

Doug Tebbs

10n10 Experience

Rider Report - from the beginning

After studying everything I could get my hands on about the long distance riding community, I decided I wanted to add long distance riding to my extra curricular activities. I purchased my BMW R1200RT and called Steve Chalmers to see about my getting into the 1088. My first goal was to start with a reasonable length for my first rally and to do the rally in a geographical area I know well. Unfortunately, the 1088 was full, but Steve had the 10n10 still with open rider slots. When we met for lunch to discuss the 10n10, Steve gave me a license plate holder and I gave him my entry fee. After a few days I began to have those nagging thoughts one gets when one realizes he is getting in over his head. I remember asking Steve if I could transfer my fee to the '11 1088. He said no - the fee was non-transferrable. Well, I couldn't let the fee go to waste. Several riders suggested I go out and ride a lot to build up my endurance and to learn what works for me and what doesn't, prior to doing the 10n10. In July I completed a BB1500 Gold in 22 hours. Two weeks later I completed a SS1000 in 18 hours. The rides helped me fix some problems (seating, lighting, using a tank bag, adding an auxiliary tank, and the location of my GPS unit). However, after completing the two rides, I began to really feel intimidated that 10 days of 1,000 per day was a huge undertaking. I kept reminding myself that I was being given the excuse to ride all over the U.S. - that has to be fun in its own right. Even, if I don't succeed, what an opportunity.

Upon receiving the bonus pack I begin considering how best to analyze the mountain of data and to come up with a reasonable approach for formulating my route. I found Queen b's blog helpful. I am visual so I used a large size U.S. map to plot the bonuses. Still, how to select and transfer bonuses into a route plan was a puzzle until more advice came my way on how to do it. I purchased Streets and Trips 2010 and loaded the program onto my computer. I learned how to use the program by entering all of the 10n10 bonuses, using different colors to represent point levels, and doing "what-if" on route selection. The process was useful and gave me a beginner's feel for how one distills data into meaningful route combinations. I also gained a better working knowledge of how to use my GPS. I am fairly competitive, which guided me into an aggressive bonus acquisition plan. As I look back on my plan, with my post-rally understanding and listening to others' 10n10 experience. I definitely was too aggressive. My route was fairly well conceived - I went west, then southwest, Nv, Ut., Co., and Sidney. Then east through Missouri, Tenn, No. Carolina (to Kitty Hawk), then north through D.C., NY, upper Michigan, Minn, then back to SLC. My total points exceeded 700,000. With my bonuses selected I saw three problems:

1. A great route but way too many bonus locations, which led to a realization that as a newbie, I might not be able to maintain such an aggressive bonus acquisition schedule.
2. There might be a conflict between the time taken to chase bonuses and exceeding 10,000 miles.
3. How will weather impact my route and mileage.

It was at this point that I prioritized my goals. My starting plan was to go after bonus points aggressively but not at the expense of obtaining the 10n10 certificate. If a conflict developed I would adjust my plan to go for the miles and save bonus point acquisition to a future rally. I would also take a closer look at the weather projections and determine how weather might adversely affect my route. Maura gave me some advice during the pre-rally banquet. She said there are rally days where you just feel like a failure and want to quit. Nothing is going right (i.e. the bike isn't working, your body isn't cooperating, the weather is bad, bonus locations are not readily showing themselves, and so on). Instead of doggedly following the original plan or instead of quitting, take a time out. Go get some

sleep, regroup, re-prioritize, adjust the plan, then move forward. That was basically my mindset going into the rally.

A note: After seeing what Ken and Wendy did I am totally in awe of their drive and determination. Not only did they get the points but they got the miles too and all done while pushing through some challenging weather. Their performance gives me a small understanding of what it might take to win one of these events.

With my routes planned I was ready to download waypoints to the GPS. Two nights before the rally I decided to go to some of my favorite pilot weather sites to see how weather might impact my route. High level wind currents, jet stream, and gulf activity gave me a picture of the possibility of severe weather over the mid states (fronts stretching from Chicago to Texas, with squall lines, rain, hail, you name it – bad stuff) that will move east during my routing east from Sidney. Finally, there was also the issue of Earl causing problems on the east coast. On the night before the banquet I reversed my route by choosing to go east first, then Sidney, then west. That way I would be in good weather out east, punch through the front around Western Nebraska, hopefully before the front began to build, and go west into cooler, fair weather.

