

A topographic map of North America showing the route of the 1985 Iron Butt Rally. The route is marked with a dashed line and numbered stops 1 through 7. Stop 1 is in the Northeast, stop 2 is in the Midwest, stop 3 is in the Northwest, stop 4 is in the Southwest, stop 5 is in the South, stop 6 is in the Southeast, and stop 7 is in the South Atlantic. The title 'the history of the Iron Butt Rally' is overlaid on the map in a stylized font.

the history of the
Iron Butt Rally

part two

The 1985
Iron Butt Rally

By Bob Higdon

At the end of the Iron Butt Rally in 1984, instead of the fortunate son he should have been for envisioning, creating, and producing the rally at all, Mike Rose was instead destined to be fortune's pawn. The motorcycle market in the United States collapsed over the winter of 1984-85. Mike's buyers stopped buying, his suppliers stopped supplying, and accounts receivable turned into accounts to be burned along with the rest of his bridges. He moved to southern California. At least there in the dark winter of his discontent and shattered dreams he wouldn't have to worry about heating bills. And someone else could worry about the next Iron Butt rally.

Enter Gary Patterson, general manager of Montgomeryville Cycle Center, a generic Japanese bike shop in a suburb north of Philadelphia. MCC had served as start and finish location of the '84 rally and, even better, had survived the economic downturn that had driven Mike Rose out of business.

Patterson wasn't into Rose's vision of man and machine against the tides of time and nature and fickle fate; Patterson was into the U.S. dollar: If he could make a buck promoting the event, he'd do it; otherwise, he could kiss it goodbye. So in the spring of 1985, backed by a nicely written IBR reprise article in *Cycle Guide* magazine by 1984 finisher David Mallet, invitations to prospective riders went out. And unlike 1984, this time it really was invitation-only: a young, enthusiastic Yamaha Venture rider from Chicago applied, but his credentials were deemed inadequate. His name was Michael Kneebone.

Twenty-four entrants received the nod. Three of the four co-winners from 1984 — Alan Pease, George Egloff, and Ed Thompson — came back for a tiebreaker. Roy Eastwood, Jim Newbery, and Rich (Pharaoh) Sommers also returned. And new faces like Canadian Ross Copas, a protégé of Eastwood's, South Carolinian Gary Moore, and Suze Mann, the irrepressible ex-wife of racer Dick Mann, appeared at the table.



Suze Mann and Roy Eastwood at the finish. Photo by Carol Taub.

Patterson was determined to avoid a repeat of the tie for first in 1984. To ensure a complete separation of the field, the base route was extended to include a checkpoint in Maine, the number of bonus stops was tripled, and an eleventh day was added. At 10:00 a.m. on Tuesday, August 27, the field cranked up and headed to Reynolds Motorsports in Buxton, Maine. It would continue to be a checkpoint on the next nine rallies.

Adding a little regional color to the continental scavenger hunt, Patterson asked riders to bring a lobster claw to the Reyn-

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olds checkpoint. The six men tied for the lead at the end of the first leg all had done so, including Roy Eastwood. He'd brought two claws, each attached to an irritated lobster. From Maine they headed to the second checkpoint in Eau Claire, Wisconsin, where they were expected to arrive with (of course) a piece of cheese. And thus a rally theme began that has survived in one form or another until the present day.

CHECK POINT CONTROL REPORT		
CHECK POINT: ROAD, TRAIL & TRAIL 1316 N. HASTINGS WAY EAU CLAIRE, WISCONSIN 54701		
ENTRANT'S NAME		RALLY NUMBER
GARY MOORE		22
TIME IN		ODOMETER READING
7:01 pm.		106,280.6
*BONUS CITIES (OR) LOCATIONS	POSSIBLE POINTS	POINTS EARNED
	R.C.	250 ✓
St. Louis, Mo.		300
THOUSAND ISL. BRIDGE		200
COLUMBUS, OH.		150
MILWAUKEE, WI.		100
INDIANAPOLIS, IN.		150
CHEESE		50
	TOTAL POINTS	1200
ENTRANT'S SIGNATURE		
Gary R Moore		
SIGNATURE OF PERSON FILING FORM		
Tom Egloff		

Gary Moore's score sheet from the rally's second leg. Note the 50 points for "cheese." Life was simpler then.

The second leg was not without incident. One bonus stop was at the Indianapolis auto museum. Get a ticket. One resourceful rider, Jim Newbery, realizing he wouldn't be able to make it to the place before it closed for the day, had his secretary call the museum, pay for the ticket over the phone with a credit card, and have the evidence delivered to a hotel next door. When Newbery checked into the hotel that night for a nap, the ticket was waiting for him at the front desk.

