

## The Iron Butt Rally Comes Full Circle

The 2015 Iron Butt Rally is in the history books. Scoring is complete. Riders have showered, slept and eaten, although not necessarily in that order. The celebrating began early and will continue into the night until exhaustion finally wins out. The early morning hours on this final day were worthy of the hype of a world class event. Heavy rain swept through the area as if to give one final Trudeau Salute before moving on to ruin some family picnic somewhere else. Rider families, spectators and fascinated hotel guests and employees gathered in the designated parking area where 87 riders and 5 pillions set out eleven days earlier.

Many riders had returned in the cover of night content with their performance. While those confident 53 riders were queuing up at the scoring table when it opened at 5 AM, the last 25 riders were queued up along I-25, and I-40 making their way to the finish. Penalty points would begin sharply at 8:00:01 AM. The door would slam shut at 10:00:00. Anyone outside at that time would be, well, outside.

One by one, each rider landed safely to cheers and applause from the growing crowd, first walking into stop the clock with Ira Agins, the last riders sprinting. One of the last riders before penalties was 'Never Say Die' Kirsten Talken-Spalding. Kirsten had surprised everyone with a brief excursion into Canada on Wednesday as a shortcut to collect two bonuses in upper Minnesota. When she exited I-25 at Santa Fe a little after 4:30 this morning, we thought could it be? Is someone still hunting bonuses? Indeed! Kirsten was not done. She watched the sun come up at Bandelier National Monument and THEN rode to Petroglyph National Monument collecting 617 points within the last two hours. As it turns, the push right up until the end made all the difference this year. *(right – Kristen checks her paperwork before submitting to scoring.)*



Kirsten was not the only rider playing the entire four quarters. Chris Comly, riding a *stock* 2006 H-D Sportster, was not content with just finishing. Chris was *still* bonus hunting at 6 AM this morning, collecting *another* 317 points before stopping the clock. "I had to," he said. He *had* to. Three words to sum up the spirit of the Iron Butt.

*(left –Dennis Bitner checks Chris Comy's odometer)*

By that ominous strike of the clock, just five riders were not in the barn: Jon Good/Ande Bergman, Dave Legnosky, Chris Rooney and Jerome Byrd. Ande Bergman sprinted in at 8:01:04, leaping from their bike before it stopped (*right*).



Legnosky would roll in at 9:11:06 AM, his second IBR finish in the penalty period. Dave had been on the low side of the state count at the end of Leg 2 and rode deep into New England before finally turning for home. At 10:30 PM Wednesday he found himself outside Erie, Pennsylvania. All that stood between him and his finish 1,690 miles away in Albuquerque was another stalled weather system dumping buckets of rain. Such is the finish of an Iron Butt Rally.

Rooney would not finish. His H-D Road Glide Ultra finally succumbed to nine days of rain outside Tulsa, Oklahoma, with electrical problems. His wife is already setting aside the money from his allowance for the 2017 entrance fee. For the next 24 months Chris will relive every minute lost this rally to something other than riding. The Iron Butt does not forgive those who do not respect the clock.

Jerome Byrd would likewise not finish although it was not without a tremendous, collective effort in the waning hours. A DNF from 2013, Jerome had ridden a solid rally. 71<sup>st</sup> place in Leg 1. 77<sup>th</sup> place in Leg 2. He still needed 27 more parks and 10 more states to finish, provided he also made it back to Albuquerque. He headed northeast out of Kingsport, anchoring his route with a visit to the Great Egg Harbor Scenic & Recreational River deep into New Jersey, before turning south and then west. By Wednesday evening, Jerome had collected his 50<sup>th</sup> park and exceeded his 25 states. Now, all he had to do was to ride 1,366 miles in 42 hours to the finish. East of Amarillo, Texas, the charging system shut down on his otherwise rock solid Honda NT700V, followed by what was left of the battery. Waiting on a tow truck for four hours had to be excruciating for Jerome. It sure was for Lisa Landry. She easily lost some time off the back end of her life in worry. The Rallymaster's instructions were simple and direct: "Get to Walmart. Buy a battery and duct tape. Tape the battery to the seat. RIDE HERE!" As a precaution in case the makeshift repair would not last, Lisa then enlisted spectator John Huval to ride east ("LIKE NOW") to intercept Byrd in case he needed further assistance. It would not be. The baby Honda died again in Santa Rosa, 113 miles away, with the math not in Jerome's favor to even swap bikes. It was utterly heartbreaking. The Iron Butt can be a cruel and fickle mistress.

