



## 2007 Minnesota 1000

Hmm. It's June and time for another Team Strange Minnesota 1000. Sounds familiar...

After riding in the Butt Lite last August, I had virtually NO desire to ride, see, listen to, or think about motorcycles. However, around mid-May or so, I found myself looking forward to rally riding again (it was around this time that the odd nightmares from the BL stopped as well.) The event is always fun, and with Bart Bakker returning for a second year as rallymaster, I knew there would be some good stuff to see.

I rode alone again for the second year in a row. Even having ridden in the BL, I was placed in Sport-Touring class (I've still never won my class in any event, my best finish being a second place), provided I removed my fuel cell. No problem there. I figured that at worst, it would only cost me about ten minutes to have to make the additional 1-2 gas stops, and I wasn't really feeling competitive enough to ride in expert if I didn't have to.

The banquet was excellent as always, and we received one bonus sheet on Friday night. I went home and entered the bonuses into the GPS. It seemed that the two major options would be to go for a lot of big points, with fewer stops, up in Canada, or to pick up more small points bonuses in Northern MN and Wisconsin. Not really wanting to go to Canada I figured I'd be better off staying stateside. Also, I had the advantage (or so I thought) of being very familiar with a number of the bonuses in Wisconsin, since we have a cabin in Iron River, and I spend most weekends there. (this also made for a convenient place to take a rest bonus if need be).

The next morning I woke up at 4 (ugggh) to ride down to Leo's in Lakeville for the rally start. After getting a few more bonuses, I made some changes to my route and set off.

The closest bonus was in Carlos Avery Wildlife reserve, near Wyoming, MN. It was worth a lot of points, but was time limited to 10 am. It also carried with it a warning about riding in sand. Perhaps I should have listened. Oh well, I rode through a five foot rocky ditch on the Butt Lite – this can't be THAT bad... In addition, I was familiar with the area, having grown up in Forest Lake, and knew because it was time limited, that someone would be there in case of catastrophe. I rode out into the swamp, and yes, it was a sandy road, but not nearly as bad as I expected. There were a few nervous moments, but nothing too bad...until I came to a corner and WHUMP. I went down. I bent my crash bar, broke my light mount, and

generally made a mess of things, all before 10 am. I managed to get the bike upright, and just around the corner, about 50 yards away, I saw Steffan Fay at the checkpoint. Why couldn't I have crashed in plain sight of him? To make things worse, about two minutes later, Kevin Kocur rode up on his Vespa. Surely he could have helped too. Anyway, I made the bonus with 8 minutes to spare (one of only five bikes to go there), and rode out the back way (which was an easy, straight road that came out right at the freeway – damn you Bart!).

I headed up I-35, only to see that my crash bar was hanging by one loose screw. That could be dangerous if it fell off, so I pulled off at a rest stop to remove it. A nice lady came running over looking to help, and seemed amazed that I neither wanted, nor needed any assistance. I was back on my way, but already behind schedule.

My next stop was an easy bonus in a cemetery near Brook Park, and then it was on to look for a town hall in Denham, near Sturgeon Lake. The stupid GPS routed me down about a two mile gravel road, at the end of which was pavement. Unfortunately, the GPS also showed about five more miles of gravel. I went about an eighth of a mile on the next gravel road, and it was bad. Big rocks and other loose messy stuff. I turned around – I figured I'd had my one lucky break in not messing up myself or my bike when I crashed the first time. Turns out I wasn't the only one who bailed on the Denham bonus.

After that it was on to Duluth, to the monument signifying the only lynching in Minnesota history. Not something to be proud of. On the way down the hill into Duluth however, I was stuck behind several WIDE LOAD trucks, carrying large pipelines, with police escorts, which weren't letting anyone pass. This went on for about 20 miles, only slowing things down more. I got to Duluth, and found the monument, which is in a very seedy part of town, with a number of winos and homeless guys hanging around, and the requisite dive bars and porno shops. I didn't spend much time there. On my way out of town though, my GPS started acting up, showing a bunch of points that I didn't recognize. I stopped to mess with it, as well as to shed some clothes, as it was pretty hot by this point. Just when I thought I was going to have to pull out the laptop and reload the GPS, it corrected itself, but still, I'd wasted more time.