Newbery's trick was discovered the next day when other riders showed up at the museum and learned of the ploy by chance. How did this work out for Jim? Suze Mann, in a story in *Cycle News*, writes: "Since the intent was to be in Indianapolis while the museum was open, the rider lost his points for the souvenir." But Ed Hertfelder's article in *Motorcyclist* states:

“Patterson didn’t specify that you had to *be* at the museum — just get the ticket — so this was legal.” And you thought an historian’s job was easy?



Suze Mann at speed. Photo by Art Friedman.

The third leg returned riders to the Cycle Barn in Lynnwood, Washington, a checkpoint from the '84 rally. It hadn't been a particularly hard slog along the base route — 3,525 miles in 106 hours — but they'd been in almost constant rain for days. Attrition was taking a toll. On the second leg John Shuck on a Triumph had dropped out due to a family illness and Nick Nicholson's Harley had exploded. On leg #3 Lou Boyd crashed, Ed Thompson bailed with fatigue, Rich (Pharaoh) Sommers was time-barred and out of money, and mechanical failure put Ross Copas and Paul Persinger out.

At that point George Egloff was in first place, leading Gary Moore by 50 points. Jim Plunkett, Al Greenwood, and Jim Newbery were tied for third. Suze Mann, Rob Eilertson, and Alan Pease lurked below the surface. Moore, an exceptionally conservative rider, and Pease, an exceptionally smart one, had ridden cautiously across the country. Each was rested and ready to move.

Egloff was not. As in 1984, he'd ridden himself deep into the red zone of fatigue. He was a Cannonball rider, not a tactician. Hanging onto first place wasn't his issue now; simply finishing the rally was the problem. But he had a hole card, one that would trump anything that Moore or Pease could play. Egloff called Gary Patterson and warned that the riders were barely capable of continuing. If they did, they would obviously pose a serious liability problem for Montgomeryville Cycle Center. Cancel all the bonuses on the next leg, Egloff advised, and give us a big layover in Lemon Grove, California.

And Patterson did just that. Gary Moore, who never gets angry about anything, couldn't believe what had happened. Pease was beside himself. He'd waited a year to ring Egloff's bell and now his chance had slipped away because of administrative interference. Even Pharaoh, sitting on the sidelines and out of the running, was stunned. In an interview in the April 1986 issue of *Easyriders*, he fumed, “You just ain't got what it takes to be in this damned race if you've gotta snivel about how you can't go on.”

But, given an unexpected time allowance, on they went. By the time they hit the penultimate checkpoint at BMW of Daytona, Egloff still led Moore by 50 points. Gary took a quick look at the bonus sheet and saw a possible avenue of salvation. In the list of seven potential bonus cities one of them, Atlanta, was worth twice as many points (400) as the next highest city in the list. If he could make the Peachtree City bonus, the rally could be his.

There was a problem, however. It was on the second page of the bonus listings:

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MANDATORY STOP AT "THE MOTORCYCLE SHOP" - RT. 1 - EXIT 25 B  
COLLEGE PARK, MARYLAND - INSIDE BELTWAY 1/4 MILES ON RT. 1
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ADDRESS: 9594 ON RIGHT SIDE
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HOURS: 6:00 A.M. - 9:00 P.M.
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DATE: FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 6, 1985
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PROBLEM: YOU WILL BE ASK TO DO SOMETHING VERY SIMPLE
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BONUS POINTS WILL BE AWARDED
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SEE ATTACHED MAP FOR ALL DIRECTIONS.
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The “mandatory” stop.

Note the word “mandatory.” What does it mean if you don't show up by 9:00 p.m.? Will you lose some bonus points that you would otherwise receive? How many? Ten? Ten thousand? Or do you lose all the other points you scooped up on the current leg? Might you be disqualified? Sent to bed without cookies?

It was an odd situation. Here the rider was told what to do, but not told what would happen if he didn't. Moore decided to take a chance. He headed to Atlanta, knowing that if he did so, there was no way he could make it to College Park before the bonus window slammed shut. At some point he called Patterson. “What happens if I can't make College Park on time?” For the second time in the rally Patterson came up with the wrong answer: “Nothing.” At least two other riders were told the same thing.