When the scoring was finally done, checked, audited and checked again, Eric Jewell had won the 2015 Iron Butt Rally. After one DNF (2013) and seven finishes including 2<sup>nd</sup> place in 2011, Eric was finally able to scrape that monkey off his back and stomp it into the ground where it belonged. Early in Leg 2, Eric dialed the Call In number leaving a message for Tom Austin. It was a vulnerable, reflective Eric Jewell. “The only way I can beat these guys is to ride more.” In the end, that’s what it took – riding more. Eric clocked in at 7:56 AM. He had ridden 11,087 miles, 899 fewer miles than 2<sup>nd</sup> place Josh Mountain, but with 161 more points. In true Iron Butt flair, Jewell’s ST1300 was dead on arrival with the fuel pump that had plagued him throughout the final night giving out in the last 200 feet with Eric coasting into the parking lot. Even his bike left it all on the field.



*“I used to believe, I still do, that if you give something your all it doesn't matter if you win or lose, as long as you've risked everything put everything out there. And I've done that.”*

- Billy Chapel *For The Love of The Game* 1999

Josh Mountain rode 11,986 miles. Even with his bold aggressive move on Day One diving deep into the bowels of Texas, Eric had edged him at the end of the Leg. Many thought Josh slammed the door shut on Eric in Leg 2, with a 2,565 point lead at the checkpoint. But a missed Call In bonus in Leg 3 turned out to be fatal for the win. Josh had called in but the call was not recorded by the Rally phone bank. This was the same bungle that befell Kirsten Talken-

Spaulding in Leg 2, costing her 1,000 points (although only place in the final standings). Similar to Kirsten, Josh had made just one call in each leg confident in the connection. Kirsten adjusted in Leg 3, calling three times although only two calls were received, plus picked up 617 more points in the last two hours. 12 riders made such insurance calls, down from the 15 insurance calls in Legs 1 and 2. Josh was the 3<sup>rd</sup> rider clocked in at 5:01:48 AM. *(left – a spent Josh Mountain is asleep at the finish at 3:08 AM)*



The final rider standings are:

Place	First Name	Last Name	Total Score	Total Miles	Parks	States	Medal
1	Eric	Jewell	106,653	11,087	108	25	Gold
2	Joshua	Mountain	106,492	11,986	103	25	Gold
3	Brant	Moteelall	100,025	10,364	101	30	Gold
4	Erik	Lipps	99,836	11,121	105	29	Gold
5	Jim	Owen	94,868	11,563	101	27	Gold
6	Barry	Bertram	93,407	10,054	101	28	Gold
7	Craig	Brooks	93,395	10,842	112	33	Gold
8	Bob	Lilley	88,173	11,725	83	30	Gold
9	Jon/Ande	Good/Bergman	87,716	10,364	91	29	Gold
10	Jim	Orr	87,002	10,161	85	27	Gold
11	Marc	Beaulac	86,563	10,388	91	28	Gold
12	Tom	Loftus	84,365	9,531	84	26	Gold
13	Paul	Slaton	83,354	10,328	78	32	Gold
14	Kirsten	Talken-Spaulding	83,083	11,805	65	26	Gold
15	Rod	Schween	82,099	10,796	76	28	Gold
16	Daniel	Roth	81,206	9,933	78	28	Gold
17	Mark	Crane	81,192	10,782	82	30	Gold
18	Paul	Tong	79,364	9,578	90	30	Gold
19	Jeremy	Loveall	78,489	8,946	79	27	Gold
20	Gerhard	Memmen-Krueger	78,302	9,109	82	26	Gold
21	Tim	Masterson	77,896	10,390	79	33	Silver
22	Bob	Bowman	76,605	9,199	82	27	Silver
23	Eric	Bray	75,961	10,744	72	25	Silver
24	Eric	Edelman	75,724	8,962	85	29	Silver
25	Will	Barclay	75,470	12,900	54	27	Silver
26	Ian	McPhee	74,005	10,115	68	29	Silver
27	Greg	Rice	72,391	12,278	69	26	Silver
28	Andy	Mackey	72,148	8,888	81	26	Silver
29	Tonie	Cowen	71,050	11,192	72	31	Silver
30	Perry	Karsten	69,474	9,851	74	26	Silver
31	Garry	Springgay	69,236	10,395	60	28	Silver
32	Gregg	Lenentine	68,272	8,781	71	27	Silver
33	Steve	McCaa	68,243	9,537	62	27	Silver
34	Anthony	Osborne	67,664	11,407	63	26	Bronze
35	Jeff	Wilson	67,334	9,551	76	27	Bronze
36	Olaf	Moon	66,662	9,747	61	30	Bronze
37	Kurt	Worden	65,851	8,768	75	26	Bronze
38	Chris	McGaffin	65,145	9,972	66	29	Bronze
39	Greg/Pat	Blewett	64,874	9,188	66	29	Bronze
40	Matt	Wise	64,230	10,137	60	30	Bronze



