

IBR 2017 July 01 Day 06 Challenges, withdrawal, dread

The challenges of riding in the World's Toughest Rally are many. Routing to produce strings that multiply specific bonuses, without much assistance from spreadsheet based programs, is outside the comfort zone of many rally riders. Riding a lot of miles while remaining functional in the blast furnace heat of the south west, or the stifling heat and humidity of the southeast, is outside the comfort zone of many rally riders. When fatigue, bike problems, high winds, rain, thunderstorms, and perhaps the pressure of finally being a competitor in the Big Dance are added into the equation, attrition is the inevitable result. As we approach the close of the second leg and the start of the last leg of the rally, the withdrawal rate has been significant.

There is another factor that comes into play at this point in every Iron Butt Rally. Riders from all walks of life, a variety of physical conditions, and various levels of experience sign up to be drawn for the IBR. It is difficult to describe this factor, but there can be a cognitive disconnect between reading about riding the IBR and actually riding the IBR. This can apply to rookies, as well as veterans, although in different ways. But the results are similar.

Some rookies may ride a lot, read stories about the rally, and convince themselves they can handle 11,000 miles in eleven days, or perhaps just 9,000 miles in 11 days to become a finisher. However, riding a rally on the clock is very different than riding a certificate ride. Most riders that have done both would agree that even completing a 10/10ths (10 consecutive 1000 mile days) is significantly easier than finishing the IBR. Riding a number of 24 hour rallies may not even be enough to prepare some riders for what it is like to persevere past day six or seven during the IBR.

The need to avoid over-extending physically, especially on the early legs of the rally, to ensure enough rest is critical. The puzzle typically gets more complicated as the rally progresses. Many riders can post impressive scores early in the rally. However, those who burn themselves out (by over reaching their ability to recover) find themselves dropping in the standings during subsequent legs.

Fatigue contributes to being unable to adequately process the information. It typically becomes even more difficult to formulate a competitive route as the rally progresses. Riders who are either in excellent physical condition prior to the start, or who manage their rest well, tend to rise in the rankings as the rally progresses, simply because they are not as fatigued. Riders read and hear about this issue before every rally, but type A personalities have a tendency to think it will not happen to them.

Some vets may recall their prior IBR experience through somewhat rose colored glasses. They may recall the highs that come with successful legs without recalling the lows that come from late night struggles in the rain and wind. They may have unconsciously blocked out the fatigue that forced them to stop and sleep instead of collecting that additional bonus. The celebration with fellow riders at the finisher's banquet and subsequent tale telling on the forums all serve to push the difficulties of the rally to the dark corners of their minds.

The IBR is not kind to vets that do not recall (or rookies that do not understand) the level of difficulty and the focus necessary to complete the rally, especially when aspiring to a top level finish. Every two

years, the rally formats increase in difficulty, younger riders enter the field, and the overall field of vets gets more experienced. For vets, it is inevitable that their next rally will be more difficult than the last rally they completed.

One advantage that comes with experience is a refined ability to know when to say no. That may be saying no to a sucker bonus. That may be saying no to more miles when one's body requires rest. That may be recognizing that they do not have their head in the game and making the difficult decision to bail and live to ride another day. The penalty for not recognizing any of these things at the appropriate time can be significant, even painful.

A recent thread on the usually quiet IBDone list involved attempts at IBR inspired haiku. Chuck Hickey posted one that seemed applicable to share here amidst the rain, withdrawals, and disappointment.

Wet dreams of wonder
Failing parts and failing hearts
what ifs..... forever.

chickey191

What if ... indeed.

Additional Leg 2 Info

Only two riders came by Rally Central with questions before they left for Leg 2. Both had the same question. They wanted clarification of how the start of a string worked on the claim form. Some of the rally staff wondered why more riders did not make sure they understood this critical concept.

The Wellers, from the UK, were motoring around the southeast on their repaired Super Tenere. They called Lisa during the correct time window for the call-in bonus. They also noted the bike was running fine, but it was "bloody hot and sticky".

It appears that as many as 12 riders missed the call-in bonus or did not provide the required information. The "hot and sticky" may be wearing on many of the riders as we approach the second half of the rally. Ken Cook called in, paused a moment, and stated "I don't have a clue where I am, let me call you back".

Andrew Byrd, a rookie riding a Concours 14, called the Rallymaster on Friday. He displayed a great attitude for a man that had bitten off too much. He fried the clutch on the C14 while trying to get through the massive traffic jam that formed on Friday of the July 4th weekend in New York City.

He related a story about going to the dealership to get his bike repaired. The shop was closed, but the owner was there waiting for him because he had been following the Spotwalla page and read a report of Andrew needing help in the area. Nice work on the part of the owner of Long Island Kawasaki Yamaha!

Andrew called back to say that when Dale waved him off at the start, he felt like he was at the pinnacle of his riding career and at that moment said to himself "I'm OK, even if *this* is all there is." We think that is a great attitude and expect to see him return for another shot.

Dave Legnoski sang all of the verses of *Singing in the Rain*, as an a cappella solo in a phone message to the Rallymaster. It was not part of the call-in bonus. We are unsure if Danielle was too busy routing to make it a duet, or if she was as amused as Lisa at the entire episode.

