



## 2009 Minnesota 1000

This was my seventh year riding in the Minnesota 1000, and I've sort of noticed at this point that there are many different approaches to this odd sport of ours. Here are a few that I've taken:

1. The Rookie (2003). Just trying to figure out how all this works, and what are you supposed to do. Riding with the Hansons, we also used this to get our first IBA SS1000, which was the main goal that year. This could also be the "drug pusher" phase, when you get hooked on LD riding, which I did.
2. Go Balls Out (2004-2005). I rode with the Hansons those two years as well, and we rode hard, competing with the best of the best, people like John Coons, and Marty Leir and Tim Conway. Lots of great planning, big point totals, and few mistakes and problems (except for the damn odometer cable that ruined my one chance to take first place in my class in a rally). These two years were my best finishes (a 2nd and a 3rd).
3. Do Something Weird (2006). One of the fun things about this is to see what crazy ideas people will come up with. Some of them include: riding a 250cc bike 1000 miles, dressing in a clown suit, driving in a sidecar rig made of industrial baking pans, or riding 3-up in a sidecar. I tried this once, choosing to take a 27 year old Suzuki I'd restored on the rally. The best description for this idea was "painful." I still don't know what I was thinking.
4. Do the Best You Can (2007-2008). When I decided to ride alone in the rally (other than the painful Suzuki incident), I decided my approach would be to plan the best route I felt I could physically and mentally accomplish, and hope it was good enough to do well. In 2007, it was a train wreck of a rally, where everything went wrong, and in 2008, everything went right, and I had my first award plaque planning and riding th MN1k completely alone.

That brings us to 2009, and a new approach. After the always first-class liars banquet at Leo's, (I've now eaten Divine Swine two weeks in a row!) and receiving our route

sheets, I had to decide where to go. I took the easy approach from the beginning, getting my mug at Bob's on the way home. It seemed smart to get points while not on the clock, especially when it's right on the way to my house, even though it was 350 points less than trying on Sunday.

When I got home, I entered all the points into the laptop (my first year routing with Garmin's FAR TOO DELAYED software for the Mac) and looked over the options. It was pretty clear that the best routes would involve visiting the UP of Michigan (proven by the fact that seemingly everyone went that way). I also realized that I just didn't want to go to the UP. Yes, it's beautiful riding up there, and yes it was a lot of points, but we have a cabin in Northern Wisconsin – I'm up that way almost every weekend. I didn't feel like going there again – I wanted to go somewhere I don't ever go. I chose Rugby, North Dakota as my big point bonus. I'll call this approach "Go Where you Feel like Riding."

I knew it wouldn't make for a competitive score, but my route was a little over 1000 miles, it was easy riding on fast, empty roads, and I love wide open spaces. I just wanted to take a nice long ride on a beautiful day to a place I'd never been (not that Rugby is a major vacation destination – apologies to the people I know from the area).

Big surprise that there were no new bonuses handed out on Saturday for the first time since I've been doing this, and even better, no fuel log (I can stop at Holiday Stations!). It probably wouldn't have mattered. I was going to go to Nodak no matter what. Miles City, MT was another option, but I already have a Bun Burner Gold, and didn't really feel like getting another one at the time.

I headed west on 94 with a few other riders, most of which I think were headed for Montana. After having to recalculate my GPS twice, I got one bonus in Kensington, where they found the Runestone (and drove through a crowd gathered after some kind of running race, hanging out in the parking lot). There was one other rider there, Wayne Koppa from Michigan. Wayne was one of only three riders I saw all day.

From there I went to Ma's Cycle in West Fargo, where I saw Paul Sundet leaving as I pulled in, headed for Montana. The guy at Ma's was super cool. I could have talked to him all day – I bought a t-shirt from him, and changed into my mesh jacket in the parking lot, and headed west. If I ever buy a Triumph, I'll think about buying there, just because they were so nice.

