

IBR 2017 July 04 Day 09 Independence, Issues, Assistance

Happy July 4th to everyone! Three years ago, on this date, my sons and I were hauling our dual sport bikes to Colorado. We had planned a two week camping and fly fishing adventure around the southwestern quadrant of the state. Darkness engulfed the plains as we drove west. Between the flashing red lights of windmill farms, we began to notice bright flashes of light against the sky. As some of the flashes occurred closer to us, my sons were excited to realize they were fireworks. For the next 100 miles or more, we were treated to a view of the fireworks celebrations from every little town along I-80 as far as we could see. That is just one of the many great memories from that trip.

Here's hoping our riders get to enjoy something similar as they are crossing this great country this evening. Speaking of fireworks, or at least fire, a large portion of the western United States seems to be ablaze. With about half the field on that side of the country, we are hoping they can avoid the smoke and inevitable road closures. None of the call-in bonus comments have mentioned any issues, so no news is good news on that front.

Based on some of the call-in messages, there are a lot of memories being made on Leg 3. It is typical for IBR riders to hail from the Type A personality group. However, within that category, there are very different personalities participating in this rally. Some of those unique traits show up in the call-in bonus messages.

Riders must report their name, rider number, current location, last bonus collected, and next planned bonus. They have the ability to play back their message to confirm all of the info was recorded. They are encouraged to make more than one call and listen to the playback to make sure the call was received with all of the info clearly stated. A successful call allows them to collect the bonus points, if it is made within the defined window of time and properly claimed on the bonus sheet.

Many riders are 'all business' on every call. They speak strongly and clearly, only stating the required information, using military style names for the bonus code letters to avoid mistakes, and then ending the call. Dan Roth, Kurt Worden, Lyle Monroe, Patrick Ford, Lonnie McCoy, Ken Meese, Bob Bowman, Kit Chunhawong, William Buskell, Paul Partin, Jeff Wilson, and John Cooper are some of the riders who tend to fall into this category.

Mike Hutsal is usually very talkative, but with a lot of points to make up after recovering from his Leg 1 and 2 gastric distress, he sounded like he was all business on the first Leg 3 call-in. Ian McPhee sounded good, but called a third time because he was not sure that he left his planned definition. Robert Bolger was also atypically all business on his call.

Billy Connacher was in Utah and reworking his planned route. Dace 'Raven' Park was in 102F heat in Nebraska and still reported having "So much fun!"

Allen Hatcher was excited, having just completed running the Tail-of-the-Dragon, Highway 129 through Deal's Gap, on the NC-TN border in the Smokey Mountains. He was likely fortunate to be able to experience the 318 curves in 11 miles on a weekday instead of the cluster it becomes on weekends.

Ken Aman had to interrupt his call to look up the last bonus he had collected and said he would call back. This is not unusual at this stage of the rally.

Gerhard Memmen-Krueger, who has completed something like eight IBRs, was in California and sounded alert. Not much info available, but Phillip Weston may be having some bike issues in the area of Orleans, California. Sjef Vanderaa was also collecting bonuses in California.

Mark Crane hid under an overpass to escape an intense lightning storm. In yesterday's Sidebar, your scribe mentioned vets trying to "catch lightning in a bottle" in their subsequent IBRs. Mark sounded like he got a little too close to doing so, literally.

Rookie Tina Venters called from altitude in Colorado. Although sounding slightly breathless when describing breathtaking scenery, she says she is having a "fantastic" rally.

Robert Koeber was moving and collecting bonuses, which is a good sign after dealing with fuel pump issues on the last leg.

Some riders go above and beyond to entertain the rally staff. Wolfe Bonham apparently dropped his Johnny Depp pirate act from Leg 2 and upon entering California morphed into a surfer dude. He was "chillin" after seeing a "rad tortoise". He spelled the LBB bonus as "Long Board Bogus" and was "bummed to miss such rad waves". He signed off with "Hang ten dudes!"

Danny Dossman used the time spent getting a tire change to re-route and reports "Life is good!"

Michael Boge sounded good, but a little frustrated. In addition to celebrating the 4th, they celebrated their 50th fuel tank fill up while lamenting not heading Kneebone's advice to add a fuel cell to their sidecar prior to the rally. He also celebrated finding a tire to fit the sidecar and reported plans to get it changed on Wednesday. The rally staff might suggest that Michael relax and delegate the call-in task to 12 year old Laura. After all, phones are what almost-teens *do*, right? Anavel has not chimed in on the calls either. Come on Team Boge, how about a trio freestyle rap with a Harley backbeat for us on the next call-in?

Maura Gatensby seemed somewhat pleased that some blisters she had been dealing with had become calluses. No further details were provided ... and if Lisa asked, it was not reported to me.

Connie Gabrick reported returning to the same bonus where she experienced the bike tip over on Leg 1. She reported being rested and had a plan for collecting that bonus again this leg again without any more issues.

Greg Lenentine was in Georgia and considering two direction options based on the offers he had received for replacing his blown rear shock.

Martin Cover was in Colorado and also considering changing his route for the next bonus. He called back and thanked Jeff Earls for putting a bonus close to his daughter and grandkids, which allowed him to have a 4th of July breakfast with them.

Chris Comley had a mechanical issue on his Sportster in Arizona. Friends came to the rescue with tools and parts. He is expected to be back in the rally.

Bill Cumbie let us know his Zumo 595 stopped working. He also had an incident with law enforcement in Dallas just after leaving Checkpoint 2. Seems he was exiting a fast food establishment, just as four uniformed officers were entering the vestibule. The last officer was a female, so he held the door for her. As he turned and stepped outside, on the clock and primed to get back on the road, he immediately ran head first into a sign post. The front of his helmet contacting the post must have made a really loud noise, as the lady officer turned around and asked if he was OK. He told her "This is why everyone should have a helmet on all the time." ATGATT, baby!

