

Jeff Earls has already gone to some out-of-the-way bonus locations on his ride to Gay, Michigan. Eric Jewell is also stretching his route to the limit, actually a bit beyond the limit. En route to Michigan, Eric gambled and lost on the 3,588 point bonus in Trent, South Dakota, missing the daylight window by just a few minutes.

In 37th place at the end of Leg 2, Australian Davo Jones has also bitten off Thunder Bay in an attempt to pull himself up in the standings. He called the Rallymaster just before 4 p.m. today to let her know he made it. Now he has to make it to Spokane. The most direct route is over 1,600 miles, but it will take a lot more miles to bag some additional bonuses along the way.

I couldn't be certain of her planned turnaround point from the information she left during her call-in, but Nancy Oswald has been scoring bonuses along the route to Gay, Michigan. She sounds alert and enthusiastic after her very strong Leg 2 performance and seems likely to be the top finishing woman.

Dave Biasotti is Still Rolling

Dave discovered that the oil leak from his new final drive was a missing O-ring for the ABS sensor. He stopped at the BMW dealer in Grand Junction, Colorado to get a new O-ring installed and to have his oil-soaked rear brake pads replaced. He has a lot of lost time to make up for, but he is determined to finish.

The Former Suzuki Rotary Riders are Struggling

Barry Bertram, now on a Ninja 250, and Alex Harper, now on his THIRD bike (a BMW GS), were 9,000 to 10,000 points below what they need to qualify as finishers at the end of Leg 2. The enthusiasm they were exhibiting back in Spartanburg is noticeably absent in the voice mail messages they are leaving during the call-in bonuses. They are learning the hard way that the Iron Butt Rally requires a well-prepared bike and a well-prepared rider.

A Second Team Has Been Formed

Bob St. George and Paul Allison called the Rallymaster to announce that they have formed a team and are headed for Saskatoon, Canada. I'm having trouble visualizing why Saskatoon makes sense for them. This team effort may end up disproving the old adage that two heads are better than one.

Call-In Bonus Performance is Improving

Despite the nine days on the road, the riders are getting better at the Call-In bonus. Only one rider is still mixing up a.m. and p.m. Mark Crane called at 9:43 a.m. yesterday, over two hours before the window opened at noon. Every other rider remembered to make the call, was in the time window, and gave all of the information required.

Driving Miss Daisy

The stress of the Rally is not only wearing on the riders, it's a strain on the staff also. Conditions have been especially difficult in the Rallymaster's minivan. Lisa takes an endless series of phone calls from riders as Steve Hobart and Colin Tanji handle the driving. When asked how the road trip is going, a source wishing to remain nameless says, "It's sort of like the movie 'Driving Miss Daisy,' except that, in the movie, Miss Daisy got nicer near the end."

Actually, the Rallymaster is maintaining a relatively good disposition considering the load she has been carrying during the weeks leading up to the Rally and the Rally itself. Bob Higdon may have selected all of the bonus locations, but Lisa was instrumental in assuring the accuracy of the waypoints, optimizing the point values, and coordinating the multitude of behind the scenes tasks required to make this an efficiently run Rally.

Tomorrow

There is a final call-in bonus tomorrow morning, which I will summarize in tomorrow's report.

Tom Austin

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