My eastern route would take me to the Boone grave markers, Floyd Garrett's museum, Dolly Parton, Kitty Hawk then D.C. Saturday morning. At the pre-rally banquet, one of the riders, after hearing I was going east, asked if I was aware that Glen Beck was holding a Saturday rally at the Lincoln Memorial? I wasn't! Knowing this meant that I probably couldn't make it to the Mall on Saturday or even move around the area due to gridlock, metro lock, everything lock caused by hundreds of thousands of people being at the rally. I had to change my plans. I scraped the route to the Kitty Hawk and decided to go straight for D.C. arriving Friday night, get the monuments, then Saturday morning go to Dulles and leave for Gettysburg getting "out of Dodge" before the rally began. I felt I had no choice about driving straight through or I would need to give up the D.C. bonuses, which would mess up some of the western bonuses I had planned. Of course, that meant driving 2,200 miles and not stopping for sleep. I hadn't driven through the night since I was a young man. Now, at my age, I'm thinking of driving straight through and on a motorcycle! I'm crazy! Later, after reading rider reports, I see that others did drive through the night at times to meet their goals. I wasn't alone in the crazy department.

Thursday morning I arrived at the hotel, ready for the rally. I was luckier than the rest of the riders in that I could sleep in my own bed since I live less than 20 minutes from the SL Airport. I also had four generations follow me to see me off. They mingled with the riders, asking questions, and looked over their bikes. I had my 98 year old mother-in-law, my wife and her sister (she lives in Abu Dhabi and was visiting us), my daughter and two of her children, and my cousin. The riders were very warm and open with my family. It was a fun experience for them.

Thursday-Friday (Days 1&2). Once the rally was underway, I decided to first go to the Utah State Capitol and to buy gas to gauge how long it takes to obtain a capitol bonus point. After reading what Brian and RJ did to obtain points – wow, those guys know how to think "outside the box". I was plain dull compared to them. After the capitol I headed east keeping my speed limit at 5 mph over the posted limit (I'm conservative, what can I say). Stopped for gas in the middle of Wyoming, then Cheyenne for gas and a capitol picture. In the middle of Nebraska a neat thing happened. As the sun was setting directly behind me - perfectly aligned with I-80, the moon was coming up directly in front of me - again perfectly aligned with I-80. It was quite a sight. The weather was peaceful, no wind, nice temperature, minimal traffic (relatively speaking for I-80). I arrived at the Mississippi River as the sun was coming up. Stopped for gas and a #2 breakfast from good old McDonalds. After crossing the Mississippi I noticed a 10 mph drop in all of the speed limits – tough. I knew I was going to miss our western speed limits. It was off to the toll roads. I previously purchased an EZ-Pass, which worked great as I moved east along I-80. I worked my way down to D.C. and the Mall. Friday night there were already thousands of people camping out. I was very lucky to slip in and get the pictures, I needed. I spent the night at my brother-in-law's home out by Dulles.

Saturday (Day 3). When I left my brother-in-law's, I only had 5 miles to go to get the NRA bonus but somehow lost it. The GPS sent me onto a freeway going back into D.C. and the traffic jam was serious. I managed to get off on an exit a few miles down the road. At that point it was 10:45am and I wanted to be at Dulles for the Concorde and Enola Gay when the museum opened at 11am. I dropped the NRA and headed for Dulles. It killed that I couldn't stay at the museum all morning. There is so much to see and learn. Unfortunately, I'm on the clock. I got my pictures and then headed for Gettysburg. It was a great ride and I really enjoyed Gettysburg. The sight is definitely sacred. From Gettysburg I headed straight for the Basilone monument in Rariton, New Jersey. It was a slow ride with traffic, on and off multiple freeways, and small crowded streets, but I made it and got the picture. I then began my northwesterly route to Rochester and I-90 through the Adirondack Mountains. It was now evening and the beauty of the New York finger-lakes area was something to experience on a "mechanical horse". (Our bikes are like horses in what we experience on a ride except our rides eat gas and go "fast forward".) The air was clear, the stars out, and the mountains peaceful. I was now heading for Niagara Falls. I-90 had numerous construction stretches and a lot of traffic. I reached Buffalo at 11pm, was very tired, and not sure I wanted to risk another hour or so going to Niagara Falls to find I couldn't take the picture. I should have verified if night pictures were possible but I didn't and I didn't want to find out by going there. So I kept moving west. A little after 1am, I found a motel to sleep just west of Erie, Pa.

