

June 26-27, 1999

The Utah 1088. That name is renown among the endurance motorcycling community. It was not the first 24 hour rally but has become known as one of the best; one of the crown jewels of the sport. It has gained this recognition because it is a Challenge. RallyBastard(tm) Steve Chalmers is visibly dissapointed if he doesn't get a certain percentage of the field to DNF.

1999 would see the 8th running of the event. Top riders from all over the country once again congregated in Salt Lake City to take the abuse that Steve would throw out. The riders' plan? Push back on Steve ... Take the abuse and ask for more, all the while exclaiming "Is that all you got?!"

As in '98, the '99 running would be a 26 hour rally. The clock would start at 0700 Saturday. If you had not crossed the line and handed in your rally pack, receipts, and bonus info to Steve by 0900:00 Sunday, you were DNF Bubba. Thanks for playing and enjoy the banquet.

My rally began with an 875 mile warmup ride from home in the Portland area to SLC. I took a detour through Jackpot and Wells, NV just for the hell of it. I arrived as tech inspection was just beginning on Friday.

At 1915, Steve call the riders meeting. He started by having three previous winners, Bill Weyher, Gary Eagan, and Bill Newton, each give advice to the new riders. After that Steve again had the curb. He laid down the Law of the Rally. Thou Shalt not Cheat. Thou Shalt Help a Fellow Rider in Need. Thou Shalt not be Late.

The meeting ended with the handing out of the rally packs. As envelopes were snatched, the crowd evaporated. I returned to my room, grabbed my maps and calculator, and headed to the hotel restuarant. I would think it out over dinner.

As in '98, there were three route options. Route 1 was the "basic" rally. A base route with three mandatory time checkpoints and 31 bonus loops. Some of the bonuses were right on the main route. Route 2 was the high mileage route. No checkpoints but a rider taking this route had to return in 26 hours with proof of having visited Bend, OR, Sacramento, CA, and Tonopah, NV. Route 3 was a "halfway" between routes 1 and 2. To get the points for Route 3, a rider must get gas receipts from Grand Junction, CO and Durango, CO, must make the mandatory checkpoint between 1700 and 1900 in Helper, UT, and collect a \$1 casino chip from Mesquite, NV. Riders taking Routes 2 or 3 could collect any bonus from the Route 1

listing although they must also take the time to maintain a fuel log. Any rider choosing Route 2 or 3 would have to declare as such Saturday morning before the start.

After a cursory check of available point totals, I chose Route 3. There were many bonuses off Route 1 that would work very well if I timed it right. Completing Route 3 was worth 4950 by itself. A gas receipt from Cortez, CO was worth 662. A Keno ticket dated 6/26/99 from any Las Vegas casino worth 919. Another Keno ticket from Ely, NV dated after 0330 MDT Sunday worth a further 422. The tickets must have 10, 80, and 8 as the numbers being played.

I didn't really want to go to Vegas (I hate the place) so I worked out other potential high point options.

I decided to do the Colorado loop first. Smack in the middle of the loop was the "Million Dollar Highway", US550. This road runs between Ouray and Durango, CO. There are three passes over 10,000 feet. It would be a beautiful Saturday and tourists would be clogging it. I had to account for a big time loss here. I marked time points on my map. I had to hit the marked towns by that time or I wouldn't make the checkpoint back in Helper. For example, I had to be in Durango later than 7:21 after the start (I used my GPSIII+ trip timer for this). I had to be in Cortez at 8:06 on the timer. At Helper, "Leg 1" would be complete and I'd reset the timer for the run to Mesquite and the finish. If I didn't make it back to Helper by 12:00 on the timer, I would lose any chance of collecting the 4950 points for completing Route 3.

At this point I should mention that to be an official finisher, a rider would need to return on time with 1157 or more miles in hand. That was the length of the base route this year.

At 0615 Saturday, Steve called another riders meeting. None declared for Route 2. This is just as well. We had a straight jacket ready for anyone who might have. Eighteen riders declared for Route 3. Steve was definitely cackling and wringing his hands. The remainder of the 67 rider field would ride Route 1.

At 0700 the clock started and we were off.

My route was the most direct to Grand Junction: I-80 to I-215 to I-15 to US6 to I-70 to Colorado. Along the way I collected two bonuses on US 6 NW of Helper and dropped a GPS waypoint as I rode by what would be the site of the checkpoint later in the evening. I collected my gas receipt from

Grand Junction 1 hour ahead of my time mark on the map. I bypassed the 500+ point "sucker" bonus at Colorado Nat'l Mon. It would just take up too much of the clock to collect. I did, however, continue east on I-70 to Cameo to grab a bonus at the power station. Then it was back to Grand Junction and south towards Durango.

Between Delta and Montrose I came up on another rally participant. It was Steve Taylor on a new K1200LT (it still had temp tags). I passed him and he decided to latch onto my license plate. Ok by me. We would ride "together" until Cortez. Approaching Ouray, we got very lucky. There was a huge construction zone including a warning about 15 minute delays and a pilot car. I could hear the RallyBastard laughing. We latched onto the end of the line of traffic that was being led through. One or two cars behind us and the flagman flipped the sign from "slow" to "stop". Once through the work zone, we picked off the traffic 1, 2 and 3 at a time. Despite this it was unavoidable that we would get stuck behind slow vehicles up the passes. Every soccer mom and her SUV was out on Saturday. We made what time we could and that's all I'm going to say about that.

I pulled into a station in Durango 10 minutes ahead of the mark on my map. I'd lost 50 minutes on the Million Dollar Highway and would have to move if I was going to make the checkpoint. Fortyseven miles later I was in Cortez, putting 1.17 gallons in the auxiliary tank for 662 points. Steve didn't stop here when I did. (At the banquet he admitted to wanting the "Doofus Award" for blowing right through Cortez. He told me he thought I was stopping to make a phone call or something.)

