

## IBA Lake Superior 1000 September 2005

I have this amazing ability of letting things eat at me until I complete them. This holds true for everything in my life, but it holds especially true when it comes to distance riding. This character trait led to my essentially riding from Canada to Mexico TWICE in a week to get my IBA Border to Border certificate, and leads into this most recent story.

Two years ago to the week, I broke my ankle on the 2003 GLMC Buffalo Run. Soon after that, my riding friends Ron and Carrie decided to get their IBA Lake Superior 1000 certificate. Since I was in a cast up to my knee, I couldn't go with. From that point on, I'd been planning to get it, but just hadn't found the time. Last year I chose to get my GLC100 certification instead, and I'd been so busy this summer I barely had time to ride at all.

Normally, the Buffalo Run is on Labor Day weekend, and I'd signed up early as usual. Unfortunately, few others did, and thus the ride was cancelled this year. This gave me a free weekend on which I was planning on riding anyway - perfect timing to get my LS1000!

The LS1000 requires you to circumnavigate Lake Superior in under 24 hours, starting and ending in the same city - the total distance is about 1060 miles. Living in the Twin Cities, the lake is about 120 miles north of me, so if I'd started at home, it would have been about 1300 miles. On mostly two-lane road, that would have been pretty aggressive, so I had to find a start location closer to the lake.

My parents have a cabin between Cable and Drummond, WI, about 25 miles south of Lake Superior, so that seemed like a perfect starting point. Plus, with it being Labor Day, I'd have built in witnesses, as they'd be there. I left home at about 6 on Friday night, and had to fight terrible holiday weekend traffic. Fortunately, growing up in the NE metro, I knew some shortcuts, like taking old Hwy 61 (the same one Dylan sang of) from my hometown of Forest Lake all the way up to Rock Creek where I crossed into Wisconsin. The whole way I could see the cars backed up on I-35 - good thing they didn't know of my alternate route! Still, the ride took about four hours, and I showed up around 10.

When I knocked on the door, nobody answered. Weird. Finally I went to the upstairs balcony, and my stepmom Jackie came to the door. We exchanged hello's, but something was off.

Me: "You weren't expecting me, were you?"

Jackie: "No, but that's okay - what's up?"

Me: "Dad's not here, is he?"

Jackie: "No."

Me: "He didn't tell you I was coming?"

Jackie: "No."

I explained why I was there, but I was NOT happy at this point. I'd told my dad multiple times I was coming up, and confirmed that he'd be there, as I needed a witness. Fortunately Jackie agreed to sign my forms, but had she not been there, I'd have had to scrounge up a witness in rural Wisconsin at 4:30 am - a virtually impossible task!

I went to bed soon after, and set the alarm for 3:45. I left the house at 4, and headed up to Drummond, the next town up the road. The BP station there wasn't open, but they have 24 hour pay at the pump, so that became my starting receipt. No problems there. Start time was officially 4:34 am. It was pitch black out with no moon, and I saw a few deer on Hwy 63 heading up to Ashland. Nothing major though. When I hit Hwy 2 in Ashland though, it got really COLD. The thermometer on the bike read 36 degrees. Even with my heated jacket and grips, that's cold for riding. Couple that with pea soup fog coming off the lake, and my ride wasn't starting out comfortably.

The sun started to come up around the time I hit the WI/MI border at Ironwood. It was a little slower through here, as there are a lot of small ski resort towns to go through. As I came out of the resort area, I increased my speed, only to have a deer pop right out in front of me! I saw her in the ditch, so I'd slowed down quite a bit, but she decided to bolt in front of me (and an oncoming minivan) when I was only about 10 yards away. Easily my closest call with a deer on a bike - I hope never to get closer.

The ride across the UP is pretty nice. There are some neat beaches along the stretch, with some 2-4 steady waves. People do surf on the Great Lakes, and it's something I've always wanted to do - I should find a way to haul my surfboard on my bike! There seemed to be a fair amount of construction on this stretch though, with a lot of one-lane bridges with temporary stoplights slowing me down. My first gas stop was in Munising at a Shell Station. As I've written before, avoid Holiday stations on IBA rides, as they often don't print the location on the receipt. Problem was, most of the gas stations in the UP were Holiday's, so I was glad to find a Shell (which usually are really good for receipts). I fueled up and headed for Sault St. Marie (the Soo).