Sunday (Day 4). I was up at 4am and rode west without my hotel receipt and picture, just great. I was headed for the Mackinac Bridge and I would have to move right along to make my 4th day bonus goals. A new problem was surfacing - the conflict of staying on task obtaining bonuses/mileage and sightseeing. I hadn't planned on my need to "stop and smell the roses". My wife and I used to live south of Kirtland, Ohio in Chagrin Falls. I hadn't been there since 1986. I couldn't pass it up, so I detoured through Kirtland, Chagrin Falls, and Solon, Ohio visiting all our old memories. Sightseeing put me behind several hours. As I moved along the turnpike the temperature hovered around 97 degrees and the humidity was high. When coupled with the heavy traffic I got tired fast. The last three days were catching up with me. I was beginning to see the same warning signs I would get in a marathon when I ran out too fast too early in the race. I wasn't pacing myself very well on my first rally. On the Indiana Turnpike my left leg started to go numb and other parts began to chafe. My iron butt was more like a mush butt. It hurt and was getting worse. The thought of going to northern Michigan didn't appeal at all and didn't make sense considering my current condition and the timeline I would need to meet to go that far north and still make it to Sidney. I stopped at a rest stop and reconsidered my plan. Maura's advice popped into my head - go rest. So that's what I did. I headed south to Nauvoo, Illinois, a peaceful place by the Mississippi where I knew I could get a first class rest. As I was driving south, Sunday evening, I passed hundreds of motorcycles heading north back to Chicago, probably after a weekend of cruising the banks of the Mississippi. The ride was beautiful. Going through the fields and ending up on the river at the small country town of Nauvoo was a great emotional restorer for me. Before turning in I completed that 10n10 mandatory call to the rallymaster - then to bed and 8 hours of wonderful sleep!

Monday (Day 5). At 6am I left Nauvoo, crossing the Mississippi to the Iowa side. I traveled across Iowa, then Nebraska heading for Sidney. The weather was perfect, temperature just right, and the scenery was pleasing to a motorcyclist's senses. One hour before reaching Sidney, I punched through a small thunderstorm that was preceding the front coming from the west. The rain was sideways and traffic was pulling to the side. I kept going, albeit at a slower pace. I was in the bad weather for less than ½ an hour. That would be the sum total of rain for all of my 10 days of riding. I arrived at Sidney around 7pm. Checked in and obtained a great night's sleep - more wonderful recovery time.

Tuesday (Day 6). Prior to midpoint check-in, I had breakfast in the little restaurant at the hotel. It was the first time I had a chance to talk with other riders. It was fun listening to their western ride experiences, bonus hunting, weather issues, bike issues, being tired issues, etc. I was beginning to feel my ride was fairly dull compared to what the western riders were experiencing. I finished the mid-point check-in and left at 9am for Salt Lake City and ultimately Reno and the Bay area for the

western portion of my route. Across Wyoming the cross-winds were fairly strong but the temperature remained in the high 60's all day. In Salt Lake I stopped at Bavarian Motor Works and had Ron Schmitt's mechanics change out my tires. I know I still had 3,000 miles of tread left, but I thought it better to be safe than sorry since I was planning on cruising through Death Valley, Arizona, and New Mexico. Being so close to home I succumbed and made my hotel stop at my home in my own bed. Before going to bed I thought about my remaining four days of riding. It hit me like a block buster. My small mileage days coming west across the U.S. had put me in a serious deficiency. Ten thousand miles appeared out-of-reach since I still needed 5,200 miles over the next 4 days, which meant 1,300 miles per day. However, with less effort I could get 8,000 miles (800 miles/day) and at least be classified as a finisher. I could kick myself for letting my average daily mileage drop like it did, but I believe I did the right thing by slowing up and recovering. That decision would pay off in the last 4 days of the rally.

