

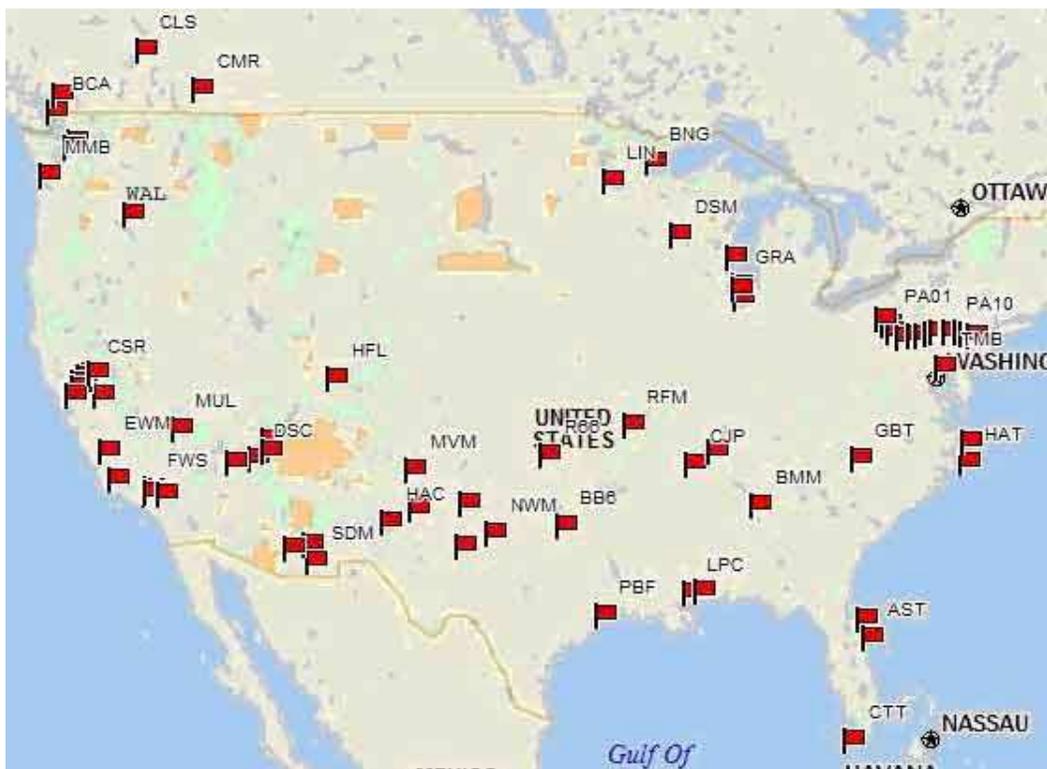
The 2013 Iron Butt Rally: Day 10

Iron Butt Intervention

You want to have a chance at winning this rally? Ride 45 mph every hour for 11 days. I'm having a sympathetic reaction to this, sort of the way the right eye starts to lose it after the left eye grows dim. I try to maintain a typing pace of 45 wph --- words per hour --- and it takes me 22 hours to get a report out. The people I write about are getting more sleep than I do.

I went to bed at about 5:30 this morning. Ninety minutes later I woke up, staggered downstairs, and saw this note from my friend Chris on the computer keyboard: "You lost 5,000 points for missing the sleep bonus. I'll tell you where your bike keys are when you tell me you've had six hours of sleep. And drink some water." I'm running out of Diet Pepsi Cherry soda and dry roasted peanuts and she's hiding my keys? She wouldn't do that. But she did.

Here is what keeps me awake. It has kept some riders awake too, I'll bet:



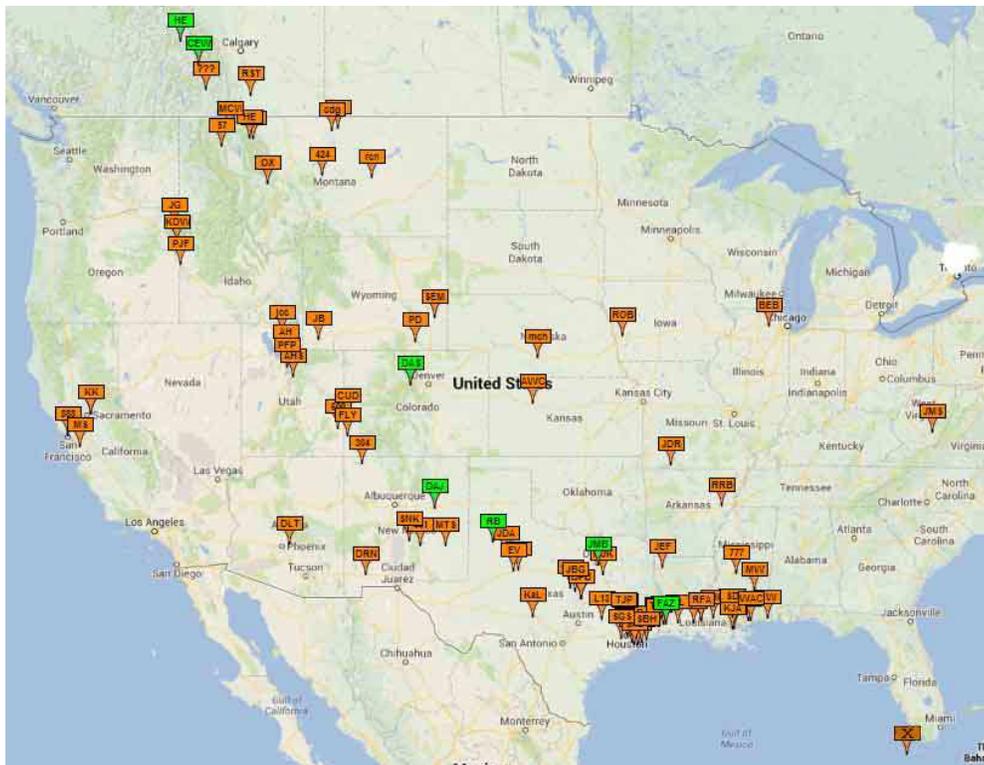
Leg 3 Bonus Locations

To make this readable I've cut out the unreachable bonuses in the Yukon and Anchorage, Alaska. You'll notice two things right away: 1) Key West is back in play; and 2) there's not a lot going on in the northwest and nothing at all in the northern Great Plains. At times like this it's always best to remember Sherlock Holmes' advice: Once you have eliminated the impossible, whatever remains,

however improbable, must be true. If you cannot win the rally by going to the northwest or Key West, then Mr. Holmes would suggest that you take the southwest route. We'll worry about bonus values in the next step of the process.

Can we eliminate Key West? The conch railway train's value on the first leg was 3,000 points. On this leg it has quadrupled in value. Combine that with the Galveston ferry (7,503), two bonuses in New Orleans (1,713), two anytime bonuses in the Daytona, Florida, area (1,900), a must do at Kitty Hawk (7,551) plus another 1,005 points in Cape Hatteras nearby, and a final daylight bonus in Washington, D.C. (755). That's 32,427 points, if you can make D.C. on time.

Does that route lock out the competition? Yes, if you've got a big lead going into the final leg. That would be Eric Jewell and Matt Watkins. Jewell went out early in the leg in a low-speed accident. That leaves Matt. If he successfully runs the route described above, the 2013 Iron Butt Rally is his. No one can beat him. But he went north. Why? He was fearful that he would be unable to deal with the debilitating heat of the south and southwest. I am not revealing confidences in reporting this. His route has been known to followers of Dale Wilson's Yamaha FJR web site since 8:39 a.m. PDT yesterday.



Looking at a screen shot of rider locations with 39 hours remaining (above), we see that Rider X --- that is not his or her real name --- is in Key West. He has hit all the big bonuses he needed so far; the others up the coast are within easy reach. Can he win with his route? Yes. Is he a lock to do so if he runs the table of bonuses right to the finish? No.

Let us return to the northwest. I noted yesterday that there were seven bonuses in the area worth 22,507 points and an eighth in eastern Oregon worth 2,500. That eastern Oregon site is "WAL" on the listing map, the Wallowa Lake Tramway south of Joseph, Oregon in an area known as the Eagle Cap Wilderness. The lone rider who went there two days ago was Matt Watkins, and when we saw that he had done so, we wondered why. It is an extremely difficult ride from the south (dropping down from Enterprise in the north is far easier). When Matt escaped from the area just after dark, he was far behind the other riders who were heading to Canada. He'd had a big lead, but it was leaking away minute by minute.