Gas was really expensive, as a result of Hurricane Katrina the week before, so even though I didn't need to fill up, I chose to get gas again on the Michigan side at the Soo, as gas in Canada is even more expensive. After a quick top-off I headed for the border. The bridge over the locks was really cool, and the sun was nice and bright. I had no real problems crossing the border, though the customs agent did inquire about my fuel cell ("What's THAT thing?") and I headed north.

Since I'd passed through here on my GLC a year before, I knew my way through town, which was good, because I'd also got lost here the year before. The ride north of the Soo on Hwy 17 is beautiful. The water almost looks like the Caribbean in places it's so blue. It was still a cool day temperature-wise, never really getting above 65 or so. As such, I never removed my heated jacket, though I didn't have it turned on most of the day. At least I wasn't at home, where according to the Minneapolis weather report on XM radio, it had been storming all day!

I stopped again in Marathon, at the top of the lake, remembering not to stop at the Petro-Canada where Macauley Culkin was working the year before (see my GLC report for this story). This was a little bit longer

of a stop, and I grabbed something to eat at the same time. Another couple from MN on a Harley was there, traveling the opposite way. At this point, I was making really good time, so barring breaking down or crashing, I slowed down some to enjoy the scenery. The ride between Marathon and Nipigon is really nice, as the road follows the bluffs along the lake. I stopped quickly in Nipigon to refill my water jug, and started checking on sunset times. I wanted to make the border before sunset, as the danger of moose on the road is pretty scary between Thunder Bay and the border.

I made the border right at sunset, about 7:40 central time, and pulled into Grand Marais just as it got completely dark. I filled up again and had a sandwich, and headed south. There are quite a few deer on the north shore of MN, but once you get south of Tofta, there are small towns every few miles, which break up the ride quite a bit. I ran into some nasty road construction outside of Beaver Bay though. Several miles of gravel and broken road aren't much fun after riding for 16 hours and it being dark out.

I hit Duluth-Superior around 11:30 or so, and had to navigate through Superior on the first weekend of college at UMD and UWS. Lots of impaired drivers around, and I was glad to get out of there. I stopped at the edge of town to get a Diet Coke, and my receipt had no address. I wrote down the address, but I don't know that I needed it, since it wasn't a gas stop, and since there's no other way to get from Grand Marais to Drummond, WI without a boat!

I headed out of Superior on Highway 2, into more fog and cold. There was little traffic at the time, and I was starting to get worried about wildlife. The GPS was routing me to turn down a county road at Brule, but I chose to override it and keep on US 2, when I saw no ditch and a sign that said "Rough Road". I did turn off in Iron River on another county road, as it would, in theory, save me about a half hour. Of course, as Homer Simpson said, "In theory Marge, communism works. In theory..."

This road was better, but I still had to dial it down to about 40 mph to look for deer. Compared to the rest of the ride, the miles seemed to click off on the GPS incredibly slow. Then, I came to my last turn to head into Drummond, and as I came to the stop sign, a police car came screaming down the road, lights and sirens blaring. This scared the crap out of me, because I wasn't expecting it, and because it was nearly 1 am in the middle of nowhere. The cop turned at the stop sign I was at, and slowed to give me a look like "what is this weirdo doing out here at this hour?" He or she obviously had more important things to deal with, but I got out of there quickly before they changed their mind. I wasn't doing anything wrong, but I wasn't in the mood to visit with one of Bayfield County's finest at that hour either.

I pulled into the BP station in Drummond at 1:04, exactly 20 hours and 30 minutes from when I left that morning, tired and happy at completing my ride. I sat on a rock for a few minutes and then rode back to the cabin. After seeing very few animals on my ride, I came across four deer and a fox on US 63 on the way back to the cabin. The Distance Riding Gods were toying with me!

When I reached the cabin, the lights were on, and my dad, who had come up that day, was up along with Jackie, and I had my forms signed, recorded my odometer, and went to sleep. Total GPS mileage was 1082.6. On writing up my paperwork to submit to the IBA, I realized that not only was this my seventh IBA

certification, but it was also my tenth 1000 mile day. That may seem like a lot (and it is to many riders), but that isn't even one Iron Butt Rally! This years IBR finished the day I left on this ride, and I couldn't help but have all the respect in the world for the guys who can complete that ride, knowing how I feel after doing 1000 miles. Maybe someday, but until then, I have to find another distance riding goal to plan for. Something has to happen to eat at me to get in that driven mood - I just hope it's not more broken bones!

Overall time : 20:30

Miles (odometer): 1098

Miles (GPS): 1082.6

Moving average speed: 58.3 mph(GPS)

Total average speed: 51.8 mph (GPS)