

## Friday June 14 Day -3                      The Gathering Storm

Large areas of the western US and Canada are experiencing smoky skies from massive forest fires. Significant areas of the midwestern states are under water from massive flooding. A few mountain passes in the Rockies remain closed due to the massive snowfall during recent months. Those familiar with the cycles of climatic history don't really think these headlines are signs portending some larger apocalyptic event. However, given the history of past Iron Butt rallies, the variety of environmental havoc being experienced around the country does seem unsurprising, perhaps even appropriate, for the impending start of the 2019 IBR. Some might even wonder if Mike Kneebone and Lisa Landry's infamous reputations for somehow wielding sway over challenging environmental conditions every two years is about to step up to the next level.

We saw news reports claiming the rockslide which caused a shutdown of I-40 in Tennessee had been cleared on Tuesday. However, riders arriving at rally headquarters saw a massive back up of traffic on I-40 on Wednesday. While both westbound lanes are reported open, contractor efforts to secure the damaged rock face above the slide area are apparently causing traffic problems for the westbound lanes. The resulting 20-mile-long traffic jam contained a number of riders stuck on the slab, some presumably on their way to the BMWMOA Rally in Tennessee, roasting in the heat and humidity. Why does that matter to IBR riders? Glad you asked!

I-40 is a major corridor for anyone in South Carolina looking to head west. The rally will start on Monday, June 17<sup>th</sup>, from the Marriott in Greenville, South Carolina. Depending on where the points might be, finding an efficient route across the Appalachians could be a priority for the 100 bikes leaving the parking lot at 10:00am local time. No word yet on when the stabilization work will be completed, allowing the interstate traffic to flow smoothly again.

### Lots of Staff Assistance

The volunteers who choreograph the Long Distance world's "Big Dance" are gathering and getting everything set up to process the riders tomorrow. Mike and Lisa rely on a group of dedicated volunteers to make sure all the parts necessary to make an 11 day, 11,000 mile rally operate like a well-oiled machine, or as close to that metaphorical ideal as possible.

Steve Hobart is back as photographer and is already posting great shots of the early arrivals. Brian Roberts is here with Tom Austin's fuel volume measurement tools. There are still a few riders with auxiliary fuel tanks which have not been certified to keep the total fuel system volume below 11.5 gallons, including lines and filters. Several riders with volume uncomfortably close to the limit were proactive and had their tanks tested by Brian at the JAX Meet or some other time during the last 14 months of preparation time. Dan Crowley, the rider with the bike umbrella already featured in Steve's photo posts was the only one to get a fuel volume test today. His set up measured under the 11.5 gallon limit, with a bit of room to spare.

Dennis Bitner and John Ferber, along with assistance from Verne and Bonnie Hauck, Greg and Pat Blewett, Roger Van Santen, and Jeannie Cumbie will be handling the rider video sessions. Tim Masterson and Nancy Oswald will be running the odometer verification checks.

Jeff Earls, Kathy Engholm, Jim and Donna Fousek, and Eddie Otto are handling rider check in, with Mr. Iron Butt himself, Mike Kneebone, doing the final sign off on the process. Eddie's task is checking the rider's insurance paperwork for compliance with the rules. This sounds simple, but somehow someone always has an issue. Dave McQueeney, Ira Agins, Paul Tong, and Bill Shaw are handling the formatting and verification of the rider's camera cards. Chris and Nancy Sakala are handling satellite tracker verification. Karen Van Santen and Colleen McPhee are distributing rider packets.

Dale Wilson, with assistance from Eric Vallaincourt, Cletha Walstrand, Jim Bain, Greg Roberts, and Rob Nye, will be conducting tech inspections. Dale has already been out in the parking lot today, answering questions about some potentially problematic farkle installations. It has been reported several rookies found the need to re-evaluate aux fuel tank mounting and venting methods prior to the official tech inspection process tomorrow. Unfortunately, this is an issue at every IBR.

