

IBR -2 – There’s an IBR Code, But Rules Ain’t Guidelines, Matey

As expected, Saturday has been a flurry of activity. The morning started with the 3:45 AM call for help from Robert Bolger stranded 27 miles east of Rally Central with a blown trailer tire. Why he called Lisa Landry (at 3:45 AM) is still a mystery. At 3:45 AM, Lisa may not have been the most sympathetic choice. If Robert is lucky, Lisa will forget about the interruption to her beauty sleep, at least until she proofs this post before upload. (Sorry, Robert.)

Such requests for help on the LDRider forum are usually met with immediate multiple replies and this was no different. Within 3 hours the issue was resolved. It didn’t hurt that Robert announced he was in the parking lot of a Dairy Queen. Mike Kneebone and Ed Otto reportedly drove out to supervise. Bob Lilley later eloquently posted about 2013 finisher Eric Vaillancourt’s generous offer to loan Bob his Super Tenere if Sandia BMW could convince the fuel pump in his R1200GSA to not think the 8.7 gallon tank was empty at 7 gallons and sputter to a halt. Such is this community of LDriders.

The staging area had filled in overnight with 72% of the expected field present when Registration opened at 8 AM, with all but 8 riders by 12 riders completing check in as of 5 PM. The lot is now a sea of Wings, Beemers, FJRs, auxiliary lights, fuel cells and Cordura. While the final tally of motorcycles by make and model won’t be known until tomorrow afternoon, the stroll poll revealed more Honda Gold Wings than any other model, followed by R1200GS and Yamaha FJRs. So far, Harley Davidsons out represent BMW’s luxury GTL1600 and K1200LT combined. We’ll see when the dust settles.

Riders are equally diverse, with a field of 46 returning veterans and 42 rookies, although it misleading to call some of these rookies as such.

“Rookie” Will Barclay is a serious motorcyclist, with serious riding experience. He’s traversed several continents on two wheels and lived to tell about it. In the US, he won the Hoka Hey Motorcycle Challenge, twice, on his Harley Davidson CVO Ultra Classic. What is unknown at present is how well Barclay will see the whole board when the pieces are revealed Sunday night. LD riders around the world may criticize his choice of weapon, but short memories forget how Brett Donahue muscled his H-D Sportster to 3rd Place in 2007. At some level, it’s more about the rider than the machine.

Rookie Troy Martin included an impassioned plea in his application, chronicling his obsession with long distance riding since drinking the Kool-Aid in 2010. He has the credentials you would expect from a rookie stepping up to the IBR – numerous IBA certified rides, a few shorter rallies like Heart of Texas, Poison and Hoagy’s Heroes Six Shooters. He claims to have read everything, every ride report, the IBR rules, everything. He must have missed the many, many stories of riders failing to follow instructions (and how we love to write about it). After receiving his Tech Checklist with explicit instructions from Lisa Landry to NOT write on the first page, he promptly went outside and proceeded to fill it out. It’s *possible* that he was just trying be efficient and help the tech staff with paperwork, but I don’t know. We’ll see if his comprehension improves or if he offers to score himself at the first checkpoint.



Troy Martin begs for forgiveness for trying to do Warchild's job.

Rookie Paul Tong has similar riding pedigree, with numerous IBA certified rides and a few shorter rallies, including the 2014 Heart of Texas 2-up with his 9 year old daughter. For rookies like Martin and Tong, the challenge can be overcoming the overwhelming pressure of an extended multiday rally. Of course, Paul is currently a police officer, after serving 13 years as a US Marine with multiple deployments. That kind of stress may be what he eats for breakfast.

Rookie Drew Dill may be sweating bullets the next 12 days. His 2012 H-D CVO Road Glide snapped a front pushrod in Conway Arkansas on his ride out from Bradenton Florida. A new top end later, he has to be wondering if they got all those tiny metal pieces out of the oil. (Of course if he wasn't, he is now...) That's a heavy load to deal with before the Start, especially with his shiny new K1600GT sitting the garage at home.

And, while some of the rooks may seem a little nervous in the shadow of the Big Dogs, Dave McQueeney reminded me last evening that 8 of the 16 IBRs to date have been won by rookies. (That also reminded me that I miscounted yesterday when I referred to this being the 18th IBR when it is clearly the 17th.)

The Big Dog kennel of returning IBR veterans is impressive as well. Ten are former Top 10 finishers; Eric Bray, Craig Brooks, Eric Jewell, Bob Lilley, Tom Loftus, Josh Mountain, Greg Rice, Chris Sakala, Kirsten Talken-Spaulding and Jim Owen the 2009 winner. No one will be surprised if this WAS the podium at the End. Neither would anyone be surprised if Daniel Roth or Perry Karsten were on that stage as well, after each secured Top Twenty finishes in both 2011 and 2013. Jon Good & Ande Bergman could also continue their 2-up climb up the rankings.