Paul Slaton rode a lot of miles in Leg 1 and then slept in for a late start on Leg 2. In fact, he was so tired that he slept through three alarms. He called in to report experiencing a failed valve stem on his darkside car tire. He was able to get it replaced and was continuing to collect bonuses.

John Coons reported being overheated and stopping to chill out in the cooler of a convenience store. Several riders are using bags of ice on their laps or stuffed in their jackets, as well as placing their helmets in the ice boxes during fuel stops. Anything to get some relief from the heat.

A late report indicated that John was having an issue with his 1994 BMW R1100RSL. A call for a replacement fuel injector was been passed on to the LD community. Allen Dye has one and plans to be at the checkpoint this evening.

Dale Bundy called and reported that he was taking a nap and missed the call-in window.

Bob Bowman lost his Garmin 665 from the cradle mount while underway. He spent 45 minutes looking for it, but stopped the search and rescue mission when he started finding plastic pieces. Rally staff put out a call for assistance and there should be a replacement waiting for him at the checkpoint. Lisa did ask Bob if he could get back to the hotel without his GPS. Don't laugh. At this point in the rally, it is a valid question.

Ken and Linda Schleman called to withdraw from the rally. They are OK, but contending with the heat and traffic during the rally was overwhelming.

Steve Bracken appeared to be having difficulty when he called the Rallymaster and asked if there was any time consideration for a thunderstorm in his vicinity. The fact that hundreds of past IBR participants have wished for such a thing is small consolation when weather is throwing a wrench into a route plan. His plan appeared to go further south after that call.

With not enough time remaining to get back to the checkpoint, Bracken has withdrawn from the rally. Lisa got a nice notification from his family that they were still going to take snacks and drinks out to the group photo bonus for the riders arriving there. We are sure the riders will appreciate it.

David Walls lost his claimed bonus sheet and rally flag on Leg 1. As a result, he was expected to be in selfie mode for the rest of the rally. However, David has suffered a final drive issue with his FJR on Leg 2 and withdrawn from the rally.

Before all of the Roundel riders perk up at this news (probably too late for that), the failure was not Yamaha's fault. When an FJR is converted to the darkside by adding a car tire, David said it is necessary to remove the rear drive unit from the swingarm to achieve enough clearance to change the tire. However, failing to torque the four nuts that secure the connection between the rear drive unit and the swingarm is a problem. Losing those nuts and experiencing the resulting thread damage from the drive unit not being secured is a bigger problem. David sounded disappointed, but was working on a solution that would get him home.

Phillip O'Connor reported that his scribe installed tire plug was still holding air. Lisa executed her famous <eye roll> when I responded to that news with "Hey, if I can't fix it, it ain't broke." Phillip called back later to let us know that his FJR had died on the side of the road. It had been over heating earlier and getting more difficult to restart, then it quit on him while on an exit ramp. He attempted a repair on the roadside, but called for a tow to a nearby dealership. Not settling for anything less than doing everything he can think of to get back in the rally, Phillip called Lisa back and let her know that he was running again, returning in the opposite direction to the original tow point to resume his ride. He should have time to get to the checkpoint.

Olaf Moon is out of the rally. He has a damaged tire and is traveling slowly to avoid further damage. He reported that he was OK, but would not get to the checkpoint in time. Olaf has not been able to catch a break for this rally. He struggled through dealer caused bike issues with his BMW just prior to the rally. The resulting sleep deficit from dealing with that was compounded during Leg 1. Sad to see him have the tire issue take him out of the rally.

Tom Spearman has withdrawn from the rally and is heading home.

Wolfe Bonham was reported to have had a "get off" Friday morning. But he has not called Rally Central to report any problems. He was at the group bonus and his spot tracker looks good. At last check, he is still moving toward the checkpoint.

There were 44 rider flags present in time for the Leg 2 group photo bonus. The point value for collecting this bonus was 1205 points. If the rider placed it at the end of a valid string, the value multiplied to 3615.

WBL

Blue Whale

OK-66, 1 mile E of Catoosa, OK

Catoosa, OK

36.1934, -95.7328

1200, July 1, 2017

Have your photo taken by IBR staff in front of the Blue Whale as part of a group.

Built in 1972 as an anniversary gift, the Blue Whale quickly evolved into a local summer hot spot and family travel destination, becoming one of the best loved icons on Route 66.





Riders having a whale of a time in the IBR! With so many comments about the heat, we are surprised these riders are not using the slide to cool off in the lake.

Spotwalla shows a stream of riders converging toward Allen, Texas this afternoon. Checkpoint 2 opens for scoring at 5:00 p.m. The penalty points start at 8:00:01 p.m. Riders that arrive after 10:00:01 p.m. will receive a DNF.

A few conversations with the riders over the last few days indicate that some are feeling a sense of anxiety, if not dread, with respect to Leg 3. It is 126 hours long, including the penalty window. That is a long time and the range of options will be huge.

With the anticipated increase in level of difficulty for the bonus collection on the final leg, this is shaping up to be an epic second half. Part of being in the World's Toughest Rally is having the ability to rise to the challenge. Which riders will be in a position to do that?

John Harrison
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Iron Butt Rally©