

NIITWIT (NOT IN IT TO WIN IT)



2nd Place Loser in 36 hr Rally

Long distance rallies are not your typical motorcycle rally. LD rallies are scavenger hunts! These scavenger hunts can range from 8 hours up to 11 days in length. They usually have a theme that may vary every year. The NIITWIt (Not in it to win it) Rally has unique concept in that you try to lose rather than win. Kind of a tongue in cheek concept that adds to the fun!

This was our 4th NIITWIt Rally. We've been in all of them so far! This year, they offered 3 different formats: a 12 hour, 36 hour and 60 hour format. Karen and I prefer the 36 hr format since we only need to take one day off from work to participate. This year, no matter what format you chose, you could start from anywhere. The object was to end up in Olive Branch, Mississippi at the Whispering Winds Conference Center at 6:00 pm on Saturday, Oct. 27. That meant the 60 hour rally began at 6:00 am on Thursday, the 36 hour rally began at 6:00 am on Friday and the 12 hour rally began at 6:00 am on Saturday. All participants would then arrive at Rally Headquarters in Olive Branch by 6:00 pm Saturday or you would be considered a DNF (Did Not Finish).



Rally Boundaries

Since you can start anywhere, we wait until we receive our rally packet to decide where we will start. The rally packet includes a list of hundreds of bonuses that are located throughout 17 states. As part of the rally you were required to build a fleet of 4 specific bonuses. The fleet would consist of a sailor, ship, airplane and an anchor. If you collected all of your fleet from one state, you started with a base of 55,000 points. If you collected your fleet from two states, you started with 49,000 points, three states, 44,000 points and four states, 40,000 points.

Since the concept is to lose, you want to finish with the lowest amount of points, we knew that we had to collect our fleet from

four states to even be in the running. So, that's how we planned our route! We reviewed the bonus list and made note of where all the fleet components were located. There were multiple components sprinkled throughout the 17 states. We determined that we could get a plane in Pensacola, Florida, a ship in Mobile, Alabama, an anchor in Slidell, Louisiana and a sailor in Chester, Illinois. Four components in four states. By starting in Pensacola, we had a good chance to complete our mission and collect other non-required bonuses along the way. Each non-required bonus had a negative point value, so each one we collected would lower our score! Remember, the lowest scores loses, err wins!



Blue Angels jet in Pensacola

To be in Pensacola at the start time for the 36 hr rally, we had to ride down the night before. Karen asked to leave work a couple hours early, so we could leave when I got home from work around 3:30 pm on Thursday afternoon. Unfortunately, the remains of a hurricane from Mexico was moving through the area that day. Once we made it to Jackson, MS, it rained the rest of the way to Pensacola. We made it to our hotel around 11:00 pm that night. We would get up at 4:30 am Friday morning, eat breakfast and get a local receipt with the date, time and location, printed on it. The time had to be no earlier than 6:00 am. Then, and only then, could we start collecting bonuses!

Our first bonus would be the F-14 Tomcat in front of the National Museum of Naval Aviation. But, the night before, the rally master warned us of not being able to get on the Naval base after 1700 hrs (5:00 pm) and that the Blue Angels jet on display at the Florida Welcome Center on I-10 would be allowed as an alternate instead. Our hotel was just 2 miles from the Florida Welcome Center. Keep in mind, the Welcome Center was on the eastbound side of I-10. We would have to go westbound 16 miles to the next exit to turn around

if there were no U-turns available in-between. It had been raining for a few days, so I did not want to take any chances of doing a U-turn across the median unless it was asphalt. On our way down the night before, I looked for turn-arounds. None of them were pavement and I didn't want to take any chances, especially in the dark. I didn't want to be the guy that sinks his 1,000 lb Gold Wing in the mud! Heck, I assume the Navy Base would be open at 6:00 am! We'll take a picture of the first option! Well, we all know what assume means!

