

2007 Iron Butt Rally, Day 2
Tuesday, August 21, 2007

There are over 30,000 members of the Iron Butt Association. Each has ridden farther in 24 hours than most people believe is humanly possible. IBA membership is quite an accomplishment, but today a number of riders are learning the difference between completing an Iron Butt ride and becoming a finisher of the Iron Butt Rally.

Their education began at about 7:00 p.m. on Sunday night when they started to learn the difference between planning a route to earn an IBA certificate and routing for the Iron Butt Rally. It's one thing to have an unlimited amount of time to plan your own route and to choose exactly what stops will document your ride. Whether the goal is riding a single SaddleSore 1,000 or multiple Bun Burner Golds, a carefully designed route is usually the difference between success and failure when attempting to ride a specific number of miles in a specific period of time.

But the Iron Butt Rally is not about who can ride the farthest in 11 days. It's about who can simultaneously ride smarter and harder. It's about figuring out the optimum combination of bonuses in addition to being able to do big miles. It requires the ability to follow the directions to each bonus location on the route. It usually requires being able to ride efficiently through urban areas and over twisty two lane roads in addition to being able to pound out the miles on the Interstate. It always requires clear thinking and reading comprehension; getting to a remote bonus is worth nothing if your brain is so fried when you get there that you can't follow the simple instructions for the required documentation.

Undoubtedly, many of the riders are interested in riding at least 11,000 miles during the 11 days of the Iron Butt Rally, but they can't focus on that objective if they hope to place well. If they focus on a route that will give them maximum mileage, they may not even be listed as a finisher. The winner of the Iron Butt Rally is not necessarily the rider with the most miles.

In just the first two days, many riders have also started learning about the importance of perseverance in the face of adversity. Some riders are already experiencing equipment failures; it's especially a problem for those riders who made last minute changes to their motorcycles and started the rally with unproven equipment. Riders from the Western U.S. are finding out that "riding in the rain" has a whole new meaning in the Eastern U.S.

Doug Chapman and Matt Watkins are two of many riders who were totally soaked on Monday night. When cranking up the heat in their motel room

wasn't getting their clothes dry, they tried the microwave oven. Matt accidentally burned his bonus listing while trying to dry it. Hopefully, there is something left besides Goose Bay. Later in the day, Watkins was photographed in the parking lot of Reynolds Motorsports trying to dry his boots by shoving them over the ends of the mufflers on his FJR.

At least Doug Chapman's alternator problem, which was mentioned in yesterday's report, is on the mend. He is now producing 14 volts at cruising speeds. George Zelenz suspects it was a problem with water intrusion in the connector between the stator and the rectifier, a not uncommon problem for FJRs that have been retrofitted with aftermarket stators. (George, a professional Polaroid photographer from Joshua Tree, California, had to drop out a couple of weeks before the rally due to an unfortunate tangle with a Chevrolet Blazer. He has been keeping in contact with some of the FJR riders during the rally and passing tidbits along to me. Thanks George!)

Lisa and Tobie Stevens called in after returning from the Grandfather Mountain swinging bridge bonus in North Carolina. The winds were gusting to 55 mph, but they completed the bonus and said they are having a great time.

Since scouting the bonus in March, the hours of operation have changed for the Devil's Millhopper sinkhole, northeast of Gainesville, Florida. Riders who showed up today (Tuesday) only had to take a photo of the chained gate rather than having to take the 250 steps down to the sinkhole. This proved to be a big advantage for some of the more elderly members of our senior citizen tour group, including George Barnes, who got there today.

K1200LT rider Jim Bain has a damaged front brake line and is hoping that Atlanta BMW can get it repaired first thing tomorrow morning. He's limping towards Atlanta as I write this on Tuesday night. Atlanta BMW owner and Iron Butt Rally veteran Bob Wooldridge is making arrangements to get him back on the road quickly tomorrow morning.

John Tomasovitch called in from Reynolds Motorsports to report that his saddlebag had fallen onto the muffler of his K1200RS and a lot of his equipment was burned to a crisp, including his only clear face shield and his \$1,500 satellite telephone. Fellow competitor Jack Shoalmire was gracious enough to give John his spare face shield, making it possible for him to safely continue his ride.

Tony DeLorenzo called to let me know that he was in Pennsylvania last night with other riders who had been to the Hoagy's Heroes bonus in Moundsville, West Virginia. That 5,099 point bonus was available from 6:00 p.m. to midnight last night. Tony says that "a number of riders"

are changing their plans to continue east because of the storms and are now heading south "to get dried out and warm up a little bit."

While some riders are feeling beat up, others are charged up. Brett Donahue gave me a call today from South Carolina while on his way to Sullivan's Island and then Tybee Island (which Lisa tells me is a sucker bonus). If he survives Tybee Island, he hopes to score additional bonuses on his way to Key West. Brett is doing fine and the Sportster is still running!

The first rider to use the call-in bonus was Bob Mueller, rider number 49. Here is the text of the call-in bonus (the actual phone number has been replaced with "xxx-xxxx"):

Call-In Bonus - no specific location 2,000 points Available
August 22, 2007

Call 916-xxx-xxxx and leave the following information:

Your name, your rider number, your location (city/town and state/province), the last bonus you scored, and the bonus you are headed for. While it is not required for this bonus, if you have a quick story, please leave it also!

Time: _____ Odometer: _____ Code: CI

Approved: _____

Bob dutifully reported his name, rider number, location, last bonus scored, and the next bonus on his route. He added that, "It hasn't stopped raining since yesterday; it's pretty fatiguing." I guess so. Had he been less fatigued he might have noticed that he was calling in a day early.

Also calling in a day early was Rob Nye. Rob called from Reynolds Motorsports in Gorham, Maine, where he was in the process of scoring a 5,300 point bonus that was available until 6:00 p.m. today. He says that, "Everything is going great."

Hopefully, Bob and Rob will both realize that they called in a day early and I will hear from them again tomorrow when I also hope to receive calls from 95 other riders.

The problems riders have experienced so far are actually typical. It's the exception for a rider to get through 11 intense days of bonus

hunting without something going wrong. Finding an excuse to quit will be easy. Finding the resolve to keep going will sometimes be tough. The Iron Butt spirit is about doing what it takes to finish. Far more people remember Manny Sameiro for his incredibly impressive last place finish in 1997 than remember most of the riders who finished in the top ten. (Manny crashed on route to the first checkpoint, bought another bike, put bandages over his extensive road rash, and continued on.) There is no better way to earn the respect of fellow riders than to be able to pick up the pieces after disaster strikes and still make it back to finish on time.

Tom Austin

August 21, 2007

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