Our view is that the northwest section was *at best* a questionable choice. Sure, there are some big points up there, but when you've put away the last of the Canadian bonuses at Cranbrook, British Columbia (CMR), what then? There's a big one (7,500 points) in Paradox, Colorado (HFL), but it's 1,100 miles from Cranbrook. John Coons and Alex Schmitt took the northern route with Matt, but unlike him, they picked up the Wallowa tramway on the way back, not the way up, and will be able to scoop up the Colorado points before the sun goes down tonight. That route is out of the question for the rally's leader tonight. His choices have narrowed solely to the locations in Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Illinois south and west of the Great Lakes. And they aren't worth anything like Colorado's 7,500 points. No matter where they are tonight, it's going to a long grind to the finish for Mssrs. Watkins, Coons, and Schmitt.

So what is left? Having eliminated the impossible, or at least the very unlikely, we conclude that the route south and then east was the correct choice out of Sacramento. Twenty-four hours from now none of us would be surprised to discover that every prediction I have made will turn into the stuff of French farce. It's the Iron Butt, after all. But time does bring some clarity to even complex positions, and as I prepare to submit this report, the remaining time is 34 hours.

Jungo Road

A mystery has been cleared up. Sunday afternoon some of the Spot tracks showed three riders leaving I-80 near Winnemucca, Nevada, and proceeding westbound on an unimproved road toward Gerlach. I am being charitable when I speak of the road as "unimproved." It is called Jungo road and it is a bike-breaker of the first rank. Ask Alan Leduc, the founder of the Motorcycle Tourer's Forum, and Ron Ayres, a top ten finisher in the 1995 IBR.

It looks like a good idea. Instead of the 155 miles from Winnemucca down I-80 to Fernley and then up to Gerlach, you can save 110 miles with Jungo Road. But if you don't make it, the pain can be intense. Ayres, no rookie in dirt, went down hard on the road in 2001 and was taken out by helicopter. The same thing happened to Leduc on the 2003 IBR. Twenty miles from Gerlach he augured in

and he too was airlifted from the scene. So it was with some consternation that we began seeing Spot tracks on that awful road around noon on Sunday. Craig Brooks was the first to make it. A little later Tonie Cowen came plowing through. We have no idea what she was thinking, but she made it. Not everyone can say that. The last rider taking a shortcut that day was Tony Osborne. He saved 55 miles by following the interstate to Toulon, then jumping off on Wild Ass road. Really. He too survived.

And More Bad News from the Front

First a word about Steve McCaa. I erred yesterday when I said that he'd borrowed a friend's Triumph to finish the rally when his own Versys gave up. It wasn't a friend's bike; it was another of Steve's own bikes. Tonight he may be wishing it had been a friend's, because he cut a deer in half with it last night near Fredericksburg, Texas, and decided not to try to find a third bike on which to continue. We agree with Steve's reasoning.

Tom Loftus has gone home to southern California. He is definitely out of the running this year, but we suspect he'll return. No one has ever been on as many Iron Butt starting lines as the hard-charging Loftus.

Marc Beaulac has switched bikes and is now hoping that the penalties associated with that will not prevent him from being classified a finisher.

In the What Took It So Long Department, the drive shaft on Rony Baenziger's R1200GS BMW blew up near Lubbock, Texas. After a blizzard of phone calls and text messages, he is aboard a loaner bike (courtesy of Bill Norris), a Kawasaki Vulcan 500 with a fuel cell. Wallace French finished the rally two years ago on the same bike. Paul Graves, James Geist, and Robert Krull of Lone Star BMW also helped in getting a genuinely nice guy back on the road.

For the first time in eight Iron Butt rallies Eric Jewell will not be at the final banquet. We are still having trouble understanding how one of the greatest riders in the rally's history could have been knocked out on a city street in a low-side slide at 35 mph. Someone mentioned that his tire might have caught a plastic grocery bag that then blew away in the breeze. But the People's Republic of San Francisco long ago outlawed such environmentally grotesque and life-threatening products, so we continue to await an answer. This much is true: with Eric, Tom Loftus, and Shuey Wolfe out, it was a tough year to be on a Honda ST1300.

Bob Higdon