2007 finisher Mike Langford is reported to have buttoned up the Tupperware on his Triumph Trophy and left Chula Vista for Rally Central. He should arrive in the morning. Sam Liles finished 55th in 2013, yet rode more miles than the 27 other finishers before him. At the last minute today, he talked his lovely wife, Sydney, into joining him this year riding 2-up in their K1600GTL. I don't know if it will help his routing, but they sure look good.



Sam Liles is about to trick his wife, Sydney into joining him 2-up

Lynda & Terry Lahman finished 2-up in 2007. Then again 2-up in 2009. Lynda & Terry are now Lynda Lahman (BMW C650GT scooter) and Terry Lahman (R1200GSA). They have declared themselves a team for IBR purposes. As such, they must *each* ride to each bonus location or *both* will lose 50% of the points for that leg. Individual screw-ups (lost flag, missed Call-In, lost receipt, etc.) will impact the affected rider alone. The “team” can divorce at the end of a leg and continue on solo, which makes one wonder what Lynda is thinking...Could there be a repeat of that other famous couple, the Langs, blissfully riding together in 1997 until Fritz said Left and Phyllis said Right. Phyllis finished. Fritz did not.

On the other side of the table are the many, many volunteers and staff it takes to put on a production at this level. An Iron Butt Rally doesn't start with some freckle faced “Hey, Gang. Let's put on show” rally cry (although it is kind of amusing to imagine Mickey Rooney having played Mike Kneebone in **Hard Miles – The Beginning**). It takes high levels of commitment, organization and energy, coupled with the ability to Execute. But after years of sweating every painstaking detail since resurrecting the event in 1991, Kneebone may have finally found the right combination of leadership and skill needed to run things. Over the next two weeks, riders will come to love, hate, despise, worship, fear, respect and ultimately appreciate Lisa Landry and Tom Austin in what should prove to be one of the most challenging and successful IBRs to date. Lisa and Tom are supported by a cast of many, each contributing time and talent for a sport of passion.

Dave McQueeney has spent the entire last month proofreading ALL of the rider materials and verifying bonus details. He will also work with each rider during Registration to ensure correct digital camera settings, in addition to downloading all rider bonus images at each checkpoint for the scorers. A Big Dog himself, it's not like he's never done this before. Dave has been working the Command Center since 1993. He is a steely eyed missile man.

Jim and Donna Fousek have been unpacking boxes of material and stuffing rider packs to make the check in process go more smoothly. The Fouseks are a fixture at IBR Rally Central, having worked

each event since Mike Kneebone took over the reigns. Ira Agins has been meticulously going over each rider's information for the master database in addition to reconciling each rider's odometer test. He will be the first person riders look for at checkpoints to stop the clock. By the close of Registration tomorrow, Ira will have the final run down. Steve Hobart and 2007 Tobie Stevens continue to snap images around Rally Central, uploading to the Iron Butt Facebook page and here.

While Bob Higdon surrendered his keyboard for the daily reports this year, he was back at the QWERTY today furiously working through the spot tracking software with Joe Denton and Tom Austin in advance of the checkpoint use. It's fun to watch old dogs learn new tricks. (*"In my day we didn't use Spot or GPS clocks, Austin. When the church bell rang, we just looked around the room to see who was there and they were the Finishers."*)



"Put the X in the center square, Bob. Right there! In the center!"

The only sight funnier had to be Bob explaining spot tracking to Al Holtsberry. At 79, Al is attempting to be the oldest rider to finish an IBR. Al's no slouch. He's finished 3 IBRs; 1986, 2001 (Gold Medal) and 2005. Yeah, he's THAT Al Holtsberry. His IBA number is 27. It will be an incredible accomplishment for him to finish. But, just leaving the lot on Monday he will surpass Garve Nelson as the oldest rider to Start an IBR. Here's hoping he survives Ed Otto's insurance discussion.



Al Holtsberry thinking these instructions sure have changed.

There are Rules and then there are Guidelines. Shortly after being drawn for the IBR, riders received the 25 page book of ***IBR Rules, Tips and Information***. 25 pages! Evolved over many years of refinement, the IBR rules outline the requirements for riders, motorcycles, necessary equipment, specifications pertaining to auxiliary or aftermarket equipment, along with tips and guidelines to help set expectations.

