

2011 Iron Butt Rally, Day -1
Sunday, June 19, 2011

48 States or Bust!

When the rider packets for the first leg of the 2011 Iron Butt Rally were opened at the pre-rally banquet, everyone's attention was directed to the following statement:

“To be classified as a finisher of the 2011 Iron Butt Rally, a rider must visit all 48 contiguous states and reach each checkpoint and the finish before the close of the specified time window.”

As described in more detail below, finishing positions will be based on how much more each rider is able to do. But first, a brief summary of events leading up to the banquet.

“Has anybody seen Eric Jewell yet?”

It's a common question at the start of a lot of rallies that is a source of anxiety for rally staff. But Eric has learned that the check-in process is a breeze when you are one of the last riders to show up, you have all of your paperwork in order, and you haven't been making last-minute changes to your bike. A somewhat greater concern with Eric is that the same question is often being asked during the check-in window at the finish. In his first Iron Butt Rally (1999), Eric finished within minutes of being time barred but still had enough points for 5th place. Perhaps his most impressive ride of all time was in the 2001 Iron Butt Rally when he was so late to the finish that he ended up in 84th place after being one of the few riders to make it all of the way to Prudhoe Bay, Alaska and back to the start in Alabama.

A few other late arriving riders had to get through tech inspection today, and several riders had to have their fuel cells inspected after last-minute modifications.

Riders' Meeting

The Riders' Meeting started today at 4:00 p.m.

Chief Technical Inspector Dale “Warchild” Wilson started the meeting by explaining the procedure for the start tomorrow morning, during which odometer readings will be recorded and rider identification tags will be punched. Riders were advised that “you need to be at your motorcycle at 8:30 a.m.” Anyone who shows up late won't be cleared to leave until after the others have left at 10 a.m.

As the custodian of the Iron Butt Rally rules, I spent quite a bit of time reviewing the most significant changes in the rules since the 2009 Rally and reviewing a few rules that some riders have had difficulty with in the past. The most significant rule change was summarized as follows:

Fuel Purchase Records – Unlike in previous rallies, you don't need to keep a fuel log. Gas receipts may often be used to document bonuses, but they are not absolutely

required. Because there is no fuel log required, there is also no prohibition against refueling your motorcycle between the time you check-in at a checkpoint and the time you start the next leg.

I also described several changes to the written rules regarding penalty points that apply to this rally. Because there is no fuel log required, penalties that used to be proportional to the fuel log bonus points are now proportional to the value of the Call-In bonus for the leg. For example, if the value of the Call-In bonus on Leg 1 turns out to be 250 points, one missing item on a receipt (e.g., the date) will be a penalty of 10% of the Call-In bonus points, which is 25 points.

One of the other points I stressed was the importance of being courteous to volunteers and other riders. More importantly, I stressed the fact that riders would be subject to disqualification for “unsafe activities such as excessive speed, reckless motorcycle operation, riding while fatigued or otherwise impaired, the use of stimulants to maintain alertness, or any other activity that results in riders exceeding their personal limits.”

Banquet

As riders, guests, and staff were finishing their dinners, Lisa Landry welcomed everyone to the 15th running of the Iron Butt Rally. Lisa acknowledged staff and volunteers who have been efficiently getting the riders through the check-in process all weekend and then introduced Bill Watt asking him to tell the audience about the bonus locations he has been working on.

Watt, who most of the riders assumed was the architect of the 2011 rally, proceeded to tell the riders about how much fun he has had identifying hundreds of remote bonus locations all over North America, including deep into Canada. He said that he has come up with a sequence of high point bonuses that requires multiple border crossings and ferry rides that he thought would provide a real challenge.

The look on the riders' faces was priceless as they assumed they were about to embark on a nightmare of a rally. Kneebone then stepped to podium, grabbed Watt's rally plans, wadded them up and threw them on the floor. He said he didn't think the riders were quite ready for that type of a rally so he has asked Tom Austin to come up with something simpler.