### Mechanicals

There was no Day -5 report. But if there had been, it would have featured the only two-time IBR winner, Jim Owen, along with fellow IBR finisher Andy Mackey. Jim was only 100 miles from home, on the way to Greenville, when his new 2018 BMW R1200RT died. The problem was diagnosed as water in the fuel and was quickly corrected. Jim has arrived safely at Rally Central.

Andy had a slightly more serious issue with his 2009 BMW R1200GSA. The final drive started leaking oil all over the rear tire. Yes, if you have followed past IBR reports, you have read about far too many riders' hopes and dreams being crushed by the infamous BMW final drive failures. However, in this case, the final drive had about 200,000 miles on it, so maybe it was due.

Andy, who is from the Bay area in California, was on his way to Greenville and found himself near Grand Junction, Colorado when the drive started leaking oil. After getting the bike to the local BMW dealership and enduring a few stops and starts with the repair options, the dealer stepped up and found a new final drive unit (ironically located very near Andy's hometown) and had it shipped overnight. Andy was able to get back on the road and is safely here at Rally Central. He reported being very pleased with the assistance from the BMW dealership, which not only got him on the road, but did not gouge or take advantage of a rider on the road and in need of assistance. A tip of the helmet to Grand Junction BMW & KTM.

While not having any issues with the typically reliable Yamaha final drives, Dan Simmonds was having trouble getting his Super Tenere to start. To see a rider with his bike torn down to the fuel injectors and cylinder heads in the parking lot the day before tech inspection is not what any of the rally staff wants to see. It is certainly not what a rider wants to have to deal with at this state of the game. Water in the fuel was eliminated as a potential cause, along with most of the other possibilities which can be checked in a hotel parking lot.

The bike was hauled to a local shop for further diagnosis. In addition, Dan is having an issue with his Spot tracker not sending tracks. No rider wants to make the daily reports with problems on Day -3 before the start, but we are hoping Dan will get this resolved and have all his problems out of the way for the rest of the rally. We will post more details as they become known. Note: Things happen fast and before we could get this report posted, we received word of a solution being found for Dan's non-start issue. Apparently, the TPS, or throttle position sensor, failed. Without a functioning TPS, the ECM does

not know what it needs to do. A replacement unit has been ordered and will hopefully arrive in time for Dan to start with the rest of the riders on Monday.

Dan and the other riders having issues with their satellite trackers will likely find many spectators and fans offering their personal tracker units as needed to resolve issues and get the check-in process back on track. The Iron Butt community has always been a great group of people who can always be counted on to step up and help fellow riders in need of assistance.

### Checking In...or Not

The rider check in process should go smoothly, if all the riders have been reading, understanding, and following through on the information in the newsletters sent by Rally Master Lisa Landry during the past 14 months. However, past experiences would predict a significant gap between what should happen and what does happen for many riders during the check in process. Reading comprehension issues, forgotten items, procrastination, or dozens of other oversights can derail the rider's check in process.

When staff finds a paperwork issue or tech issue which stops the process, the riders must scramble to resolve the situation to the satisfaction of the staff. Stress levels rise. The cost is more than just time and frustration for the rider. It is difficult to remain calm and get quality rest when a problem arises which could potentially end a rider's dream of an Iron Butt Rally finish before they even get started. Most issues tend to get resolved in time, but some riders may find it difficult to recover from the stress and missed sleep, potentially putting a damper on the rest of their rally. There are no pity parties allowed for adults who have had 14 months of direction and reminders about everything they need to do to be ready for this rally.

### More to come

And what a rally Lisa and Jeff have planned for these riders! The first thing I did when I started looking over the rally design was to email Lisa and ask if it was too late to resign as scribe and enter the rally. This is going to be an amazing adventure and quite a challenge, as it should be. After all, this is the World's Toughest Endurance Rally for the World's Toughest Riders. The solo competitors, two up riders, and even a few teams are in for quite a treat as they open the rally packets on Sunday evening and attempt to solve Jeff's 2019 puzzle.

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