

Saturday June 24 Day -2 Process, correction, direction

The Saturday before the rally is always busy, for staff and riders alike. My dad was a beekeeper and it is fascinating to watch a hive of honey bees working to achieve their goals. The busy motion in and around a hive seems random to the untrained observer, but under the orchestration of the queen, each bee has a purpose and is determined to get that purpose accomplished. The result of the successful completion of this process is sweet honey, but disruption of the flow can get you stung.

Sitting back and taking a look at the seeming random movement of riders and rally staff occurring at Rally headquarters today reminded me of the motion in and around a bee hive. Lots of activity occurring that might seem random to the hotel staff or other guests, but every staff member and rider was focused on specific goals and getting those goals accomplished as quickly as possible. As with the bee hive, when everyone completes their task properly, the result is sweet. But not reading the rules or not having everything in order can be painfully frustrating.

After an opportunity for a great breakfast, most riders started their morning lined up to get their registration packets, paperwork, and banquet tickets from Rallymaster Lisa Landry, with assistance from Donna Fousek, Karen Van Santen, and Bill Thweat. The riders were then free to move to any of the following stations for processing by a dedicated and talented group of staff volunteers:

Tech Inspection Station: Dale Wilson, Ande Bergmann, Brian Roberts, Derek Dickson, Jeremy Lovall, Adam Wolkoff, Brant Moteelall, and Rich Reid.

Odometer Check Station: Marty Leir, Carol Patzer, and Paula Behm.

Camera Card Formatting Station: Dave McQueeney, Ira Agins, David E.B. Smith, Eric Vallencourt

Video/Media Station: Dennis Bitner, John Ferber, Roger Van Santen, Greg Blewett, Pat Blewett, Verne Hauck, Bonnie Hauck, Dan Stephans

Insurance/Waivers/Medjet Station: Ed Otto, Kathy Engholm

Spotwalla Tracking Station: Tim Masterson

Emergency Contact Info Station: Jim Fousek

When each rider is cleared through all of the process stations, they go through a Final Check In with Jeff Earls. That the registration process started at 7:45am and by 4:40pm all of the riders were done would seem to indicate that overall things went very smoothly.

But as always, there were a few exceptions. Some riders blamed the massive road construction mentioned in the Day -3 report for failing the odometer check. Some, in this case, means about 26 riders. A few confessed that it was simply a case of confusing basic left and right at intersections. The pressure of the IBR can have such an effect.

In fact, there were so many who had to do a second trip around the course by lunch time that Marty started offering to do a guided lap at 6:00pm for anyone who had not been able to get it correct by then. Fortunately, IBR riders tend to be quick learners and most got it done on the second try. Rob Jamie, on a well set up Honda NX700, needed a third lap to be successful and maintained a great attitude throughout the process. Other riders in prior rallies have taken more laps than that to get it correct, so no records were set today.

The relief on the faces of many of the riders after completing the course successfully was obvious and hopefully will bode well for calming nerves, paving the way for a smooth start from the parking lot on Monday morning.

To say that the rally hotel parking lot always contains interesting bikes would be an understatement, at best. Where else do you see a Ninja 250 with 112,000 miles on the clock? It is clear that rally vet Kurt Worden likes that little bike a lot. He noted that valve replacement is just a standard service item on a 250cc rally bike.

Where else do you see a Burgman 400 scooter with 105,000 miles on the clock? With a tiny car tire (155/75-R13) on the back? Unfortunately, the tech crew questioned the lack of an aux fuel vent line and called in Dale Wilson. After a quick look and observing fuel stains running down the filler and stains on the rear fender next to the exhaust pipe, Warchild turned thumbs down on the tank cap aux vent system on Ishii Yohinori's 105,000 mile scooter. This was a stressful situation, especially for a rider whose first language is not English. In fact, the most common issue during the parking lot tech session today was inadequate aux fuel vent hoses. Several riders were required to add, reroute or properly secure their vent hoses to meet the technical standard. At last report, Ishii was in the process of modifying the tank filler this evening to include a fitting and proper vent line. Fortunately for him, there are several farkle experts floating around the host hotel willing to help resolve such issues.