On Friday, September 6, as the remainder of the field steamed north toward Washington, D.C. and College Park, disaster struck. Late in the afternoon an oil truck with two tankers jackknifed and exploded just south of the beltway on I-95, turning the region's customary awful rush hour into a scene from Dante's *Inferno*. The northbound interstate came to a complete halt for hours.

Out of that fireball and hellish mess the Iron Butt goddess was about to hand Alan Pease the break he needed. D.C.'s impenetrable traffic congestion, second only to that of Los Angeles, may terrify the ordinary motorist, but Pease felt like the proverbial hare in a briar patch. He'd not only grown up in Washington, he'd attended the University of Maryland, not three minutes south of the bonus stop he had to make.

Maneuvering his bike off the impassable interstate onto back roads in northern Virginia, Pease eventually found U.S. 1, which parallels the interstate from Miami to Maine. That led him straight through Washington and to the bonus in suburban Maryland. A few riders had also hit the cycle shop in time, but Pease recalls that none had been ahead of him in the standings

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at Daytona. He waited until 9:00 p.m. No one else rode in. He got back on his bike with a smile, believing that he had just won the rally. Those are the sorts of memories that you do not quickly forget, not even after 25 years.

Gary Moore was also smiling that evening. Sure, he was hours late arriving in College Park, but he had a waiver from the rallymaster for that “mandatory” bonus. He had a huge bag of points from Atlanta, points that Egloff could not overcome, and thus became the second rider heading to the barn in Montgomeryville in the belief that the Iron Butt Rally was his.

Incredibly, a third rider shared Pease’s and Moore’s winning conviction on that last night of the event. George Egloff had also been ensnared in the I-95 traffic jam. He told Suze Mann that he had persuaded a Virginia highway trooper to permit him to pass through the blockade to the next exit, and by so doing was able to make the “mandatory” bonus with 15 minutes to spare.

It took no time at all after the last rider came into the Cycle Center’s parking lot on the morning of September 7 for Gary Patterson’s decisions in the final hours of the rally to implode. There were the following possibilities:

1. If the College Park bonus is “mandatory,” then either Egloff or Pease wins, depending on whether Egloff really did make it to College Park on time; or
If College Park is thrown out but the rest of the leg survives, then Moore wins; or
If the last leg is tossed altogether, then Egloff wins, because he

was leading at the last checkpoint in Daytona.

Alan Pease could almost see it coming. Summoned to Patterson’s office in mid-afternoon, he strode in with blood in his eye. “You have thrown out the entire last leg?” Pease asked heatedly. “Is this true?” Patterson nodded. Pease lit into him. There had been no legitimate reason to dump the College Park bonus, he argued. No one ahead of him in Daytona made it to the bonus on time. Patterson didn’t dispute that. To throw the final leg was just to hand the rally to Egloff.

Patterson leaned back and explained the facts of life to BMW’s factory rider. “I can’t afford to have a BMW win this event,” he said. The marque’s reputation for endurance was well-known. It had won the Paris-Dakar rally the last three years. A Japanese bike had to win the Iron Butt. It was unnecessary for Patterson to add that the Cycle Center sold Hondas and Suzukis.

“I won this rally,” Pease repeated angrily. At that he turned, left the office, skipped the final banquet, and rode straight home.

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For 25 years the vague hint of a fix has haunted the rally. Is the reputation deserved? Of all the decisions Patterson made, scrapping the west coast bonuses was clearly the worst. Egloff was finished at that point; Patterson saved him, inadvertently or otherwise. On the final leg, once Patterson had told Moore that College Park wasn’t really mandatory, the entire leg was compromised beyond recovery. Yet again Egloff was the principal beneficiary.

George Egloff and Gary Patterson vanished years ago. Absent evidence in the form of a smoking gun, we may never be certain what really happened. This much is true: Patterson accurately predicted to Pease that a Japanese bike would win the rally. It just wasn’t fated to be Gary Moore’s Gold Wing.

Money once again had brought the event to its knees. The lack of it had almost killed the ’84 rally at the start. Now commercial concerns had produced different but just as unhappy results in 1985. Changes were going to have to be made. In our next segment, we’ll see how successful they were in the 1986 and 1987 rallies.

To be continued... ●



The Top Ten Table. Left to right: Jeff Janks (9th), Gary Moore (2nd), Rob Eilertson (3rd), George Egloff (1st), Suze Mann (5th), Jim Newbery (4th), Richard Hoffman (6th), Roy Eastwood (7th). Not shown: Alan Pease (8th) and John “Stu” Moore (10th). Photo by Carol Taub.