

Jeff Earls' 2003 UTAH 1088!

June 28, 2003

We got the 19-page bonus listing a little after 6am Saturday. We could leave at 7am. There were 46 bonuses on the main route and three tightly windowed checkpoints. Some bonuses required a GPS, some a Polaroid camera, some both. Some were "global", like the golf course scorecard bonus (from any course in Utah). There was a combo bonus (Primm & Jean, NV). There was a progressive bonus (Ports of Entry). I sensed a high probability of "helmet fire" and a missed checkpoints on the main route.

There were three alternate routes. Alt. route #2 was titled "The Hot One" and required visits to Baker, CA, Thermal, CA, and Caliente, NV. Alt route #3 was "The Prison Run" and required visits to the state pens of Utah (south of SLC), Wyoming (Rawlins), Colorado (Colorado Springs), and Arizona (Yuma). I forget the name of Alt. Route #4 but it involved visiting several casinos around Nevada.

There was a huge 4400+ point bonus in Lake Havasu City as well as the obligatory keno ticket bonus from Las Vegas (worth 2500 points). I calculated that for 1550+ miles of riding on fast roads, I could scoop up close to 20000 points. I quickly ran through what I thought a realistic total on the main route might be for a top finisher and also came up in the 20k point range. That settled it for me. I'd take the alternate route (#2) that I knew I could easily ride in the time allotted. I hoped to maintain a high enough average that I could make it back to the SLC area with 2 or 3 hours to spare, which I use to scavenge other nearby bonuses and push my total up to winning range.

Note that not all bonuses were available to alternate route riders. My route passed within 5 miles (total, cumulative) of 3 bonuses that totaled over 2300 points but that I couldn't collect because of this restriction, which would have put me in the top-3. But that's neither here nor there as Steve very carefully calculated out all the bonus points and restrictions to emphasize the main route. I knew that going in.

So I told Steve my intention to take route 2 and I was off shortly after 7am. My first stop was in Nephi for a scorecard from a golf course (830+ points). Stop #2 was in Cedar City to take a picture of a lighthouse for 300+ points. I had to pass the progressive bonus at the St. George Port of Entry because that was restricted to main route riders only. I made my first gas stop in Mesquite. I arrived in Las Vegas before 1300 MDT (all times will be Mountain time, regardless of actual time zone). I collected the keno ticket and was off on US95 south to Needles. The temp was over 110F in Vegas.

I got to Lake Havasu, AZ by 1530. The bonus required two of three items: a picture of the city limit sign, the GPS coordinates of London Bridge, a receipt dated 6/28/03. I did all three for insurance but the heat was brutal. It was 116F and by the time I got out of there at 1600, I'd been in it for four hours. The next stop was across the Mojave desert in Thermal. I made it only a few miles.

When I got the Parker, AZ I had to stop. I was suffering the onset of heat exhaustion. I stumbled into a convenience store, grabbed a quart of Powerade, threw two bucks on the counter, told the cashier to keep the change, and asked if she minded if I lay on the floor for 15 minutes. No problem. I ended up staying there for almost 30 minutes. It hurt my average speed but better than drive myself into a ditch from heat stroke.

Somewhate refreshed, and with the back pocket of my 'stich full of ice, I got back on the bike and rode to the Indio/Palm Springs area. There I had to repeat the "cool floor in the convenience store" exercise for 20 minutes in La Quinta, CA (it was still over 110F outside). I also got a little turned around on the location of Thermal in relation to Indio. It was hot and I wasn't thinking clearly. The clerks were very helpful and gave me a shortcut to Thermal. I thanked them profusely and went on my way.

I collected the Thermal part of the route (polaroid and receipt dated 6/28/03) then got back on I-10 towards Palm Springs. From there I turned north towards Yucca Valley. The wind was howling through San Gorgonio Pass and with it the temps

dropped below 110F for the first time in 8 hours. I never knew 105F could be so refreshing.

I took some fun two lane highways across the Mojave to reconnect with I-15 in Barstow. My biggest concern now was fatigue through the night. The heat of the day had beat me to a pulp and I knew I'd be struggling overnight. Unfortunately, I'd already used most of my buffer time resting during the day.

After turning at Barstow it was a quick run up to Baker for another picture and receipt. I rode across the border into NV and collected the combo bonus of Primm and Jean, NV (requiring 4 photos, two \$1 gaming tokens, and one GPS reading) for over 1500 points.

Back north of Vegas I turned onto US-93 north to Caliente for the third route requirement of a photo and receipt (there is 24hr gas there if you have a credit card). I collected another bonus at the city limit sign in Panaca for 500+ points. Then it was a blast to Cedar City and up I-15 to the barn.

The recuperation delays I had in the heat sucked my average speed down to where I didn't have time to do any significant last minute bonus hunting around SLC. Rather, I felt lucky to have survived the ride and would be satisfied wherever I finished in the standings.

The last bonus I collected was a 300+ point "gimme" of bringing a *COLD* six-pack of beer, soda, or water to the finish line. There was a convenience store right next to the hotel.

I rolled to the finish line right around 8am Sunday with 1592 miles (GPS) behind me and 19392 points in hand. At the banquet I learned that was good enough for 9th place. The winner finished with 21K+ points so my estimates were pretty good.

Kudos to Steve for another tough rally. Somehow he goaded me into the single most brutal day of riding I've ever subjected myself to. yeesh. I must be stupid. Or something.

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