41	Danny	Dossman	63,210	9,091	61	28	Bronze
42	Lynda	Lahman	62,703	8,579	57	26	Bronze
43	Terry	Lahman	62,687	8,630	57	26	Bronze
44	Don	Duck	62,414	9,948	52	26	Bronze
45	Robert	Scott	62,346	8,866	60	28	Bronze
46	Christopher	Ross	61,976	9,389	56	28	Bronze
47	Phillip	O'Connor	59,802	9,430	56	28	Bronze
48	Larry	Meeker	59,649	9,546	60	28	Bronze
49	Chris	Purney	59,457	9,429	59	28	Bronze
50	Lyle	Monroe	58,534	9,052	65	28	Bronze
51	Drew	Dill	58,406	8,766	56	25	Bronze
52	Kit	Chunhawong	57,613	9,008	58	26	
53	Mike	Langford	57,414	8,405	63	28	
54	Joe	Green	57,142	8,826	57	28	
55	Alex	Ciurczak	56,219	8,911	56	28	
56	Nancy	Lefcourt	55,914	8,891	57	26	
57	Scott	Jones	55,319	8,674	59	27	
58	Dave	Legnosky	55,238	9,046	56	27	
59	Eric	Chernin	54,880	8,598	63	26	
60	Mike	Riley	54,020	9,083	55	25	
61	Greg/Wini	Farmer	53,375	8,336	63	26	
62	Chris	Comly	53,061	8,744	51	25	
63	Pat/Rebecca	Ford/Martinez	52,880	8,694	56	25	
64	David	Walls	52,484	9,741	56	30	
65	Brian	Dent	52,229	8,361	63	28	
66	Al	Holtsberry	52,044	8,223	54	26	
67	Michiel	Kerkhof	50,129	9,197	56	26	
68	Glenn	Pancoast	48,825	8,885	54	28	
69	Ted	Black	48,809	7,943	54	28	
70	Rob	Jaime	48,099	7,569	56	25	
71	Neil	Hejny	47,285	8,000	53	26	
72	John	Cooper	45,047	9,472	52	26	
73	Jonathan	Tan	44,371	9,095	52	26	
74	Jack	Cheasty	43,317	8,151	53	26	
75	Allen	Hatcher	34,162	???	61	26	Silver
DNF	Philip	Weston	0	10,489	55	24	
DNF	George	Doughty	0	8,563	31	18	
DNF	Brian	Bumpas	0	8,329	28	18	
DNF	Robert	Bolger		5,138	33	18	
DNF	Christopher	Rooney		4,998	31	16	
DNF	Jerome	Byrd		4,773	23	15	
DNF	Troy	Martin		3,939	27	10	
DNF	Chris	Sakala		3,862	19	6	

DNF	Margaret	Peart		3,686	13	8	
DNF	Mark	Starrett		3,485	19	9	
DNF	Sam/Sydney	Liles		2,576	20	7	
DNF	Nahum	Sloan		0	0	0	

Erik Lipps, Jim Owen, Jim Orr and Craig Brooks, Barry Bertram and Brant Moteelall each rode very different yet equally efficient routes in Leg 3 shuffling the podium, but none enough to knock off Jewell and Mountain. *(right - Brant celebrates his Leg 3 scoring with John Harrison and 2007 finisher Lisa Stevens. Below – Erik Lipps celebrates what is truly important – coming home safely.)*



Bob Lilly and the 2-up team of Jon Good/Ande Bergman dug deep in Leg 3 to move up in the standings into the Top Ten, while Kirsten Talken-Spaulding and Rod Schween dropped only a few.

