

The 2011 Iron Butt Rally – Day -3  
Friday, June 17, 2011

### The Riders are Gathering in Seattle

The Seattle Airport Marriott is beginning to fill up with motorcyclists gathering for the start of the 2011 Iron Butt Rally, “The World’s Toughest Motorcycle Competition.” Beginning at 10 a.m. on Monday, about 90 competitors will embark on an 11-day odyssey during which almost every waking moment will be spent riding a motorcycle to points currently unknown. Most will just be hoping to meet the minimum requirements to be listed as a finisher, which typically requires about a 9,000 mile ride. Others, who will likely average 1,000 miles per day or more, will be attempting to finish at or near the head of the pack.

2011 marks the 15<sup>th</sup> running of the Iron Butt Rally, which was first run in 1984 and is now run every other year. Since its early years, the Rally has evolved from a relatively simple test of endurance into a much more complex event in which a rider’s ability to select the optimum combination and sequence of “bonus” locations has become extremely important. Because the ability to think clearly is an asset, riders need to get adequate rest during the event. Points awarded for “rest bonuses” provide additional incentive for riders to get an adequate amount of sleep.

### Early Arrivals in the Hotel Parking Lot



## Iron Butt Rally Veterans in Seattle

From Left: Jeff Earls, George Barnes, John Harrison, Bill Shaw, Bob Higdon, John Ferber, Dennis Bitner, Chris Sakala, and Ira Agins. Harrison and Sakala are riding again this year.



### Pre-Rally Activities

Today, many riders are getting maintenance and tire changes on their motorcycles. As usual, some riders are making last minute modifications to their bikes or trying to fix problems associated with recent modifications that cropped up on their ride to Seattle.

Canadian Perry Karsten is one rider who is very glad to have arrived in Seattle early. Yesterday, he discovered that the final drive on his Yamaha FJR 1300 was leaking, indicating the potential for a catastrophic failure during the rally. After a call went out to the FJR Forum, no less than three fellow FJR owners from the local area offered to swap final drives with Perry. The swap has already been made and Perry is back in business.

Another victim of a pre-rally incident was Alex Harper. Alex, who managed to survive a tour of duty in Afghanistan as a U.S. Marine, reportedly sustained minor injuries earlier today when he fell off of a chair in a local salon while receiving a pedicure. This report was phoned in by another rider receiving a pedicure and the same salon, Nancy Oswald. If the report is not accurate, I'm hoping Alex will take it out on Nancy and not me. (Early Saturday Morning Update: Alex has recovered to the point that he was able to make it to the hotel bar last night. The minor scrape on his elbow is not exactly of Purple

Heart caliber. He also copped to getting a manicure as well as a pedicure and his nails did look very nice!)

Pre-rally activities for the Iron Butt Rally Staff include unpacking numerous boxes of items being distributed to the riders this weekend. Things to be distributed include hats, t-shirts, identification cards, USB thumb drives containing coordinates of locations that may be visited during the course of the rally, and various documents describing exactly how the rally is being run this year. There are also last-minute changes being made to a new computerized scoring program that is intended to dramatically reduce the amount of time required at each checkpoint and the finish.

### The Weekend Schedule

Tech Inspection – Beginning Saturday morning, the first step in the rider check-in process is “Tech Inspection.” Before their motorcycle is inspected, each rider is required to show that they have a current driver’s license, vehicle registration, and proof of insurance. The vehicle identification number and license plate on the motorcycle are then checked for consistency with the paperwork. Each rider is also required to show that they have a helmet that meets U.S. DOT or equivalent specifications.

The amount of time required to finish Tech Inspection depends how extensively a motorcycle has been modified. Most of the motorcycles in this event are equipped with auxiliary fuel tanks to extend the distance that can be ridden between fuel stops. When dimension checks of the auxiliary tanks indicate that the total system capacity is close to the 11.5 gallon limit, a fairly time-consuming measurement of the auxiliary tank capacity is required. The process involves the use of hydrometers to measure fuel density and a laboratory grade electronic scale that is used to measure the weight of fuel required to fill the system. The measured capacity of the auxiliary tank combined with the manufacturer’s specification of the volume of the stock tank must not exceed the limit.

Motorcycles with aftermarket exhaust systems also have to pass a sound test during technical inspection. Since 1999, the Iron Butt Rally has required all participants to use relatively quiet exhaust systems that not only reduce rider fatigue but leave a good impression with the hotels used for the start, finish, and the checkpoints.

Another element of technical inspection is the odometer check. Each rider is required to ride a specific route after zeroing the trip odometer on their bike. The mileage recorded by the odometer is compared to the known actual distance of the route to create an odometer correction factor that will be used to determine exactly how far each rider traveled during the 11-day rally.

Additional Check-In Procedures – Following the completion of the Tech Inspection process in the hotel parking lot, riders have a number of additional steps to complete inside the hotel. One of these steps involves verifying that each rider is starting with an empty memory card in their digital camera, a correct date and time setting, and the proper resolution setting (640x480). There is also a brief videotaped interview of each rider.



Mandatory Rookie Meeting – At 4:00 p.m. on Saturday afternoon, each rider who has not previously completed an Iron Butt Rally is required to attend a presentation by Jeff Earls, 2<sup>nd</sup> place finisher in 2009, during which the rookies are expecting to be able to glean pearls of wisdom.