After getting our start receipt at 6:05 am, Karen and I ride to the front gate of the Navy Base. There are 2 long lines to get in. The lines moved pretty quick since the guards were just looking at everyone's military ID. What?... Well, we pull up to the guard and tell him that we need to take a picture of the F-14 in front of the museum. The guard replies, "No civilians are allowed in this gate, you must enter the west gate!" What?... "Sir, no civilians are allowed to enter this gate, blah, blah, blah!" Well, we'll just go to the west gate! He confirmed we were allowed to enter there! So, off we go! We follow the instructions the guard gave us to the west gate. Once we arrive, there are 2 long lines of traffic. Same thing! Guards are looking at everyone's military ID. We pull up to the guard. I tell him that we just want to take a picture of that F-14 in front of the museum. He replies, "No civilians are allowed to enter this gate until zero-eight-thirty hours." What? "Sir, no civilians are allowed, blah,

blah, blah!" Oh crap! By now, its 6:30 am, we don't have 2 hours to waste, we need to go back to the Welcome Center and get a picture of the Blue Angels jet! So, off we go! A few minutes later, we pass by our hotel. I tell Karen "There's where we stayed last night." What!!! Karen had no idea what was going on or the bad assumption I had made about getting on the Naval Base at 6:00 am. We jump on I-10 and head westbound. We pass the Welcome Center. I start looking at the turn-around opportunities. Fortunately, I find one that is hard-packed gravel. I turn around. Yay! We're at the Welcome Center! It is now 7:00 am! I have just wasted an hour! That hurts! That's exactly what you don't want to do! We jump off the bike and take the required picture for the first component to our fleet, the airplane! Now, we head for Mobile, AL to get our second required component to our fleet, the ship!



USS Alabama in Mobile

We are both a little bummed now! We started off on the wrong foot. But, it was smooth sailing ahead as we had no problems collecting our ship in Mobile, along with a couple other bonuses! Now, we're feeling pretty good again! It turned out to

be a great day to ride and we're having a blast! Next component for our fleet is an anchor in Slidell, LA.



Anchor in Slidell, LA

On the way to the anchor in Slidell, we collected several more bonuses including 3 pelican statues!



1 of 3 Pelicans in Slidell, LA

To complete our fleet, we had one more requirement, the sailor. We picked the Popeye bonus in Chester, Illinois as our final component to meet the 4 state requirement! We would follow a trail of bonuses to Illinois and collect them along the way.

From Slidell, we headed north through Tylertown, MS and up to Monticello, MS, then west to Natchez and up to Vicksburg collecting bonuses. From Vicksburg, we headed east and went north around Jackson to snag another bonus. By now, it was

getting dark. We are required to take a 4 hour rest bonus, but you can extend the rest bonus to 8 hours. This extension is well worth the points! Fortunately, Hernando was on the way to Chester, IL, so we had a chance to take the rest bonus at our own home! An opportunity that never happens!

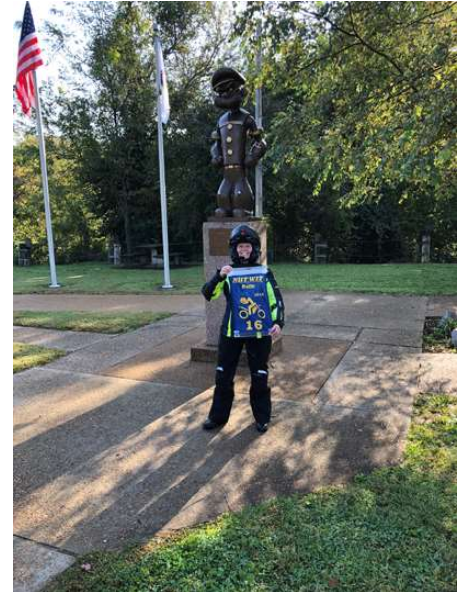
For the rest bonus, you are required to get a start receipt with time, date and location. At least 4 hours later, you are required to get an end receipt from the same location. During that period of time, no other bonuses can be collected. You earn -20 points per minute, so an additional 4 hours earns you -9600 points (8 hrs total). Sweet! We get our start and end receipt for 8 hrs and 1 minute! No wasted time here, we're headed north!

We bag the Memphis Orpheum Theater early this morning instead of later in the day on our way back. Perfect timing! In and out of in minutes! On to Chester!



