

Day 7 – What Could Possibly Go Wrong....

81 riders are currently circling the Meadowview Conference Resort & Convention Center in Kingsport, Tennessee, like aircraft on approach. Within the next 4-6 hours, they will land, taxi, stop the clock and get scored, followed next by food, a hot shower and sleep. At 6 AM Monday they will receive the third and final bonus point value list to begin the last leg in the 2015 Iron Butt Rally. In the meantime, it's well organized chaos in Meadowview as the clock counts down. 20 rally staff and volunteers traveled from Albuquerque to Kingsport, and are joined by another dozen or so additional volunteers. To adequately explain the logistical challenges of managing an event of this magnitude with any level of justice escapes me. Prior to this year, I had only seen the process from the participant's viewpoint, which had improved each time (although my performance did not). Even as a guest at prior events to discuss rider interaction with the media, I can honestly say that was not prepared for the level of organization needed and professionally exhibited, for this event. Every individual involved, and there are dozens upon dozens, remains singularly focused on the experience of the participants. In the end, the Iron Butt Rally is about the riders, and the backroom staff and volunteers never seem to lose sight of that. All kidding aside, this team rocks. (I just thought I'd say this now in case I get voted out of the van.)

"Life moves pretty fast. If you don't stop and look around for a while, you could miss it" - Ferris Bueller

Leg Two is rapidly winding down but has not been without some breakage.

Margaret Peart decided this morning to pack it in and withdraw. She conceded that she should not have started Leg 2 and was heading back to Albuquerque. Her challenges were starting to show as early as yesterday when she dialed in for her Call In bonus. She was perfectly pleasant and recited all of the required information to get the points. Unfortunately, she called four hours *before* the window for the bonus opened. She is a tremendous rider with a great deal of heart. We expect to see her in future IBR in the "Unfinished Business" Class.

Perry Karsten was having trouble with his J&M headset. Smoke signals were sent into the sky. In less than two hours, a new headset was sourced to be delivered and installed at the checkpoint.

Chris McGaffin lost his primary Spot tracking unit and a water jug after hitting a wheel swallowing pothole just north of Memphis. His tracking signal went dark at 6:28 PM on July 4. Ever-prepared, Chris is carrying a backup Spot unit and will not lose points for this issue. Let's hope his luck holds out. Sources report he's been leaking oil possibly from the final drive on the high mileage FJR1300. Rick Martin is on hand with a spare unit if needed.

Hopeless Class Jack Cheasty continues his swim against the tide aboard his 20 year old BMW R100GSPD although that is being generous considering the bike's design dates back to 1980. With his navigation issues resolved (Jack purchased paper maps at checkpoint one), Jack can now add the cost of a tow and new battery to his list. Jack has had his share of setbacks but somehow he is still in this. Meanwhile, fellow Hopeless class rider Kurt Worden continues to push his diminutive MSF training bike along as rally staff cheers him on.

Alex Ciurczak reported in his Call In message that he was having some vibration issues with his R1200RT. "I'm hoping it's a tank of bad gas," he said. "It's getting a little better. But I might just be getting used to it." We will see when he gets here.

Leg Two Call In bonuses were, again, well done. Only two riders failed to make the calls, although this is being researched to confirm prior to scoring. Some notable comments from the messages:

Drew Dill: "There's a huge street festival and they have all the roads blocked coming to the George Rogers Clark and I had to walk about a half a mile to get that one. But, life is good. Loving the 2015 IBR. Thanks for all your support back there at IBA central." His Big Blue Beast HD CVO is going through oil every 1200 miles. He got beat up by bedbugs at a "no-tell motel." He was considering dropping out until he found a note of encouragement left on his seat. Head back in the game, he's moving forward. Such is Day 7 in the Iron Butt Rally.

Lynda Lahman reported that LD rider Tim Henderson met them at the Herbert Hoover National Historic Site. He'd been watching the spot tracker and tried to time it when a rider would be there to offer ice water. David Walls had a similar experience with a civilian who rode alongside him outside Indianapolis and held up a paper sign to "ride hard, ride safe."

Michiel Kerkhof called in from a Shell station in Columbus, Georgia, from a lent phone stating his phone has not worked all day. Judging from the girls giggling in the background, Michiel's accent was a hit.

Mike Langford: "Left Ft. Scott Arkansas and it got dark and it was really really great going across the Ozark Mountains. Neat twisty roads. It would have been just wonderful if it would have been daylight, and if it hadn't been foggy and it hadn't been raining and if hadn't been outright scary. Anyway, it was fun to get that over with. Bye."

Perry Karsten: "Today was an absolutely terrible day weather wise. 6 hours of torrential downpour rain. Was actually some of the most standing water I've ever ridden through. Probably a boat would have been better than a bike today. During one of the torrential downpours I couldn't see a thing. There was tons of water on the road and spraying up my legs. Then an armadillo decided to basically walk out into the road in Zion. Obviously I couldn't do anything drastic because of the weather. So I went over to the side of it and went over the poor guy's little tail. But unfortunately my left foot hit him. All I can say is that I understand where they get the name from. That sucker was *hard*. It was like hitting a rock. The foot is a little sore but it's getting better as the day goes on. At first I thought I had might have broke it. It was a pretty hard hit. But it's feeling pretty good now so no worries."