Sunday Morning Tech Inspection – Late arriving riders and riders who were unable to pass on Saturday will have an opportunity to go through the Tech Inspection process on Sunday morning. Some riders will undoubtedly still be working to resolve last minute problems with their extensively modified motorcycles.

Riders Meeting – At 4:00 p.m. on Sunday afternoon, all riders will be required to participate in a meeting during which the most important rules will be reviewed in detail. More importantly, riders will be provided details regarding which of the formal written rules are being suspended for this rally.

Pre-Rally Banquet – 5:30 p.m. on Sunday evening is the pre-rally banquet. After the dinner, the rider packets for the first leg of the rally will be distributed and the theme of the rally will be explained. Speculation is running rampant through the Marriott in anticipation of the moment all is revealed.

#### Rally Staff and Volunteers

Throughout the weekend, Rallymaster Lisa Landry will be assisted by about two dozen Iron Butt Rally staff and volunteers. Like a scene from the old television program “Charlie’s Angels,” Landry is sometimes heard talking on the phone to Michael Kneebone when he occasionally checks on whether everything is running smoothly.

Chief Technical Inspector Dale “Warchild” Wilson will be running technical inspection on Saturday and Sunday. Assisting Dale this year will be 1999 Iron Butt Rally winner George Barnes, IBR veterans Terry Lahman, Tobie and Lisa Stevens, and “Turbo” Dave Hicks.

During the rider check-in process, Bill Shaw and Dave McQueeney will be in charge of verifying that each rider has their digital camera set up properly. At each checkpoint, Bill and Dave will be collecting rider’s memory cards, transferring the images to a thumb drive, and checking to see that each image has been recorded with the proper resolution.

Assisting with other elements of the rider check-in process will be Lynda Lahman, Bill Watt and Susan Murphy, Jim and Donna Fousek, Roger and Karen Van Santan, Verne and Bonnie Hauck, Ira Agins, Dennis Bitner, Cori Phelps, Maura Gatensby, John Ferber, and Tim Bowman. As usual, Ed Otto will be providing assistance with any insurance issues.

Photographing the activities this weekend will be Steve Hobart. A more difficult task for Steve begins next Friday at Checkpoint Number 1 when he will be responsible for running the scoring process. However, the biggest challenge Hobart faces during the next two weeks is maintaining a sense of personal dignity and composure while traveling with Lisa Landry to each checkpoint and the finish.

## Checkpoints

At this point, riders have no idea where they will be going on Monday morning. They know that the first checkpoint is Cheektowaga, New York (a suburb of Buffalo), but its only 2,588 miles to Cheektowaga and they have until 8 p.m. on Friday, June 24<sup>th</sup> to get there. Accounting for the time zone change, that's 103 hours after the start. That's twice as much time as most of these riders need. There is time available to consider bonus locations all over North America. No one hoping to score enough points to be listed as a finisher will be heading directly to New York. Many riders are expecting to spend a lot of time in Canada.

There is a mandatory layover in Cheektowaga that will give riders the opportunity to start the second leg well-rested. If they get in a little early and finish with scoring by 8 p.m., they will have 8 hours of down time before the bonus listing for leg 2 is handed out at 4 a.m. on Saturday morning.

By 5 p.m. on Monday, June 27<sup>th</sup>, the riders need to be in Jacksonville, Florida. Total time from when the bonus listings are handed out in Cheektowaga to the opening of the Jacksonville checkpoint is 61 hours. The most direct route from Cheektowaga to Jacksonville is 1,053 miles, requiring an average speed of just 17 mph. As with leg 1, there will be lots of time available for side trips to far flung bonus locations.

As at the first checkpoint, there is a mandatory layover in Jacksonville, but it's shorter. The bonus listings for the final leg are handed out at 10 p.m, 5 hours after the opening of the checkpoint window. To avoid penalty points at the finish, the riders need to be in Ontario, California by 10 a.m. on Friday, July 1<sup>st</sup>, which is 87 hours later.

The most direct route from Jacksonville to the finish is 2,362 miles. For riders who can maintain a 1,000 mile per day pace, there is time available for over 1,200 miles of side trips to bonus locations.

## Daily Reports

As during the last two Iron Butt Rallies and the Iron Butt 5000, IBR staff will be keeping track of riders' progress between checkpoints with the use of "call-in bonuses." Riders will periodically be leaving voicemail on the telephone system at my office in Sacramento, California. 24 separate telephone lines are serving a dedicated call-in number. Once on each leg, riders will be given the opportunity to earn bonus points just by calling the number and leaving a brief message telling us where they are, where they have recently been, and where the next bonus is that they are heading for. As soon as they hang up, each rider's voicemail message will be converted to a ".wav" file and attached to an e-mail automatically sent to me and the Rallymaster. The time stamp on the e-mail message will indicate exactly when the call was completed.

We will also be monitoring the progress of some riders through the trail of "breadcrumbs" they are leaving with their "Spot" satellite tracking systems.

Most of tomorrow's report will be dedicated to identifying the entrants and what model motorcycles they will be riding. There will also be a few highlights of the Tech Inspection process.

On Sunday, I'll provide some insight into what transpires at the private Riders' Meeting and report on the activities at the evening banquet when the bonus listings are handed out. Unlike in previous Iron Butt Rallies, the bonus locations for the entire rally will be disclosed at the banquet.

Tom Austin

June 17, 2011

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