Windsor Ruins in MS

Today, there weren't going to be as many bonuses since our main objective was to collect Popeye in Chester. This would require a lot of miles. But, we do collect a couple on the way.



Popeye in Chester, IL

Once we get Popeye, it's 11:00 am. We still have 7 hours until we need to be back in Olive Branch. It'll take four hours to get there. What do we do? Should we chance heading up to St Louis for a couple more bonuses? Sure! We came to play! So, we head north!

No problems getting in and out of St Louis! Now, we turn around and head south! We'll veer off the beaten path for one final bonus in a little ghost town named Irondale, MO. We get lucky! The roads are 4 lane out to Irondale and back! No traffic and awesome scenery! Life is good!

We make it back to Memphis with 45 minutes to spare. From I-55 southbound, we get onto I-240 just as an accident occurred in front of us! Traffic starts to back up! Oh no! This could slow us down! Fortunately, no emergency vehicles have arrived yet and traffic slowly passes the accident on the left shoulder. Nothing

serious, just a fender bender, but those cars weren't going anywhere fast. We made it around! Yay!



Irondale, MO

We finally make it to within a mile of Rally Headquarters in Olive Branch when Karen asks "How many miles have we ridden?" I say "1,536 miles." Karen says "That's good for an Iron Butt Bun Burner 1500 award, isn't it!" I agree! Karen says "Let's stop and get an official end receipt to submit to the IBA for a BB1500!" So, we stop, fill up with gas and obtain a receipt to submit later.

We jump back on the bike and check-in to Rally Headquarters with 20 minutes to spare! We rode our route as planned! Let's see how we score!



Checking in at 5:40 pm

Once we check in, we have until 7:00 pm to fill out our score sheet

and verify all the bonuses that we have claimed over the past 36 hours. After doing this, we get in line for scoring. This process goes quickly since we email our pictures to Rally Headquarters as we take them during the rally. So, the scoring process is really just verification and agreement between us and the scorer. 40,000 points (for bagging the 4 state fleet) minus our other bonus deductions equated to 21,798 total points. Now to wait for the finisher's banquet to see how we compare to the rest of the field!



A friend getting scored

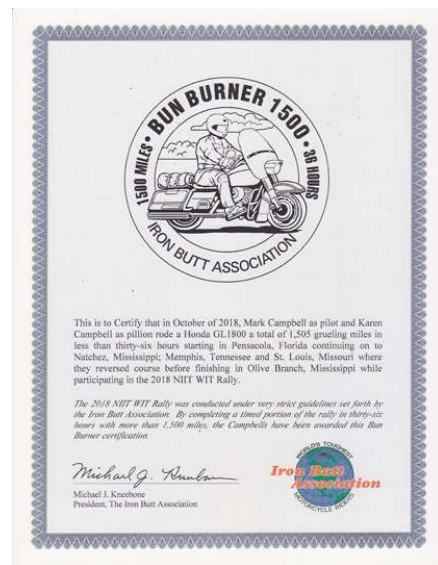
Later, at the banquet, we are called up to the podium as the 2nd Place Loser! There is only a one or two bonus difference between us and the 3rd Place Loser! Also, there is only a one or two bonus difference between us and the 1st Place Loser! What a fun time!

During the banquet, they talked about riders that DNF'd (Did Not Finish). One rider hit a deer in West Virginia. He was in the hospital with a few broken ribs, but will be okay. The rally staff were making calls to help get his bike back home for him. One rider's final drive went out. He was dealing with that. One rider threw

in the towel after plugging his tire for the second time. He was headed home! Another rider had back problems during the rally and just decided to ride to the finish early and give his back a break before heading home. So, all riders were accounted for by the rally staff.

After the banquet, we visit with friends then head home. We usually don't finish this close to the house. Usually, Sunday is a day spent riding home!

A few days later, I submit my start and end receipts along with my satellite tracking data to the IBA to see if they would approve our Bun Burner 1500 (1,500 miles within 36 hours). It was approved! We received our certificates a couple weeks later!



BB1500

The NIITWIt was a fun rally! We rode hard and the BB1500 was icing on the cake! We are already wondering what they will have in store for us next year!