Bob Bowman: "I have been bouncing around the Illinois/Indiana border where time zones are a thing just indescribable. You're in Central, you're in Eastern, You're in central, you're in eastern and you went in a straight line. I thought you should have people leave their tips of the day. So here's my tip: Last night I went to my house east of Kansas City, slept in my own bed and had supper with my wife. Everybody told me not to do that. I went anyway. My tip is don't go home during the Iron butt Rally."

Greg & Pat Blewett: "By the way, we were 5 minutes from home and we did not stop." (*That's the difference between a rookie and a vet, Bob.*)

Greg & Wini Farmer: "Having a good time"

Danny Dossman: "Like everybody else, I've been riding in the rain most of the day, had the same mechanical issue with my shift linkage but I was able to somewhat patch it together. And I'm just having a lovely day in the Iron Butt Rally and I hope to see you soon in Kingsport Tennessee." But there was something in his voice that concerns me. More psychotic than his usual cheery. When he said "I hope to see you soon" it was in the creepy, eerie way that wants me to see if Marriott can set up a metal detector at the front door.

Al Holtsberry: "I wonder if there's good fireworks in Atlanta." Now *that's* grace under pressure.

Fireworks were going off in the background during Tom Loftus' call. He said "No, I am not getting shot."

Josh Mountain: "Natchez Trace was an awful lot of fun. You know, sunset, getting dark, then the fog came in and then the rain started and then the heavy rain, then cars decided that when it was too foggy they would just come onto the other lane and push me onto the grass, which was kind of fun. So, ah, yeah, time for sleep. Good night."

Paul Tong (on the Natchez Trail): "Kinda wet down here in the south."

Mark Crane: "The theme for today is, is, actually, um, shit. I had to deal with the shitty drivers in New Mexico when I was leaving there. Then there was the feedlots in Amarillo. Then there was tweaker hell in Frisch. That was amazing. And the almost ghost towns going through there. The rally does what it's always going to do. It takes you places you'd never go otherwise and places you have been. So, yeah, I would have never gone to some of those dying towns in Texas and how dusty and rundown they were. But up in Minnesota it was just like the inverse, like they knew they were having a 4th of July party so they told everybody "Ok. Clean up. We have people coming." Literally, the whole place just looked like they took a vacuum cleaner, it was just crazy. Anyway, it was really nice day of riding today and such a stark contrast the previous day in look and feel. It was very startling."

Garry Springgay (calling from Vincennes, Indiana): "Everything is going well. I'm ready for about a 5-6 hour sleep. I'm about to take my rest bonus and see you all tomorrow night."

Jack Cheasty: "Next bonus is...let's see...that's a good question....I'm kidding myself. Good ride today. Glad the sleep bonus is coming up. I could use it."

George Doughty: "if you want a real laugh, check my tracking. I went round and round looking for the visitor's center at Natchez (National Historical Park)." I did. It's funny.

15 riders left multiple messages, what Steve McCaa calls "insurance calls." Larry Meeker called in three times from Leiper's Fork, Tennessee, each time giving the essential information, but calling back with a "Let's try this again," and "OK, one more time I hope it get it right." Eric Jewell called in from Marks, Mississippi and then started laughing so hard he had to call back a second time. (Trust me when I say that Mark Crane won't find this particularly humorous.)

Matt Wise: "I made a routing mistake today and rode about 4 hours in the rain for 190 some odd points. Other than that, everything else is going great today."

I don't know how to fully describe John Good's and Ande Bergman's call in message. It was 1:53 minutes. Same sing/song answering machine routine as Leg One, but with a twist. This time they serenaded me with verses from "Saturday in the Park", "Born in the USA" and revised rendition of

“Eastbound and Down” from *Smokey and the Bandit*. I have a few days to figure it out, but I will find a way to play it at the banquet. Now we know what the pillion does when she’s bored...

Robert Bolger reported riding in terrible rain for 4 hours until he realized he was riding under the same supercell. So he stopped to let it pass. He’s soaked. His boots are full of water. But, he’s doing okay.

Marc Beaulac (from Jasper, Texas): “Dang it’s humid.

Will Barclay (from Waco, Texas): “Man, it’s hot.”

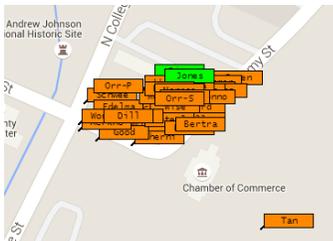
As the second checkpoint is about to open, all eyes are on the Andrew Jackson National Historic Site in Greeneville, Tennessee. The group photo will be taken at 5:30. It’s raining a monsoon at the bonus site. The road into the bonus is partially flooded with a downed tree. Afterwards, riders will land in Meadowview for scoring. Below is the bonus description along with the screen on Matt Wise’s GPS and the cluster of orange dots assembled.

ANJO
Andrew Johnson National Historic Site
101 North College Street
Greeneville, TN
Coordinates: 36.1627 -82.8296
July 5, 5:15 pm



The Andrew Johnson National Historic Site and National Cemetery interprets the life and legacy of the 17th President as he worked to reunify a nation torn by civil war following President Lincoln’s assassination.

Park in the nearby visitor parking lot and have your Rider Number recorded by IBR staff not later than 5:15 pm in front of the site. Be in the group picture taken by IBR staff at 5:30 pm with the other riders present. Your flag must be visible in the photo.



I will post the Leg Two scoring results in the morning.

Chris Cimino

Iron Butt Scribe

Iron Butt Rally©