Wednesday (Day 7). At 3am I left home for Reno and the Bay Area and bonuses. While riding across Nevada, in temperatures ranging from 28 degrees to 39 degrees, I found myself rethinking my plan for the last four days of the 10n10. I was fairly "bumped out" about missing the 10/10ths certificate. Somewhere between Elko and Winnemucca I began to build up the courage to get the 10,000 miles. If I got up at 3am each day for the next four days and rode until 10pm-midnight, sleep three hours then go at it again, travel interstates as much as possible, and avoid bonus stops, except for a few key combination bonuses, I might make 10k by Sunday 10:10am. I had a new plan and was gaining my "second wind".

I stopped for a #2 breakfast at McDonalds in Winnemucca, Nv. In Reno I took a picture of Harrah's. Unfortunately, I couldn't find a suitable person to kiss. Going over the Sierra's was great. The weather was just right, there was hardly any traffic, and the construction didn't slow me that much. As I came down into Sacramento the temperature climbed into the mid 90's. My next stop was the Keller Museum in San Carlos. After getting the picture I was just about to leave when Jerry pulled up behind me on his bike to visit. He had been following my track across Nevada. We had a great visit for 20 minutes. But the clock was ticking, so off I went south on 101. As I crossed over from 101 to I-5, I had a near miss. While beginning to pass an 18-wheeler, its trailer back left tire blew, just as I came alongside. Fortunately, quick acceleration cleared me of the tire debris that zinged through the spot I was occupying the moment before. I-5 was hot and very congested and I was glad to get off it and start moving east. I wasn't about to go into LA and lose precious time/travel distance. I eventually got to I-15 and Barstow around midnight for some sleep. Completed 1200+ miles.

Thursday (Day 8). Slept until 3am then off again. I decided I would go up I-15 to St. George (stopped for #2 at McDonalds) then north up UT-18 and back into Nevada. The ride was a welcome change from California. I rode up to Ely, then over to Wendover, where I picked up the Enola Gay hanger, then west to Wells, north to Twin Falls, east to Pocatello, north to the Rexburg area (visited for 30 minutes with my wife's sister/husband - they fed me) then headed back to SLC. Going out of Rexburg I saw the most stunning sunset. Of course, I didn't get a picture because I kept leaving my camera in the back luggage instead of in my tankbag. Night settled on me by the time I reached Pocatello. I was back in SLC by 11pm. Completed another 1200+ miles.

Friday (Day 9). Slept until 3am then off again on a very boring but highly efficient ride from SLC to Reno, back to Wendover, reverse back to Wells, then back to SLC by midnight. Got my 1200+ miles.

Saturday (Day 10). Slept until 3am then off again. This time north to Missoula, Butte, east to Billings and then reverse back to SLC arriving in the late evening. Covered 1,200+. Crossing the Montana boarder into Idaho I encountered a very strong sand storm moving from west to east over the interstate. At times I couldn't see more than 50 yards in front of me. Gusts exceeded 70mph at times. Just north of Idaho Falls, the sandstorm ended. Got into bed around midnight. Got another 1200+ miles.

Sunday (Day 10 < 10:10am). Got up at 4pm. Decided to ride an extra 200 miles to make sure I was clearly over 10,000 miles. Rode to Wendover and back to the finish at the hotel. Arrived at 8:30am to Steve giving me a big congratulations on finishing. I enjoyed the next hour checking in and talking with riders. Went home for the day and return with my wife, Carolyn, for the award dinner. We sure enjoyed being with everyone. Carolyn especially enjoyed seeing the faces that were behind the little spotwalla flags she followed for 10 days.

Week Later. Now that I have had time to digest what happened, I can say the experience is one I'll put with the best experiences I have had during my lifetime. Thanks to you all. I look forward to seeing you in future rallies.