

The 2013 Iron Butt Rally: Day 7

Go West, Young Man: Horace Greeley

Pikes Peak Is One Of The Biggest Bonuses On This Leg: Tom Austin

Read The Instructions For Each Bonus Very Carefully: Mike Kneebone

Kevin Lechner studied the entry on page 26:

PPC 8,666 points

Pikes Peak Cog Railway

38.8402 -105.043

Cascade CO

Take a picture of the train at the summit of Pikes Peak. If you are unable to include your bike in the photo, take another photo of your bike in the parking lot at the summit.

Can do, Kevin thought eagerly, hopping aboard the train to begin a pleasant three and one-half hour round-trip ride on the choo-choo. When do you think he realized that he was going to have trouble taking a picture of his bike at the top of Pikes Peak when it rested at the bottom of Pikes Peak? Surely not when he was paying \$35 to get on the cog railway. Five minutes into the ride maybe? That would be a little salty. At the top perhaps, when he looks for his bike and only then remembers where he last saw it? You can almost hear him groaning, *“Rats! People are going to be reading about this until the end of recorded time.”*

Yes, they will, Kevin, but it’s still not the worst mental lapse in the rally’s history. That one belongs to Michael Smeyers. He rode from Denver to Key West and back in 2005 but forgot to put his ID flag in the photo of the infamous buoy. So wrenching was that one that I couldn’t even write about it at the time.



Long, long days for not, not much

Still, something positive eventually came out of that disaster. The scoring was partially relaxed so that a tiny error would not bring down the entire house. I'm all in favor of giving riders the benefit of the doubt. This is why they won't let me anywhere near the scoring tables. A rider shows up and has done something careless. Who hasn't done that, I ask? The poor bastard is begging for relief. I'm the judge and I can see that what the little beggar is trying to do is make what we legally-trained specialists call a showing of good cause. You'd call it an excuse, but that's because you didn't spend \$140,000 in law school learning to speak in a way that guarantees no one will ever again understand you.

In my court your showing doesn't have to be all that righteous. I'll listen to just about anything. Did you try to get that damned bonus? OK, full points. If you didn't try, did you at least think about trying? Good, but I've got to knock 10% off. Say what? You didn't even *think* about trying? I'll let you have two-thirds of the points, but I'm really going to have to draw the line sometime. I'd never do anything of the kind, of course, but the rider doesn't know that. I can't stand the red eyes, the runny nose, the choked, trembling voice, and the tear-stained Aerostich jacket. You can see why I'm no good at the scoring thing.

Attrition and the Shards of Touring

Kevin Lechner had a bad day --- at the top of the mountain, by the way, he hitched a ride back down to his bike, saving himself a bunch of time --- but at least he's still playing the game. Neil Hejny isn't. The alternator problem with his Gold Wing on Day #1 was merely the beginning. At the start of the second leg his back began to complain in a way that he couldn't ignore. Cross him off the active roster.

Brian Bumpas went out as well. He'd had a tough ride on the first leg, stood 90th overall, and was struggling. At a gas stop yesterday he opened his top box. In an instant every paper in it was blowing down the highway. His irreplaceable receipts and route sheets were gone with the wind. That was it for Brian.

Our favorite Iowa hog farmer, Dennis Powell, ran into tire trouble and retired this morning. Two weeks before the rally began his bike caught fire in his garage. A new one showed up in a crate a few days later. It is not possible to prep a bike for a ride like the Iron Butt in three days, but he did. Now it's on its way back to Iowa at a more leisurely pace than it left.

It doesn't matter what causes it. Physical problems with Neil, endless frustrations with Brian, and a broken bike with Dennis. They're all the same to the Iron Butt. When things get bad enough, your problems will send you home. Marc Beaulac's tire pressure monitoring system is going south this afternoon, Scott Thornton lost his camera and thousands of points, and Sal Terranova has a leak in his front

tire. They've all reached out for help. Can they possibly be saved? We hope so, but who knows?

Dave Cwi says he does. We go back a long way, even before the time that I put out a bulletin on the internet that announced he'd been killed in an accident on his way to the Coon Bottom rally in Alabama. Everyone knew Dancin' Dave, the guy who had a column in the BMW MOA rag, the guy who showed up in a tux every year at the Finger Lakes rally, grabbed the microphone, and wowed the crowd like Jolson. The lamenting was immediate and unrelieved. In the next six hours there must have been 200 "I remember Dave" obituaries of one sort or another before someone found out that he was in Baltimore at an Orioles game.

How will Mr. Cwi fix these physical, mental, and mechanical problems, you may ask? As I understand it --- and with Dave this is not always easy because he has a tendency to speak in tongues and write in alphabets not heretofore seen in the West --- he has a two-pronged approach. First, he issues you something called a Smurf card that he says will mitigate problems. It won't prevent your BMW's final drive from hemorrhaging oil, but you'll break down one block from a dealer. Cwi says Alex Ciurczak was carrying a Smurf card and that foresight was the only thing that saved the rider on the first leg.

Second, he offers the evidence of the Shards of Touring. Dave describes it as the wind-shredded remnants of one of those 20-micron thick yellow Korean rain suits that you get in K-Mart for \$3.95. When it predictably disintegrated into molecular pieces about ten minutes after purchase, someone stuffed it into a Pringles can and sealed it with packing tape. The can, Dave claims, has been repeatedly proven to ward off erroneous GPS directions. It isn't clear to me how one obtains such a device, but at least the pun works like a charm, so to speak.

Tonight: Rumble in the Rancho

Checkpoint #2 will open for business at 4:00 p.m. PDT this afternoon at the Marriott in Rancho Cordova, California. All riders should be checked in by 8:00 p.m. That won't happen, naturally, and to punish the tardy ones they'll be docked 15 points for each minute of lateness commencing at one second after eight. If they have not made it to the check-in table by 10:00 p.m., their rally is over and they will be free to depart for home at their convenience.

Scoring will probably be completed by midnight in California, but since the riders will not receive their bonus packages for the final leg of the rally until tomorrow morning at 6:00 PDT, we will hold off posting any results until then. So with a little time on my hands, I think I'll go shopping for a cheap, yellow rain suit.

Bob Higdon