The rules are straightforward. Wear appropriate rider gear, carry proper documentation, don't dis the rally staff, and so forth. No need to delve into all 25 pages here as there will no doubt be ample opportunity over the next two weeks to discuss particular items in detail, usually when someone has stepped way out of bounds. For now, let's turn our attention to the rules pertaining to paperwork, motorcycles and accessory equipment. These rules are particularly well-defined, some with detailed information including charts, graphs and specific measurements. The rules are not subject to discretion or situational ethics ("I didn't stop to help a rider because I didn't *know* it was an emergency..."). Yet at every IBR Registration, some rider having had 17 months to prepare, arrives with a documentation or technical issue that could have easily been resolved up to 17 months in advance, longer if they had studied prior rallies which they presumably had. Almost all are resolved so the rider can still compete, albeit with some frantic repairs, heightened stress and some expense. In the case of Quek Cheng Chye in 2003, the expense was more than just "some" as he was ended up purchasing an entire exhaust system for his BMW K1200RS when his aftermarket pipes exceeded the allowed noise level. While several riders still had to take 2-3 attempts at proper documentation before getting it right, there have been surprisingly few tech issues this year.

Dale Wilson, Chief Technical Inspector. “Warchild” placed 5th in the 1997 IBR before retiring from competitive riding in order to throw stones at riders. He is a fixture in the FJR community. Yamaha’s Motorcycle Development executive, Kunihiko Miwa, is rumored to troll Warchild’s posts for needed FJR improvements on future models. He is a barrel of a man, as serious as the bullet he resembles. When Honda coined the “Stupid Hurts” campaign in 1998, Warchild was who they envisioned wearing their T-shirt. My guess is that riders have finally learned that arguing with Dale at tech check-in is like watching a pig roll around in the mud; eventually you realize the pig enjoys it.

Jeremy Loveall came close to having a bad day. Finishes in the last two IBRs on his R1200RTP were easier than proving the fuel capacity on his FJR with auxiliary fuel cell. After preliminary measurements suggested it would be close, Tom Austin (former executive officer of CARB), administered the official fuel capacity test, a combination of specific gravity determination, weights and volumetric calculation, concluding Loveall’s total fuel capacity was 0.15 gallon under the limit. Crisis averted.

Will Barclay wasn’t as lucky yet. The auxiliary fuel cell on his H-D failed to contain proper baffling and venting as required under the rules. But the fixes aren’t complicated, certainly easier than making repairs in the jungle like he’s done before. Just like a hundred times before, a plea for help and help arrives. Terry Lehman may have enough foam to fix the baffling, leaving just a minor vent fix. Hopefully, he can make the necessary adjustments in time to clear Tech on Sunday.



Will Barclay tries to convince Warchild and Jeff Earls that the fuel cell was stock

New this year, the fuel log bonus has been eliminated. Long a staple in the bonus realm, fuel log and receipt snafus have been the undoing of many a promising IBR ride. Ron Ayres clawed his way back to a 5th place finish in 1995 after losing his receipts in the desert. Others weren't so lucky. The fuel log requirement was later limited to just riders with greater than 7 gallon OEM tanks, or any auxiliary fuel cell. With the advent of more readily accessible satellite spot tracking technology to prove the rider's route, fuel logs became less essential with riders in 2013 having the option of providing IBR access to their spot tracking in lieu of the fuel log. For 2015, riders who provide access to their spot tracking will receive considerable bonus points, enough so that not providing the access would all but eliminate that rider's chances of placing well. Rookies Jim Orr, Kit Chunhawong, and Neil Hejny were so concerned about what to do if the tracking unit fails, they have installed back up trackers. I wonder if the Navy's testing of the GPS system based in Nevada will cause any issues. The FAA thought it might and issued warnings of potentially unreliable or unavailable GPS signal throughout the southwestern United States through Tuesday. Pilots were advised to test backup navigation systems and notify the FAA when air traffic control assistance is needed. IBR riders will probably call Lisa.

Tonight, all will (try to) relax and socialize among friends. For those who checked in today, Sunday morning won't need to come quite that early, maybe even time for a mani/pedi. For the few remaining riders yet to complete that process, tomorrow will be a bit more harried clearing tech inspection before final meetings for all. Back in the Command Center, Tom is adding the finishing touches to a diabolically masterful route while Lisa arranges for lockable storage for 80 or so laptops possibly to be left here for the duration.

Finally, a correction from yesterday's report: Derek Dickson and Josh Mountain reminded me that the 48 state theme was in the 2011 IBR, not 2013. The theme for 2013 was Planes, Train & Automobiles. I guess when the Number 1 & 2 riders call you out on something, it warrants noting. Thanks, Guys.

Chris Cimino

2015 Scribe

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