



2008 Minnesota 1000

2008 marks my sixth consecutive year running in the Minnesota 1000, and my third running solo, as opposed to in a group. After my disaster of a showing last year, I wanted to do a little better this time out. Unfortunately for me, I'd just flown in from Vancouver the night before from a work trip, and I was sort of messed up from the time change.

As it's been for a few years, the rally was run out of Leo's South in Lakeville, and I rode down with Ron and Carrie, and oddly enough, we were the first ones there. There was some nasty weather in the area (all of which missed Leo's) so I suppose that delayed some people. As usual, the food was excellent, and the people fun.

We received a lot of bonuses on Friday this year (60 total), so I went home to plot them into the computer. This took a while, and combined with a fussy laptop, jet lag and a snoring wife, I got very little sleep that night. Not good.

We received a few more bonuses, plus the combos (which I'm never very good at figuring out – my brain doesn't work that way). Unlike most rallies, I actually left almost right on time, deciding on a route mainly in northwest Iowa and Nebraska. My original route had me back in the cities by 12:15 am (more on this later) to take my rest bonus, which I knew I had to take because of my lack of sleep on Friday.

I left Leo's and headed to Iowa, picking up a quick bonus in Dows, right off the freeway, and then to the State Capitol grounds in Des Moines, where a massive monument was the bonus. As with most of my stops that day, there were at least a few other riders at both locations.



From there, I headed to Winterset, home of the Bridges of Madison county, made famous by the movie of the same name (which I've never seen). The bonus required 8 miles round trip on gravel. Ughh – stupid sidecar riding rallymaster. The road was dry though, and in pretty good condition, so it wasn't a problem. The bonus required you to walk across the bridge and read the sign on the opposite side. Funny thing about that – the signs on either side were identical. He just wanted us to walk across the bridge.



The next bonus in Tayer, IA, was also on gravel, but only about a mile. It was a historical site where the Mormons spent the winter on their trek west. That road was also decent, though apparently some riders had some issues later in the day with rain. Eventual winner Marty Leir was there, and I passed some riders going the opposite way on my way out as well.



From there I headed west to Omaha, with a quick bonus at Adair, IA (site of Jesse James first train robbery). Omaha was the birthplace of Malcolm X (which I didn't know) and there was supposed to be a sign there. No sign, but a lot of confused Team Strangers (aren't we all) wandering around. The answer to the question was pretty clear though, once you looked around. To add to the fun, a nasty storm was rolling in, and the neighborhood where the bonus was located was in one of the rougher parts of town, where there was more furniture on the front lawns than in most houses. Not a place you'd necessarily want to hang around. We later found out some kids stole the sign because "a bunch of people were going there to take pictures."

Here's where things went a bit off from my original plan. I was planning on riding directly to Sioux City, with a stop in Decatur, NE to pick up some points. Two things changed my plans. First of all, the storm coming in looked pretty nasty, with a lot of lightning that I wanted to avoid. Second, I noticed on the GPS some bonuses that were right on the way, yet not on my original route, that were worth a lot more points. Not sure how I missed that initially.



Instead of going to Decatur, I headed back into Iowa, and picked up a sign at the museum of Religious Arts. I avoided the worst of the storm, and really only had to ride in a little bit of rain, while the storm passed to the north of me. Problem was, when I rerouted, it had me back in the cities now at 1:30 am. How did that happen – I wasn't really adding many more miles. This sort of fouled up my original plan to sleep at home. Oh well.

Next stop was going to be the Loess Hills overlook – Bart said it's one of his favorite places in the Midwest. However, the storm made it there before me, and the road was more gravel – about another 8 miles round trip, with a big hill. I went about 100 yards down the road, and it was pretty greasy, so I wimped out and turned around, missing out on 900-plus points. Oh well – my new route was still more points than my original route, so I justified it to myself that way.