From Cortez it was straight through Moab to Helper. There was nothing to do but ride my ass off and watch the clock tick. Running up US 6 I waved to the Route 3 riders that chose to do the Nevada loop first. They had already hit the check and were on their way east. I made the check at 1830. Since my Leg 2 time marks were based on a 1900 start, I had a few moments to down some energy bars and stretch.

Unlike Leg 1, I had 14 hours to complete Leg 2. But Leg 2 would be some 200 miles longer and at night. The advantage came from my knowing they would be open roads.

Slightly before 1900, I was off to Mesquite. I stopped briefly to collect a bonus in Price. I found myself riding south on UT-10 about 1/4 mile behind Bill Newton, the winner of the '98 event. We kept this spacing until I-70 at which point I passed him and he maintained that same interval behind me.

South of Richfield we came up on a police roadblock. My guess is that they were looking for a fugitive. They just waved us through and I was happy for that. As we tured west over the mountains towards I-15 we were greeted by a stunning sunset. Off in the distance were five lines of mountain ridges capped by a tangerine sun on the right side. Breathtaking but I had to enjoy it on the move.

I stopped in Beaver to gas up, apply a BreathRight nose strip (they work), and put on my electric vest.

The rest of the ride south to Mesquite was uneventful except for the run through Virgin Canyon. This is where I-15 cuts the extreme NW corner of Arizona. I was totally unprepared for it, expecting only a rolling desert. Incredible scenery. But how could I tell, it was night, correct? Yes, it was ... with a nearly full moon. The moon was bright enough to illuminate the canyon I was riding down and cast shadows on the walls. I was so entranced, that I almost missed one corner. People ask why I ride the miles. If you don't get out there, you're going to miss the moments like this.

Bill was finishing gassing up as I pulled into Mesquite. He tailed me up to the Rancho Mesquite casino. As I parked, he said he'd watch the bikes as I collected a couple of chips and that he'd return the favor with the keno tickets in Vegas. Now at that point I was thinking of running back north to grab a bonus available at the 3rd Route 1 checkpoint in Delta, UT. I really didn't want to deal with Vegas. But wait a minute, sez I ... Bill has done this before. He knows how to get in and out of that city. It was 11:20 and it was 1 hour to Vegas but that was Mountain time, Vegas is on Pacific time. We could make it and get our tickets dated 6/26/99. Let's do it. (I thanked Bill later for this ... that moment in Mesquite is officially the moment at which I pulled my thumb out of my ass in terms of changing from just running a rally to finishing high in the standings.) I ran in and grabbed the chips.

Some 10 miles south of Mesquite, I was following Bill and suddenly found myself with a wingman. It turned out to be Gary Eagan. He passed us and we sucked up into his draft. Now I see part of how he won the '95 Iron Butt. The guy flat moves. I will not disclose numbers but we covered the remaining 60 miles to Vegas in short order. Gary led us to the Golden Nugget downtown. I watched the bikes in the valet area as Gary and Bill went in for tickets. They returned with slips of paper dated 6/26, timed 11:30 (PDT) or thereabouts. I now know how to deal with any potential Vegas bonus on future rallies. Into and out of the downtown casino area is a breeze. Tip the valet well and no worries about the bike.

Now north to Ely. This was a straight 250 mile shot up US93 and NV318. There were plenty of kamikazi jackrabbits to keep up entertained. Because of the wording of the Ely bonus, no one doing Route 3 could collect it before 0330MDT. We got to Ely at 0240PDT and got gas receipts. Bill and I then went to the closest casino and found fellow rallyist Paul Unmacht (sp?). He relayed to us that no casino in town had live Keno. This was disturbing because the bonus specifically said we need a keno ticket. We went to another casino downtown and confirmed the story. No live keno in Ely. The operator there gave me a signed statement to that effect, along with a casino bumper sticker. I also bought a \$1 gaming token, and took a photo of the electronic "keno" machine to prove I was there. My gas receipt would have to confirm my time of arrival.

Bill left me studying my map. It was ~350MDT and I had 5 hours to do "whatever" back to the finish. This was where my original rally plan ended; "Get to Ely on time, then finish." There were no points in taking the direct route back to SLC through Wendover. Instead I decided to run through Delta, taking the longer route and grabbing the two bonuses on the west side of Utah Lake.

I did that and returned to the start/finish at 0756. I noted my ending mileage and took about 15 minutes to put all my paperwork in order. My rally, for good or bad, was done. I had posted a new personal best 24hr mileage mark at 1654 and finished the event with 1716 on the odo. All the miles had been fruitful in terms of points and I felt good. Time and the RallyBastard's computer would tell the rest.

I overslept the banquet by 45 minutes but managed to grab a plate of dinner as Steve Chalmers was reading the awards. As I sat down to eat, he announced 8th place ... with fewer points than I determined I had. A good sign, that. He worked up to 7th, 6th, and 5th. At 5th he called Bill Newton's name. We ran the rally pretty much in lockstep. Any difference was in what we collected after Ely. Yep, by only a few points I had topped Bill and taken 4th. A few points farther up was Gary Eagan in 3rd. The event had it's first repeat champ in Bill Weyher. I felt *really* good to have placed in this company.

I should mention that Steve Chalmers was definitely irked that all 18 Route 3 riders had made the checkpoint in Helper. ;-)

Thanks go out to Steve and Janiel, and all those who helped put on this year's event. The Utah 1088 is one *hell* of a challenge. Keep it up!