

What does it take to DNF? by Joe Zulaski

I was to find out soon enough. My purpose for doing the Utah 1088 this year was two-fold. I had always wanted to do it but the last two years work had intervened. I also wanted to practice several things during a top-notch rally in preparation for the Iron Butt Rally.

I was to learn that I'm not as good at this as I thought I was (hey Steve, I want my cape back ;-).

My goals were to see as much of Utah and the surrounding states as possible, practice my route planning and distance management skills, and ride a lot of miles. I accomplished all of these goals. Why then did I DNF? Laziness, Arrogance, Stubbornness and Tiredness or L.A.S.T. for short.

Friday night after Steve handed out the route sheets, I retired to my room and started the planning process. However, after only plotting a few main route bonii, I jumped ahead and looked at the bonus for the alternate routes (laziness). Route three was impossible for me. Go to Glacier National Park in Montana (ok) but then you had to go to Portland, Oregon (no way). So, I looked at route two. Hmmmm, the points immediately intrigued me. 4900+ points for getting a gas receipt from seven states surrounding Utah plus Utah itself. I thought I needed to figure out a way to incorporate this into my plan. But, 4-5000 points wouldn't win the rally I figured.

So, I needed more. Back to the main route I went but now with the idea of seeing if there were a few high bonii there to be added to the second route. I eventually selected eight other bonii from the main route that I was eligible for on the second route (you could only do certain bonuses from the main route if you chose an alternate route). These included doing the two (now optional) checkpoints, four corners of Utah, and three casinos. The total of all of these was about 9500+ points. However, it meant trying to ride 1800+ miles in 25 hours. But, I was pretty cocky (arrogance) - having just done 1609 miles in 22 hours during the Mass Gold ride and I thought I was up to the task. My mistake was not comparing this to the main route points.

My chosen route would have me head for Evanston, Wyoming on I-80 for the first state. Then, I would backtrack to I-15 south to the first checkpoint at Nephi. Then onto I-70 which would take me to Colorado for my second state. Then I would swing south at Crescent Junction onto 191 and pick up my first "Utah corner" at Monticello, UT. I would then head back on I-70 to pickup the second checkpoint at Beaver on I-15. Then work my way down I-15 and over to Kanab, UT for my next "corner". Then cross Arizona for my third state (although it would actually be my fourth counting Utah itself). Then, down to Mesquite for a casino chip and north to Ely, Wendover, and Jackpot for keno tickets and my fifth state. I would then hit Idaho and Ontario, Oregon for my sixth and seventh states. Finally, I would race back to Snowville for my "fourth" corner and then onto Salt Lake City for the finish.

Yeah, right!

I made several routing mistakes right away. I assumed that, although the two checkpoints weren't required, I could still get points for them and so I laid out my routes accordingly. Wrong. The next morning I found out that even if I did go to the checkpoints, route two riders weren't eligible for their points. This changed my plan and dropped my possible score by some 2000+ points. I then decided to add a couple of other bonii - a cemetery near Zion National Park and gaming chip from Las Vegas - both were worth 1000+ points but also added miles. I also thought I could return to the starting line by 9am for 550 points - this was a late, secret bonus that was announced just before the start. Oh, did I mention that I was the ONLY rider to select an alternate route? That should have been a clue but I now had no choice as I hadn't laid out a backup plan.

The mistake I made next was not to better revise my route better. I did quickly change to a faster, shorter route on the first leg from Wyoming to Colorado but forgot to look at alternate ways for the second leg from Monticello to Kanab. I had forgotten that the only reason I was backtracking along I-70 was to make it back to a checkpoint. Now I didn't need to return to I-70 but instead, I could have continued south into Arizona and saved lots of time AND miles by taking 191 south to 163 and then up to

Page on 89. Not having the Arizona map laid out probably contributed to this error. I was using just the Utah map as that's all I had needed with the prior route.

Another problem I would find out later was that I would have to go through Zion National Park and not "by it" as I had assumed in order to get to the Cemetery bonus. This would consume another good 45 minutes extra.

Add to that two delays to converse with LEO's and I had the makings of a total debacle (Note: I got off both interviews with only one 5 over citation - i.e., no points).

I was pretty much ahead of schedule until the LEO stop right before Monticello. This delayed me about 1/2 hour. Then, the routing mistake from Monticello compounded my delay. Stubbornness to get to Kanab caused my next LEO encounter but I was only delayed another 1/2 hour, not cited. I finally got to Kanab and made another mistake. I chose to go after the cemetery bonus rather than just head for Arizona and the other states. I think I was already realizing that I had screwed the pooch and wanted at least SOME points on the board (I didn't have any yet because the you had to have all 7 states and all four corners to get points).

So, back towards Zion I headed and soon realized THAT was a time cruncher too. Add to that the time to find the cemetery along old dirt, gravel roads at eleven thirty at night and you've got the makings of a dnf.

Still, I now had at least 1100 points - finally. I should have beat feet towards the finish and called it a day. But, then I thought that I'd go to Las Vegas, get another 1000 or so points and then head straight back to Salt Lake City with my tail between my legs. This was another mistake.

South I headed and made it as far as Mesquite, Nevada (and my fifth state BTW) before I realized that I was too tired to continue. I re-evaluated my physical condition and realized that I was just asking to fall asleep on the bike. I decided right then and there to grab a room for at least a half hour's nap. But, no rooms were

available. I traveled all the way back up I-15 until Cedar City before I was able to find a room. By then, it was almost 3am. I was still about 5 or 6 hours from SLC and the finish which was at 8am. I was screwed!

So, I slept for 3 hours and then called Steve to inform him that I would be a DNF. I then road my ST leasurely back to the finish with another 1500+ day under my belt and enjoyed a sumptious feast at the banquet, some cold O-douls non-beer, and the great stories of my compatriots.

In short, I had a great time, rode a lot of miles, and learned a lot more about rallying.

See you next year, Steve.