Late update, with the help of the local LD community, the vent issue has been corrected and Ishii is good to go! Mr. Rich Reid is becoming the go to guy for riders in trouble. He made the report yesterday for getting his seat to Maura. He makes the report today for getting Ishii's vent problem corrected. Cudos also go to Bill Thweatt for assisting.

Amazingly, Rob Wilensky's GS (the upside down horror story from Day -3) was rebuilt and running in the parking lot this morning. Exceptional effort was demonstrated by everyone involved to pull that off. The bike ran fine through a couple of laps of the odo course, which we will take as a good sign.

There were a few observations from spectators that maybe the universe was trying to tell riders that trailering bikes to the rally is, well ... one hesitates to use the word 'cursed'. But the somewhat more mild issue of a seat getting lost in transit was quickly supplanted by a few bikes falling off of trailer ramps and winding up with parts making detrimental contact with terra firma. There were various levels of damage incurred, all repairable as far as we know, and most repairs were completed by this evening. One lingering concern is a tweaked knee belonging to Kirsten Talken-Spaulding. Hopefully, with care and ice therapy, that issue will clear up by Monday morning.

Mike Heitkamp had an issue with his paperwork today at Jim Fousek's table. Mike recently moved to Minnesota. His Ohio driver license has been punched as invalid by the D.M.V., but he has not received his new Minnesota license yet. They gave him a piece of paper showing that he made application, but it does not have the new license number on it. An acceptable remedy was formulated by the Rallymaster, allowing Mr. Heitkamp to complete the registration process.

Jim Fousek also noted some interesting responses on some of the emergency medical questions by some of the riders. On the standard question asking about the "relationship" of the emergency contact, one rider wrote "it's complicated". On the question asking about "other important medical information", one rider wrote "old – not very smart". One two-up couple listed each other's phone numbers as their emergency contact numbers. One rider filled out the emergency form with their listed friends and contacts, but did not put their own name on the form.

At the completion of the registration process, a rider was overheard telling Jeff Earls "I am so happy to be here!" Jeff immediately replied "We can fix that." With the reveal of the rally poster this morning, along with Jeff's calculating reputation, we anticipate that the riders are about to embark on an adventure that requires a significant amount of mental exercise for 11 days.

Lest the riders who had issues with tech or had to do the odd course more than once think they are the only ones making errors at this event, your scribe needs to offer a few corrections. Phil Weston's Triumph 800 is clearly a triple, not a twin. I knew better and still messed it up.

Dylan Spink, listed as the youngest rider, seems to have had a birthday and also changed his chosen mount from the originally listed ST1300 to a hopeless class 1977 GL1000 Goldwing. However, those changes were not shown on the official spreadsheet provided to the scribe. Just sayin'. (Y'all should read that last phrase with a LA accent for best effect (LA means Lower Alabama)). There was another unreported bike change, so Dan Crowley's Cagiva adds one more Italian marquee.

Speaking of that '77 vintage Wing, it proved to be of some interest for the tech team today. Dylan Spink may be the youngest rider in the rally, but his fabrication and farkling skills appear to be rather advanced. There are some impressive details on this bike that are worth a look. As impressed as the jaded and grizzled tech team might be, they still have a job to do. The inspection resulted in the dimension calculated fuel volume being extremely close to the limit of 11.5 gallons, including fuel lines and filters. Because Tom Austin's precise fuel testing equipment was unavailable to the tech staff, the cell was provisionally approved with the requirement that the rider turn in all fuel receipts during the rally. Rob Nye's BMW is also pushing the max on board fuel volume, coming in just under the limit at 11.47 gallons.

For some of the riders, tonight may be the last full night of sleep they will get until the end of the rally. Tomorrow night, they will be in rally mode, balancing the need for sleep with solving the puzzle to produce a good route for Leg One. There are at least three options to choose from Sunday night:

Option 1: Sleep too much and miss out on significant planning and points-gathering opportunities.

Option 2: Spend so much time producing a plan that looks great on the laptop, but results in getting too little sleep to be able to ride that plan.

Option 3: Know when good enough is good enough for a short leg, save the file, and get some good rest to be fresh.

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