iron Butt history.

Karol Patzer, Frank Taylor, and Gregg Smith rolled in. For Patzer, it was her first attempt at the event and she completed it with style. For Taylor the rally was a let down from his second place finish in 1993. For the shy, self-effacing Smith, it was just another eleven days at the office. He is the only person ever to have completed four of these brutal events.

As the afternoon wore on, more arrived. Morrison, Rowland, Stockton, and Hogue. Charles Elberfeld, not even bothering to get off his bike, looked at Chalmers and said, "Now, once again, just how many laps is this thing?"

Donovan, Young, Haak, Metz, Ransbottom, and Searcy. Forty-five minutes before the checkpoint officially opened, Minnesota's Eddie James, the leader of the pack in Maine, rolled in. He had overcome initial difficulties on the leg, somehow summoned the power to recover, and had mined the bonus gold field near Denver. He had done all he could do. He knew it would be close.

"You won't believe what I saw in the Wasatch mountains," James laughed. "A half-mile ahead of me was what I thought was a Gold Wing, struggling to make the uphill grade. Trucks in first gear were passing the poor thing."

Stover, Kerslake, Culp, and long-ball hitter Morris Kruemcke came in at 1645. Ten minutes later another contender, Gary Eagan, who had led at the first three checkpoints, pulled up. He had averaged over 1,100 miles each day for eleven days. No one on this event would ride farther.

In the final minutes before the checkpoint opened and the lateness penalties began to accumulate, Jesse Pereboom on his Harley battlewagon hove into view. "They said it would burn up in the desert," he smiled. "It didn't." Ron Major, the '91 IBR winner, ducked in under the wire.

Mary Sue Johnson and Chuck Pickett, riding together as Siamese twins, were nine minutes late. "She is the best motorcyclist I've ever ridden with," Pickett said. "I can't wait to do this again."

At 1722, taking a few lateness points, the apparition that Eddie James had earlier seen in the mountains appeared. It hadn't been a Gold Wing. It wasn't even a real motorcycle. It was just Ed Otto and the Honda Helix. For days he had manhandled the scooter up thousands of hills. He'd been stopped by a trooper on an interstate for not being able to make the minimum speed due to headwinds. He had continued, and his arrival wrote "finis" to one of the Iron Butt's most incredible stories of perseverance in the face of unimaginable adversity.

But Kneebone's fears were justified. Not all would make it back before the two-hour time window slammed shut. Garve Nelson, at 72 the oldest entrant, called to say he would not arrive until the following morning. Ron and Karen MacAteer did the same. But their proof of arrival in Salt Lake City tomorrow will credit them with a finish on the Iron Butt rally. Not one motorcyclist in 50,000 can claim that achievement.

Final Standings

These men and women, no matter how low the number may be in the first column, deserve a round of applause:

Place	Name	AGE	Bike	Position				Total Points
				WA	CA	FL	ME	
1	Eagan, Gary	46	BMW K1100LT	1	1	1	4	19,922
2*	Jones, Martin	34	Kawasaki Voyager	9	9	3	2	19,875
3	Hildebrandt, Martin	29	Honda ST1100	47	44	36	32	17,982
4*	Major, Ron	54	Honda ST1100	14	20	10	9	17,369
5	McKinney, Eugene	52	BMW R1100RS		33	14	9	17,303
6	Ayres, Ron	52	BMW K1100LT	3	2	7	5	17,186
7	Stockton, Michael	40	BMW K1100LT		21	17	12	17,150
8*	Kruemcke, Morris	52	Honda Gold Wing	6	7	5	14	16,933
9	Donovan, Kevin	36	Honda Gold Wing	34	24	19	15	16,769
10	Young, Boyd	35	BMW K100RS	10	12	6	17	16,566
11*	Brooks, Harold	55	Honda Gold Wing	22	21	18	11	16,549
12*	Eastwood, Roy	51	BMW R1100RS	13	18	17	10	16,530
13*	Metz, Eddie	36	Honda Gold Wing	5	4	2	6	16,460
14*	Faires, Eric	35	BMW K1100LT	41	33	16	13	16,412
15	Pereboom, Jesse	26	H-D FLHT	30	13	14	8	16,241
16	Hogue, Bradley	47	Honda Gold Wing	12	11	11	18	15,806
17	Clemmons, Jerry	48	Honda Gold Wing	24	23	13	19	15,527
18	Keating, Keith	45	BMW R1100RS	17	46	24	16	15,519

19*	Smith, Gregg	48	Yamaha Venture	29	26	27	23	15,101
20	Haak, Horst	57	BMW K1100RS	35	34	22	20	14,951
21	Rowland, Hank	61	BMW K100RT	36	35	21	21	14,951
22*	Otto, Ed	43	Honda Helix	43	36	26	22	14,891
23*	Culp, Jim	44	Honda Gold Wing	26	30	23	24	14,695
24	Searcy, Dennis	47	H-D FLT	42	27	25	26	14,434
25	Murphy, Michael	57	Honda ST1100	37	29	31	28	14,247
26	Kerslake, David	31	Suzuki GSXR1100	27	32	38	33	14,167
27	Fickess, Ed	49	Yamaha Venture	16	28	30	25	14,152
28	Thommes, William	51	H-D FXRP	44	38	29	27	14,077
29	Elberfeld, Charles	43	BMW K75SA	38	25	32	29	14,009
30	Patzer, Karol	47	BMW K75C	28	31	20	30	14,003
31	Ransbottom, Robert	40	BMW K75RT	50	41	40	34	13,652
32	Stover, Doug	48	Honda Gold Wing	45	37	34	35	13,061
33	Taylor, Frank	56	Yamaha FJ1200	7	3	41	38	11,501
34	Morrison, Rick	40	BMW R100RT	15	10	8	39	11,458
35	Johnson, Mary Sue	57	H-D Dyna Wide Gli25	16	28	40		10,567
36	Pickett, Chuck	53	Honda Gold Wing	32	19	33	41	10,342
37	McAteer, Ron&Karen	62	Honda ST1100	48	45	37	37	9,280

Did Not Finish

	Mello, Kevin	29	BMW K100LT	46	40	35	31	10,381
	Shrader, Rick	49	BMW R1100RS	2	5	42	42	5,573
	Hatton, Ken	46	Kawasaki ZX11	8	6	43	43	5,484
	Kellerman, Ardys	63	BMW K75RT	23	22	44	44	4,817
	Aron, Leonard	49	Indian Chief	39	39	45	45	4,688
*	Lang, Phyliss	57	H-D FXR	51	42	46	46	4,643
*	Lang, Fritz	57	Honda Silver Win52	43	47	47		4,643
*	Fairchild, Robert	40	Honda Gold Wing	54	48	48	48	4,250
*	Losofsky, Steve	43	BMW K100RS	4	49	49	49	2,639
*	Gottfredson, Gary	58	BMW K100RS	18	50	50	50	2,251
*	Attwood, Steve	38	Motor Guzzi	20	51	51	51	2,242
	Loegering, Tom Jr	27	BMW K100RS	31	52	52	52	2,204
	Honemann, Bob	49	BMW R60/2	53	54	54	54	2,175
	Ciccarelli, Skip	47	Moto Guzzi	55	55	55	55	0