The next two bonuses were easy. A rest stop west of Duluth in Floodwood, and a really cool old flooded mine in Nashwauk. At this point however, my XM radio stopped working. All I could get was the preview channel. At my next stop, I called my wife to see if she could check on it. (long story short, our ATM Visa cards had been stolen two months prior, and I'd guessed she hadn't switched the card numbers on the XM billing account). She said hers was working, so I just hoped it was a glitch.

Next stop was Tower, MN, up on the iron range. Another easy stop (except for getting delayed by a parade for returning local soldiers), but now I had to look at my entire route. I was WAY behind. I ended up removing Cook and Skibo from my route – both worth decent points – but I really wanted to try and get the Michigan gas receipt as well as Copper Falls, which were worth more, and both of which I was familiar with.

I headed back down towards Duluth, and picked up the bonus at Betty's Pies in Two Harbors (and wasted 20 minutes getting my XM radio to work, finally...yes, I'm spoiled having had it for so long...). My next

stop was Foxboro, WI, just south of Superior about 20 miles. Crossing the bridge into Superior, I saw, coming the other way, the largest group of motorcycles I'd ever seen. Literally a thousand or more cruisers, with a police escort. Wow – I wonder what that is – they look like a parade of ants at a picnic. I was a lot less happy, when I found out they'd blocked traffic for this in downtown Superior. I sat for 30 minutes waiting for this to go by, with no way around. My route was now officially a disaster. At least I didn't feel so bad about the wasted time at Betty's Pies, since it would have still been spent in Superior at that intersection.

I went down to Foxboro, which is actually kind of a funny story. More and more, in the last year or so, I've started to notice little things that might make fun bonus locations, should I ever decide to plan a rally. On one trip to the cabin, I decided I wanted to cross into Wisconsin on one of the only roads where you don't have to cross a river from MN – this is at Foxboro. The thing about this, is the road on the Minnesota side, is about 15 miles of gravel, but the road on the Wisconsin side, is paved. It occurred to me, that Foxboro would be a good bonus, because it would be tempting to try and get it from the MN side, if you didn't know better. Apparently Bart thought the same thing, because he even mentioned a city limit side on the west side of town. Anyway, knowing better, I took the easy way from the WI side, and picked up the bonus. (finally, I outsmart someone...a small victory, but still...)

From Foxboro, I had to make it to Lake Nebagamon by sundown. Plus I needed gas. I barely made it, just as the sun was dropping, and fortunately it was pretty easy to find. What happened next pretty much sealed my rally as a failure (like the other five delays didn't already do it).

Coming out of Nebagamon, I'd planned to go to Ino, Cornucopia, and try and make Copper Falls and Michigan before taking my sleep bonus at our cabin and heading back through Wisconsin to pick up some smaller things. Unfortunately, what I had forgotten (and which I should have known, because we're up there a lot) is that WI-27 is closed at Brule. What I didn't know, is that the detour takes you about 40 miles or more out of your way. By the time I realized where the detour was going, it was too late to turn back, and that sealed it for me. In addition, I probably saw 30-40 deer in an hour, and came within two feet of hitting a skunk crossing the road. (bet that would make me popular at the finish) I had to drop Ino, Cornucopia, Copper Falls and Michigan, and my point total was screwed. I picked up Drummond, which I'd planned for the way home, and then went back to Iron River for the rest bonus, where I slept for three hours. (I did ride to the Ino bonus a few weeks later, just for fun, and it's a great road).

I woke up, got my ending receipt, and headed for home, picking up Clam Falls, Trego, Danbury, and Franconia along the way, all small points, but all places I was very familiar with. I rolled in to Leo's at about 7:30, having gone only just over 900 miles. Not a great showing by any means. My initial route would have been enough to place, but with all the delays I had (some my fault, some out of my control) it just wasn't to be this year.

At least I didn't go up to Winnipeg and get caught in the storm of the century like some riders did...It was a nice ride though, with great weather, so I can't complain. Plus, after my burnout from the BL4, it sparked my interest in rally riding again, which is probably the most important result. Thanks to Bart, all the volunteers, and the nice folks at Leo's, who, for the second year in a row really treated us well. Can't wait for next time!