I caught up to Paul again at the Jamestown exit, which was another bonus (get a fuel receipt), and wished him luck, and headed northwest. I'm probably kind of odd, in that I like riding in the Dakotas and Iowa. I enjoy the small towns, the farms, the slight rolling hills and the big skies. It was a great day, and the sky was filled with what I refer

to as "Simpsons Clouds." (think of the puffy cartoon clouds in the opening montage of "The Simpsons.") Lots of flocks of interesting birds too – white ones (not gulls) flying in circular formations – I don't know what they were. I pulled into Rugby mid-afternoon, and took my photo of the "Geographical Center of North America" pyramid. It wasn't as cool as I'd hoped, but I can say I've been there. The only drawback to the day was the huge number of bugs that were out. I had to stop several times just to clean my face shield so I could see – I didn't expect that in ND.



I made a gas stop in Devils Lake, which was kind of fun, because several of my best friends are from there, and I shot a photo with my cell phone to text message to them. They thought it was just great. As I mentioned to someone, Devils Lake is about how I remembered it, only with more water (there were hundreds of people fishing in weird channels and gullies, and the lake just spreads forever now), and I don't think I'd ever been there sober, so that was different too. (that's another set of stories).

I picked up another bonus (only my fourth, if you count Bob's), at a cemetery near Hatton, ND, and then stopped for gas in Fargo. I lived in Fargo for four years in college, and still have good friends there, so it felt weird to not stop and say hello, but I was on a rally, even if I wasn't working that hard at it...

Next stop was Detroit Lakes, where I ran into Wayne Koppa again. While we didn't ride together, we saw each other at the next two stops as well, in Verndale, in a city park, and Little Falls, at the Lindbergh house, both of which ended up being our last two stops.

After one last gas stop near St. Cloud (the bugs were so thick under the gas station canopy, I had to keep my helmet closed to keep from getting infested), I headed for home and my rest bonus. All day, my GPS arrival time had been getting earlier and earlier (high speed limits in ND and few bonus stops will do that), and as it was, I pulled into the gas station by my house at about 1:15 am. I was only about 25 miles short of

1000 (by GPS) at this point, which made it one of the quicker 1000 mile days I'd ever done. I kind of felt guilty because I was going to get about five hours of sleep on a distance rally. Ok, not THAT guilty. I'd considered picking up bonuses in Garrison and Ogilvie, but I knew my route wasn't competitive, so I decided against it. There weren't any bonuses right around the Twin Cities this year either, so there wasn't much I could pick up in the morning either.

One funny thing that happened. Over all those miles, I only saw one deer all day, near St. Cloud. Until I pulled into our neighborhood... There, standing on the curb of a residential street, was a freaking doe, just staring at me eating from some guys lawn. 1000 miles with little wildlife, and there's a damn deer in my own neighborhood near the end of the ride.

I woke up around 6:00, got my ending receipt for the rest bonus, and headed back down to Leo's, where I was one of the first riders to arrive, and went over 1000 miles on the way. I felt pretty good (five hours sleep will do that), especially seeing the riders come in who had been on the road most of the night. I do know what that feels like.

Scoring was really easy with only ten total bonuses, so I finished that, ate breakfast, and waited with the rest of the riders to see who won. After the awards, it was an easy ride home, but I was really tired, and I couldn't figure out why. I took a nap until Lisa got home from the cabin with the dogs, and had dinner with Ron and Carrie (you guys are missed you know!).

I had a really great ride, and a really fun rally, even though I chose from the beginning to do something different from past years. I'd say to anyone who's never done this and is thinking about it to go for it. You don't have to be one of the top dogs to have fun riding a rally – you just have to make it into something you think you're going to enjoy. Not to say that I'll take this approach next year, but I really had a great time. It's always a highlight of my summer, and special thanks go to Bart, all the volunteers, and the staff at Leo's.

(Now where's my fuel cell – I need to turn it up a notch next year again!)