I picked up another stop in the area (I think it was Smithland), and then headed towards Sioux City. This road was beautiful, with lots of rolling hills and scenery of the surrounding farms. I thought it looked familiar,

but then I saw a building I remembered from another ride – turns out I'd ridden this road on the Butt Lite in 2006, on the last leg with a half-functional bike. Today's ride was much nicer.

The bonus here was a monument way up on a hill overlooking the Missouri. This was also a daylight only bonus, but since it was the longest day of the year, I was there with no issues. More slippery gravel, but the road to the monument wasn't too bad. The issue here though, is that the monument is WAY up on a hill, and is about 300 feet tall. The instructions said the whole monument has to be in the photo, along with your rally towel. It took three tries, but I was able to hold my flag up in front of me from the bottom of the hill, and get the whole monument in. (this is one of those occasions where riding with someone can really help).

From there, I assumed I'd be back on I-29 up towards Sioux Falls. The GPS routed me a back way through town though, and onto a really cool state highway that runs along the Sioux river between Iowa and SD. This was a lot of fun, and a really cool road. The only minor drawback was that it was getting near sunset so I had to start watching for deer, rather than just enjoying the view.



Next stop was Haywarden, IA, which somehow confused me. The bonus read "near the South Dakota border," but he must have meant the town, rather than the bonus itself, so I spent about 15 minutes trying to find a massive park, which was two blocks north of where I was.

Next was a sunset ride from there up to the spot where MN, IA, and SD all meet. I actually knew right where this was, because my wife's grandfathers farm was only about five miles from here, and the back road to there cuts right near the monument. This was easy to find and a short ride back up to I-90. I stopped for gas in Worthington, and to call home (and to find out that Ron and Carrie were going to intentionally DNF to sleep in the next day, as it was their first weekend alone since having their son.) I-90 is one of my least favorite stretches of road – all straight, with lots of creatures at night (especially raccoons, of which I nearly hit about five).

My initial route only had one more bonus on it, which was a big arrowhead in Winnebago, MN. Another easy one, but I was getting really tired at this point, and there was no way I was making it back to the cities without some rest. I bagged another bonus not on my original route – a monument near Mankato, which was hard to find, as it was really foggy by that point.

I pulled into Mankato and decided to stay a few hours at the Iron Butt Motel. I got my receipt at Kwik Trip, and went to the Happy Chef for some breakfast. I spent about an hour there, and then went back to the Kwik Trip, tucked my bike in among the semi-trucks, and laid down on the pavement to go to sleep (I'd initially tried a park, but the grass was so wet, I couldn't stay). I woke up about 2 hours later, at 4:30, right before my Screaming Meanie was going to go off, and it was really cold. I was shivering, despite having four layers on.

I got up, filled with gas, got my ending receipt, almost hit a deer near the mall in Mankato, and headed out for two more bonuses not on my original route. The first one was near Kilkenny, MN, which was a bell near a fire station. I was going to go back to Leo's at this point, but I had about 2 hours to kill, so I added one more.

My final bonus was a pair of churches near Nerstrand, which is near Faribault. My wife is from Faribault, so I knew exactly where these were, and I also knew that by going there, I'd go over 1000 miles for the rally. In fact, I drove right by my father in law's barn on the way there, and said hello to his mule while passing (tell me you don't do strange things too while riding on little sleep). The riding between Faribault and Northfield via Nerstrand is a nice set of roads as well, and a nice way to end my ride.

From there, it was a quick run up 35 to Leo's, and I had lots of time to spare, coming in at 7:15. I was surprised at how many bikes were already there so early. I was one of the first people to be scored though, so it was nice to be done, and be able to watch others come in and be scored.

When the awards were announced, I was pleasantly surprised to find I'd placed fifth in Sport-Touring, and got to come home with a plaque for the first time since 2005, and for the first time ever riding alone.

This rally was a rare one, where everything went well, and I didn't screw anything up, try to bite off too much, or suffer mechanical problems. I felt good almost all day about my route, and I didn't lose any points at the table. Most of all I had a fun time on some really cool roads.

Hats off to Bart for another excellent rally (The MN1k is always one of the highlights of my year, and this was no exception).