I began my description of this year's rally by explaining that my objective was for a change of pace; to provide an experience for riders more like the kind of rallies that drew me into the sport in the 1990s. To go back to a time when a computer spreadsheet wasn't required to pick a good route. To go back to a time when you didn't have to worry about how long it was going to take at a Canadian border crossing or whether a freaking ferry was running on time. To go back to a time when you didn't have to fret about traveling over roads best suited for knobby tires in order to score big points. To go back to a time when you could ignore a multitude of piddling bonuses that were just a little bit out of the way; to instead be able to point your motorcycle in the direction of a fewer number of

high-point bonuses and grind out the miles. To go back to a time when George Barnes could read the bonus listing and smile instead of wince.

Michael Kneebone Tosses Out Bill Watt's Plans



This and all other photos courtesy of Steve Hobart.

I said that I expected route planning to still make a difference in determining who finishes first and who finishes tenth, but I didn't think very many of riders would need to stay up half of the night trying to figure out where to go. Finally, I said that when this rally is over, riders would have an easy time explaining to friends and family where they went and what they accomplished.

After laying out that background, I said "So let's open the rider packets and see how long it takes you to figure out where you are going to be riding for the next 11-days."

The Rider Packets

Although many have been expecting ever increasing complexity with each new Iron Butt Rally, there has been a dramatic reversal for 2011. Instead of the 42 pages that were required to describe the Leg 1 bonus listings in 2009, the Leg 1 bonuses for this year's rally are presented on 4 much smaller pages. Most riders had a good idea of where they are heading within about 10 minutes of opening the packet.

The simplicity of the 2011 Rally is described in the following sentence from the description of the Rally that the riders received tonight:

“To be classified as a finisher of the 2011 Iron Butt Rally, a rider must visit all 48 contiguous states and reach each checkpoint and the finish before the close of the specified time window.”

In addition to this basic requirement, which is worth 4,800 points, riders can earn 4,800 bonus points by also completing the “U.S.A. Four Corners Tour” during the course of the Rally. This involves documenting visits to Blaine, Washington; Madawaska, Maine; Key West, Florida; and San Ysidro, California.

Another 4,800 points are available for documenting a visit to Alaska. And since each rally usually has a bonus equivalent to documenting a visit to the moon, yet another 4,800 points are available for the capital of Alaska: Juneau.

Bonus points are also available for documenting visits to other state capitals, with the point value for each capital being generally related to the degree of difficulty. Although any state can be documented on any leg, only certain state capitols are available on each leg. However, the capitals available on each leg are logical; they are the capitals of the states on the base route for the leg. For example, the capital of the State of Washington will be available on Leg 1, the capital of the State of Maine will be available on Leg 2, and so on.

On leg 1, the point values for capitals in the 48 contiguous states range from a low of 25 points for capitals that are essentially right on the base route to 1,000 points for Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, a capital that requires taking a lengthy side trip just before heading for Checkpoint 1.

Finally, as in previous rallies, bonus points are available for a Call-In bonus on each leg and two separate rest bonuses.

To make it even simpler, a screen shot showing one possible route touching all 48 states was included in the rider packet. The route shown is 8,325 miles, according to Delorme Street Atlas, which was the program used to generate the screen shot.

The rider packet also explains that all riders who visit all 48 states and complete the Four Corners Tour will be Gold Medal finishers. A detailed route for the Four Corners option wasn't provided; however, riders were informed that the minimum riding distance to visit all 48 states and complete the Four Corners Tour is approximately 10,500 miles.

Although there are no “daylight hours only” bonuses, there is one subtlety in the bonus instructions regarding documenting visits to state capitals. Between sunrise and sunset, the documentation required for each state capitol bonus is a photograph of the capitol building. After sunset, photographs may still be used if the capitol is illuminated and is clearly visible in the image. However, a receipt from the city in which the capitol building is located may be used in lieu of a photograph between the hours of sunset and sunrise. The computer-generated receipt must have the date, time, city, and state. If a

receipt is used in lieu of a photograph, the value of the bonus will be reduced by 10 points.