Mike Heitkamp let us know he planned to re-route at his upcoming rest bonus. Subsequent reports indicate he is in Maine and has a large hole in a tire and multiple plugs are not stopping the leak. There are several offers of assistance already.

Kevin Blevins noted that it was 110F, but he did not complain about it.

Nancy Lefcourt called in to report a beautiful day, riding wonderful roads, no complaints, and experiencing a great ride in Wyoming. The next call was to report that her BMW had failed. She suspects the driveshaft, based on where the smoke was emanating from and the melted plastic.

A search for a bike with a low seat height, near enough her location to be of use, was conducted. But the last word we have is that Nancy has withdrawn and is on the way to the finish in a rental car. A tough break and not the way anyone wants to end their rally.

When will an IBR Scribe get to cover a rally without having to report on a BMW failing and dashing it's owners hopes, dreams, and two year investment of time and money in the adventure of a lifetime? That was a rhetorical question. What the crap, BMW?

How about more BMW issues? Chris Ross also called from Mountain View, Wyoming. However, he observed that there were no mountains in view. He also informed us the transmission on his BMW R1200GSA will not go into neutral and is very difficult to shift in the lower 3 gears. Based on that, he is routing to avoid as many large cities as possible. That sounds good, but he will likely need the lower three gears to get through the construction in Minneapolis to get back to the finish.

Greg Farmer is also in Wyoming and would like a "do-over" on his route because "there are no points up here". It is not unusual for riders to second guess their routes at this point in a long leg. We expect Greg to feel better after a rest bonus and there is plenty of time to massage his route.

Sam and Sydney Liles called from Alabama in July and thought it necessary to say it was hot and humid. At least they still have a functional BMW (fingers crossed). You may recall their unbelievable 2015 trials and tribulations with a failure on their new BMW K1600. They do need to find a rear tire soon, as the tread on their Pilot PR4 is down to the "second wear bars". Does that mean you can see what color the cords are inside the tire? Yes, they have offers of tire assistance along their route.

Bill Cumbie called back from Colorado, to tell us he was over the 'pole incident' and having a good day. We liked his quote, "Life does not suck."

Greg Fizer was short and to the point. "Yes, it's hot."

Kirsten Talken-Spaulding dropped her bike twice near a bonus and could not pick it up. Activated SPOT for assistance. She walked back uphill to last bonus to wait for help. Search party walked downhill from the bike and could not find her. She kept us up all night, but survived and is OK and still in the rally. Did I mention she is a NPS Ranger, marathon runner, and tough as nails?

One rider reported following Team Almond Joy for a short time. While Paul is driving, you might expect Peter to be routing. We can only speculate that they are very happy with the route they are following, because Paul was observed doing the arm motions for the Y-M-C-A song from the pillion instead of dancing his fingers across the GPS. Being in the top 5 in the IBR and having a blast. Priceless.

Team Wintererbes route for Leg 3 was hinged on picking up a string of points in NYC. Jim and Lisa arrived at night and had no trouble getting around. Great timing on their part, as being a few hours later would have likely found them battling closed roads and Independence day traffic at a standstill in Manhattan. To say they were ecstatic with the success of their plan would be an understatement.

Unfortunately, Troy Martin may be experiencing IBR déjà-vu. He is OK, but his bike is reported to be totaled. He was looking for a replacement bike "just to go straight to the finish". He crashed twice on Leg 1 of the 2015 rally. Until today, he was having a great ride this year. I have seen pictures of the bike, but the resolution is not high enough to include in the report. Hard to see how a rider walks away from a bike in that condition.

Late reports indicate that Troy may have gotten a loaner bike to ride to the finish. Hopefully his guardian angel is not too fatigued from saving his butt today to follow him to the finish.

Chris Purney added that he is having an "awesome time" in Colorado.

Two up riders Peter Ihlo and Conny Schneiter report their rear brake is "off" and phone is not working. They were happy that someone "rented them a phone" for the call-in bonus. Late reports indicate they may have had an incident resulting in a swollen foot, but we have not confirmed any details.

Steve Diederich took his 8 hour rest bonus at his home. Some riders that have done that in past rallies have not returned to the rally. He managed to tear himself away and is feeling good riding at night to avoid the California heat and traffic.

Five riders put in massive rides to the far northeast and appeared about to board a ferry for some much needed rest. They will need to be fresh when they get off the boat. The ferry schedule is tight and it will be a long ride back to the finish.

I have posted about a lot of riders calling Lisa for non-emergency assistance over the last few days. A couple of grizzled IBR vets posted on the IBDone list today, lamenting the seemingly high numbers of

riders calling for assistance. I am paraphrasing, but the gist of the discussion was that 'back in the day', riders were more self sufficient and were capable of handling problems without cell phones and armies of Facebook peeps. That may be the case. I have those "get off my lawn" old man moments on occasion too.

But the flip side of that coin is how great the IBA long distance community is and the willingness and generosity of those tuning in to follow the ups and downs of a few riders chasing their dreams around the country. Loaning bikes, changing tires, finding bolts or sockets, bringing cold water to a tired rider, or just leaving a note of encouragement on the saddle of a nasty, bug encrusted bike in a motel parking lot. This is truly a great group of folks and we are all better for being associated with them.

Photos of staff enroute to the finish:



Dennis Bitner, IBR Staff



John Ferber, IBR Staff



IBR staff running the left lane north towards the promise of cooler temperatures and lower humidity.

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Photos by Ira Agins