

The Coolest Damn Rally Flag Ever

Pics at: <http://s280.photobucket.com/albums/kk178/rallybubbas/OnC-2009/>

The 2009 Oriole and Crab Rally was my second try at this local event. Based in Maryland over Father's Day weekend, "The Life of Bryan" was the underlying theme. The Mandatory stops were Frostburg (where Bryan went to college) and Ocean City (because all good Marylanders go "downy ocean"). To and from Rockville is roughly 560 miles; for a day long rally, shouldn't be too much of an issue.

The bonus lists came out about a week ahead of time. I try to prepare for all my rallies the same way when the lists are available early- what are the potential time traps, where are any known issues, and how am I going to get from A to B as efficiently as possible. I decided to ride with Mike Allen again this year; we've done fairly well together over the few years. Our riding styles compliment each other- he tends to be hyper aggressive and I try play conservative but competitive. I also believe my best asset is my analytical ability- solving problems on the fly.

Friday night we get 5 of 6 pages from the rallybook and our rally "flags"- giant stuffed crabs with our rider numbers on them- the Coolest Damn Rally Flag ever. I mean ever. There are no surprises in the rally book so Mike and I fine tune the route we have selected with the option to big time change it if we're running ahead of schedule (which we both knew wasn't really going to happen but sometimes you have to dream). At the morning riders' meeting, we get page 6- it has a few surprises including singing happy birthday, buying and signing a birthday card, Old Bay seasoning and a few combo bonuses. We hadn't really planned on doing any parts of the combo lists and the potential point gain for planning over wasn't worth it based upon our assessment. (route and all bonus locations at: <http://tinyurl.com/2009OnC>). And off we go, two quick stops right off 70 and then the long trek west via Sideling Hill, Fort Ashby, and Dan's Rock to the western mandatory in Frostburg- mostly through steady rain. After fueling up, Mike decides to take the shortest route to our PA national park stamp in Myersdale. I took the quickest route and wasted 5 minutes at the top of the I-68 entrance ramp waiting for him not knowing he was going the "other" way. I've offered to help him buy a CB radio for his bike, but the aftermarket electrics on his GS are a pretty sad state of affairs that it really wouldn't matter if he did have a CB- it wouldn't work anyway.

Mike rolls up to the old train station just as I'm getting off the bike. We get a good laugh. Inside the train station for our stamp of the Highlands National Bike Trail, we encounter an issue which we never checked until it was caught by the rallymaster during scoring- when the clerk says "let me make sure the date is right", make sure the date is right- the stamp said it was October 5, 2008-----OOOOPS. Off to Morgantown for a receipt and then into the mountains of West Virginia on the twisty roads. We were here in broad daylight and relatively fresh- I can't fathom trying to do these same roads in the middle of the night after riding 16 hours. Once we get to Seneca Rocks, I know the hard miles are over. Even though WV55 is near motorcycling nirvana, it has been for the most part replaced by a giant, limited access highway that connects nowhere to nowhere. Old

55 is still there and is a true gem. Our major timed bonus is the Trappist Monastery near Berryville for some jam- we arrive 15 minutes ahead of our plan. Things are good!

The route takes us to the Chesapeake Tunnel Bridge via the Marriott Ranch, Culpepper and Richmond- yea, I know Richmond was only worth 45 points, but it was a receipt bonus and sort of along the way. I've had some great overnight rides and now crossing the Tunnel Bridge just after dark has joined them. The temp was perfect in the mid 70's, the sunset was still glowing subtle pinks and purples on the western horizon and a crescent moon was rising over the Atlantic. Looking skyward, the heavens were alight with stars and the Milky Way appeared to be alive as it filled the night sky. It's a close second to the night ride in Idaho during Buttlite III – a very close second.

Somewhere along US-13 on the eastern shore of Virginia (Accomac area?) there is a spectacular recent car accident. Car parts are everywhere, car resting on its roof- hope everyone was OK. In Beaver Dam, the bonus is directly in front of the Maryland Welcome Center, hidden in plain sight, just like Dan's Rock....D'huo.

Ocean City is a relative breeze and return eastward is underway, next stop the Chesapeake Maritime Museum in Saint Michaels. At the big intersection of MD-213 and US-50 in Wye Mills, we take our rest bonus. For the last few hours I've been running something through my head and I need Mike to agree with the change- if we finish our plan, we'll be a little late into the finish. At 25 points a minute, it's real expensive to be late. We have time to get the last 2 of the 3 "grave bonus" combination- alone, they're not worth much, but combined, it's roughly 100 points more than we could have achieved on the last section of our the plan. With the rest bonus complete, away we go on the final push to the finish. In the construction along the Baltimore Beltway, I lose the right speaker cover (sigh- you'd think I'd learn by now and Velcro them into place) and apparently the CB antenna mast. The base is still there, so maybe I can find a replacement mast?!?

Mike misses the detour going into Rocky Ridge and I arrive in the cemetery just before he rolls up. Two bonuses left: Woodsboro and Point of Rocks. We finish at 6:53 at just under 1200 miles and tie for first place, again.

Thanks to Bryan for putting on a local rally- I wish more folks would "walk the walk" instead of "talking the talk" about putting on a rally.