The Basic 48-State Route



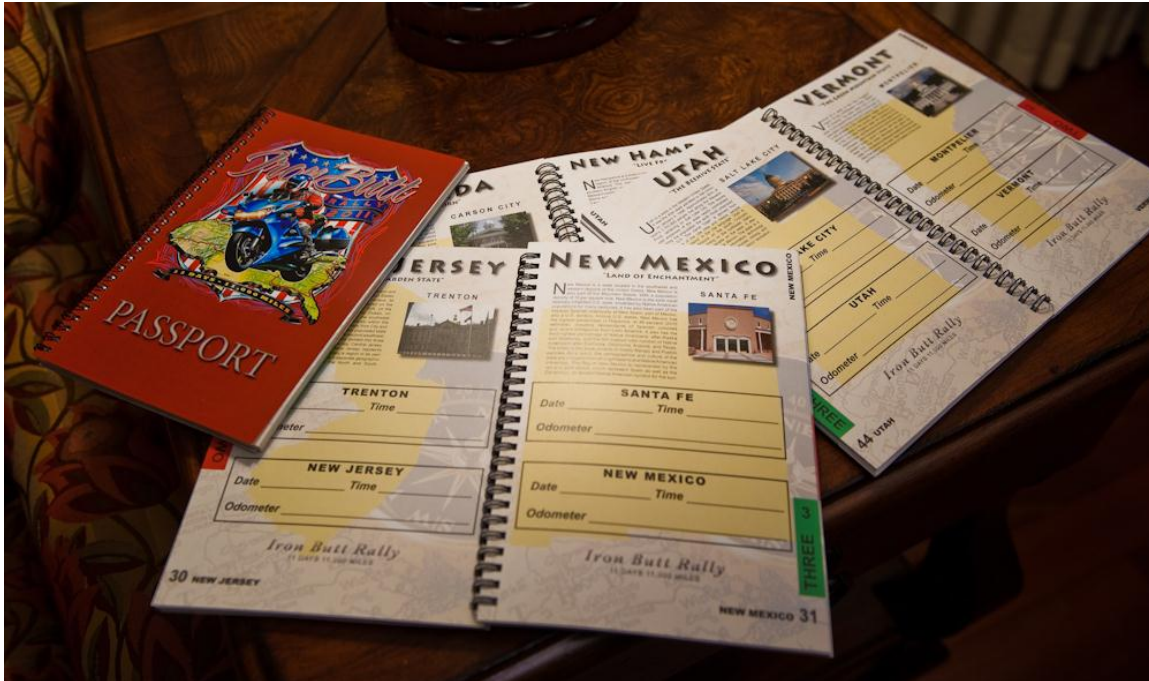
Rally Passport Book

In previous rallies, riders have been required document their visits to bonus locations on a list of bonuses printed on sheets of 8 ½ by 11 paper stapled together at one corner. Not this year. This year each rider has been given a full-color, spiral bound “Passport Book” that contains a separate page for each state. Printed on a single page is a photograph of the state capitol, the state “nickname” (e.g., Arizona is “The Grand Canyon State”) and short paragraph describing the state. There are also two boxes where the rider can fill in the date, time, and odometer reading when they visited the state or its capital.

At the back of the Passport book are separate pages for documenting the Four Corners bonus, the Call-In bonuses, and the Rest bonuses.

This booklet is a work of art that was developed by Steve Hobart. It will surely be a cherished keepsake for riders.

The "Passport" Book



Planning for Tomorrow

The lack of uncertainty about what is coming up during the next 11 days is having an obvious effect. Spirits were extraordinarily high at the end of banquet. Every rookie rider should show up at the starting line tomorrow morning confident that they are going to be a finisher. Even those going for the Four Corners bonus and other big points will recognize that retreating to the base route is always an option.

In contrast, at the Big Dog end of the spectrum, there will be a recognition that this isn't going to be a walk in the park for anyone shooting for the top ten. Many of the bonus locations are a long damn way from the base route and it's going to require a mighty big ride to score them.

Some monster rides were apparent from what we saw on the computer screens of several riders hard at work in their rooms shortly after the end of the banquet. Several riders and IBR staff have commented that they expect the top riders to log over 13,000 miles by the time they reach the finish in Ontario, California on July 1st.

Eric Jewell Working on Leg 1



Chris Sakala Working on Leg 1



I'll post a report covering the start by Monday afternoon.

Tom Austin

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