Tara Brooks waited patiently, anxiously by the door for her husband Craig to arrive. At 6:27, the 4<sup>th</sup> place finisher from 2013 pulled up and Tara finally exhaled. Her next breath would be the first full deep breath she'd taken in 261 hours. "He looks good," she said. "Better than he did in 2013." He had time to get his paperwork in order before stopping the clock and presenting himself for scoring. She made him a plate for breakfast. With enough states and parks in the bag by the end of Leg 2, the National Parks System was Craig's playground for Leg 3, with Craig jumping from 24<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> in the final leg.



Riders, staff and the viewing world in general will no doubt spend the next few weeks analyzing these results for meaningful information or answers. Everything from make, model, mileage, routes taken, rider experience, ambient temperature at sea level, oil brand and rider age will be sliced and diced with dozens of self-styled experts offering Monday morning opinions. Riders who gave it their all will sleep well, soundly. Others will replay routes and decisions over and over in a search for answers or peace. But there will be none.

There will however, be peace for Al Holtsberry at least for now. At 79, this now *four* time finisher has become the oldest rider to finish the Iron Butt Rally. To cap it off, Al pounded out 1,283 miles in his last 24 hours to finish in 66<sup>th</sup> place. I will not be at all surprised to see him in 2017 on the starting grid in his white riding suit. *(right – Scorer Pete Bansen goes through each bonus with Al)*



Jack Cheasty and Kurt Worden did what no rally scribe wants. The two Hopeless Class riders finished the Iron Butt Rally with so little drama that it's hardly been worth teasing them. *(This stuff never happened to Hidgon.)* Ever the gentlemen, Jack even stopped to change a woman's flat tire this morning on his way to the finish. With the rally now over, Jack can finally stop calling Lisa. It may take at least a week.

Kurt Worden joins Leon Begeman (2003) and Duke Dunsford (2005) as the only two riders to *start* and finish the Iron Butt Rally on a Kawasaki Ninja 250. (Before everyone starts ping me about Barry Bertram's 2009 finish on the baby Ninja in 2009, Barry actually started that rally on a rotary engine Suzuki RE5 that died within 16 feet of the start. Then he borrowed a friend's wife's F650GS before picking up the Ninja. Still a huge ride, but it's not like Barry *choose* to start the rally on a Hopeless Class bike.) Now, if only the buffalo in Yellowstone that charged Worden had actually caught him...

Tom Loftus and Gerhard Memmen-Krueger are now tied, each with seven Iron Butt finishes. Both managed to finish this morning despite each having minor get-off's overnight. They spent the banquet playing Rock Paper Scissors.

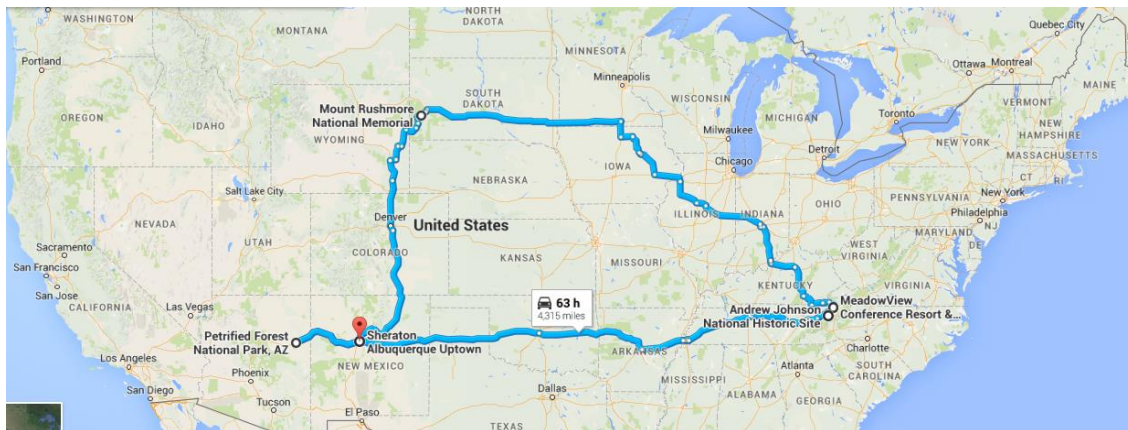
The group photo bonus was new this year and, judging by the feedback from riders, staff and followers, is likely to be used in future rallies if for no other reason than it provides for some really stunning images of this sport. The Mount Rushmore photo bonus on Leg 3 attracted 14



riders (seen in photo below). 13 riders bagged the photo, with just Jim Owen missing the deadline by six minutes.



It can't be said enough how the Iron Butt Rally is only made possible through the commitment of volunteers. IBR veterans Dennis Bitner and John Ferber did double duty this year, working the odometer checks at each checkpoint AND conducting the three photo bonuses. While the rest of us were slumped away in our assigned seats in the Rally van, Ferber and Bitner rode 4,315 miles, more than the average motorcyclist will ride in a year, to set up, meet and photo rider at the three locations.







Steve Hobart (*right*) and Tobie Stevens (*left*) provided nearly all the photos used in these daily reports. Both have an incredible eye for capturing the moment. Not being half the writer Higdon is, these reports would have been painful for all concerned if not for the great art from these talented photographers.



Jason Jonas of SpotWalla made the tracking data available for rally staff, family and friends, and the public. Joe Denton developed a special webpage for IBR staff with more detailed information throughout the rally. Thousands of spectators have been hitting ‘refresh’ for the last eleven days. Many have had the tracking page up on monitors at work and big screen TVs in stores like a 24/7 realty show. Those same thousands have begun withdrawal. It’s not pretty. Thank you, Jason and Joe. Our psychiatrists will be in touch.

Beyond just the volunteers who know what they had gotten themselves into are the many civilians who often get enlisted along the way. Howard Etkind, Bob Hall, Steve Aikens, Paul Glaves, Steve Bracken, John Bailey, the UPS guy who helped right Margaret Peart’s bike, NMRodRunner and HotRodZilla who rebuilt Josh Mountain’s forks at the end of Leg 1, John Huval are just a few. I am certain there are more who will be revealed in the ensuing weeks.

It has been a great deal of fun to tell some of the stories heard during the rally, certainly a full circle for me having ridden in three IBRs as material for feature articles. There are other stories that haven’t been told yet, but will come out over time, like

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Bob Lilley (*right*) waking from a rest bonus to find a “Be Back Later” sign at the store where he needed his receipt.

And...



Olaf Moon being approached by two “hillbilly moonshiners” who offered beer and whiskey to stay the night deep in the woods of Tennessee after he had taken a gravel road to the Nemo Bridge. He swears he heard music. Banjoes, perhaps?

Winner Eric Jewell catching a metal trailer fender under his ST1300 outside of Houston. Following the rule of “Whatever you can’t swerve around, you go over,” the fender became lodged between his wheels, scraping as he let off the throttle until THUMP and out it came. No damage except maybe soiled shorts.



And...

Gregg Lenentine getting roused from his sleep bonus in West Helena, Arkansas, at 3:30 AM by an aggressive, drunk hooker looking for a good time.

Erik Lipps having his tankbag raided by a swarm of crows in Yellowstone that had opened the zipper and stolen 15 Cliff bars by the time he took his photo of Old Faithful.

Bob Bowman attributing his 14 position climb in Leg 2 to stopping at home for “some quality rest.”

Mark Crane killing five birds in Leg 1, three more than he’d ever hit in all his prior years of riding. Even with the dead bird juju hexing him, and a medical issue with his eyes, Mark managed a 17<sup>th</sup> place finish.

Chris Comly crashing his on his way to the Start, which I had promised not to repeat here until he had told his wife Michele first. When Chris rolled up this morning, she was literally vibrating with excitement. Today is their 16<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary. All she wanted was his safe return. “Can I touch him yet?” she asked as he ran to stop the clock. “NO.” When she did finally get to give him that hug she added, “I’m not even going to ask you why your jacket’s all ripped up.”

There are of course many more stories to come out over the next few weeks and months. I hope to have an epilogue uploaded over the weekend with overall summary analysis including breakdown by manufacturer. There are also many riders who never made it to my radar during these last eleven days, good or bad, which certainly doesn’t diminish their achievement in any way. They rode solid rides, chasing their dreams and demons. Only they will know if they left it all on the field or if they have unfinished business.

*Chris Cimino  
Iron Butt Scribe  
Iron Butt Rally©*