

## **Bun Burner Gold – 1500 miles in 24 hours or less.**

**Starting receipt time:** 3:19 AM Saturday, March 29, 2008

**Ending receipt time:** 3:12 AM Sunday March 30, 2008

**Total odometer miles:** 1596

**Total MS Streets & Trips miles:** 1551

**Total Garmin Zumo 550 miles:** 1548

This attempt was originally planned for the first weekend in April, but with my cancelled Augusta RTE plans, and with the Cape Fear Rally following close behind, I decided to attempt this the last weekend in March, instead. It was to be sort of a consolation prize to myself for not finishing the 50CC...and for not going to the RTE. The route had been planned for quite some time, including each gas stop along the way, and the S&T file had been sitting in my “rides” folder on my computer waiting for the right opportunity. This weekend was the perfect opportunity. Daytime temps are still moderate here in TX, and I had just had a major service performed on my little red BMW. She and I were ready.

### **The route:**

From the big, new Buc-ee’s Exxon station near my house (which is open 24 hours) straight up 288 to where it merges into I-45 in downtown Houston, then straight up I-45 to Dallas where it disappears into I-30 downtown, and then I-35E to I-35. It would then be I-35 all the way to Salina, KS to I-135, where I would turn left onto I-70 west to Russell KS. This would be my turnaround point – at 775 miles – to backtrack toward home.

### **The advantages of this route are several:**

- Plentiful gas stations along the entire route which made it very easy to plan my stops to maximize my bike’s fuel range.
- Enough populated areas along the route to provide peace of mind in the middle of the night.
- Straight-forward route and, because of the “corner” receipt requirement, I could hit the same gas stations in both directions.
- Heavily traveled by cars and trucks, so the deer factor wasn’t as big a concern for me.
- Familiarity with this route, having ridden and driven it many times.

### **Some disadvantages:**

- The route passes through several densely populated areas - Houston, Dallas, its northern suburbs, Oklahoma City, Wichita - where the speed limit drops to 55 or 60 mph in places.
- A stretch of toll road in Kansas, meaning two stops in each direction: one to pick up the ticket and one to pay the toll.
- One “corner” would require getting receipts in both directions, necessitating two extra stops.

Why not I-10 west to the TX state line? This question was put to me by at least two different people, when I told them I was going to do this. The answer is two-fold:

- The gas stations in west Texas do not align well with my bike’s range once I get past Kerrville.
- 50% of the ride would be done in the dark, and I’m not ever going to do that again. West of San Antonio, almost to El Paso, is over-populated with deer. If you’ve never seen it, you simply cannot imagine it! I did not see one single deer on this BBG route (and I was looking!).

### **Planning and preparation:**

As I mapped the route and selected the gas stops, I also played with the start time, looking for the optimal mix of daytime and nighttime riding. I determined that leaving at around 3:00-3:30 AM worked the best, giving me some semblance of a normal night’s sleep (9:00 PM-3:00 AM) and putting much of the

nighttime riding in more densely populated Texas, where the roads wouldn't be so dark and desolate and where I was very familiar with the roads and driving conditions.

Aside from getting the motorcycle serviced prior to this ride, I did the following:

- Packed a large bottle of water – enough for a 24 hr period – in my side case and took a healthy swig each time I stopped for gas. I find I do better if I don't have full-time access to water, as I will tend to over-drink out of boredom. Too much is just as bad as not enough. This method works best for me and it only takes a second or two to access it in the left sidecase.
- Packed food in Zip-Lok bags to graze on: two bananas, Wheat Thins, slices of cheese, a small pop-top can of tuna, Hershey's Kisses. I ate the bananas and munched on the crackers at the gas stops. The cheese and tuna might be good for a SS1000 or long trip, but I found them too fussy to deal with on a BBG. I didn't even touch the candy; I thought I'd crave it, but I didn't.
- Prepared money for the Kansas tolls: I folded two one-dollar bills in half (toll each way is \$1.60), and attached a small note that said "receipt please" with a large paperclip. I prepared two of these, one for each direction and I tucked them into my tank bag where I could easily grab them. The large paperclip helped because it not only made a neat little packet, but added weight and "substance" to the packet, making it easy to grab with winter gloves on. I'd just drop the loose change into my tank bag and stuff the receipt into a corner until my next stop. Memorizing the odometer reading so that I could write it down at that next stop gave my mind something to do.
- Played with the S&T file to find the most northerly point in Houston where I could get an ending receipt and still have the 1500 miles plus a small cushion. This would be my back-up finishing receipt, just in case I felt I couldn't make it all the way down to Pearland before the 24-hour clock ran out. I drove up there on Friday to scout the gas station and put gas in my truck to check the receipt. This location would work just fine, and would still get me a receipt for 1528 GPS miles, if needed, buying me approximately 35-40 minutes if time was getting tight.
- Put each of the planned gas stops into my Zumo 550 so that I didn't have to think about it.
- Put fresh batteries in my Boostaroo so that I wouldn't lose my XM tunes when I would need them the most: at the end of the ride in the middle of the night.
- Prepared a "sanity check" cheat sheet and kept it in my tank bag map pocket. It listed each of the gas stops and KS toll booths with an estimated arrival time next to each. I referred back to it regularly along the way.

### **Ride report and thoughts:**

I never thought I could do one of these, and had expressed this opinion several times to others.

Nonetheless, I had prepared a route in S&T and had it saved on my computer for the time when I might change my mind. After attempting the 50CC, I realized that I could successfully do one. I covered about 1150 miles my first day riding the 50CC and felt great, not tired, and thought I could probably have continued at least another 200 miles had I not been so stressed out on that dark, desolate and deer-infested stretch of road. In fact I had even briefly toyed with the idea of doing a BBG on the 50CC and sleeping in my own bed in Houston before finishing the ride to Jacksonville, but thought that might be biting off more than I could chew on that outing.

I got my start witnesses late Friday afternoon. That night I went to bed at 9:00, not too far off my usual bedtime. Alarm was set for 3:00 AM, bike was already packed and sitting out in my driveway, nose pointed toward the street, and all I had to do was brush my teeth and pull on my riding gear and I was out the door and headed down the driveway by 3:15 AM. I was at the gas station and getting my start receipt at 3:19 AM. Bed head would turn into helmet hair, so what did it matter that I didn't even take the time to brush my hair?

It was just so easy to get on the road! The start receipt was obtained just one mile from my house, with the entrance to the freeway nearby that would take me straight to Dallas! It was warm and muggy, and I was sweating profusely in my Gerbings and heavy winter gloves and was seriously fogging up my glasses

and face shield before I could get rolling onto the highway. But I knew that once I got into north Texas the temps would be much cooler, not more than 50 degrees were forecasted for the highs. I also knew that there was a 30-40% chance of rain along the way. As it turned out, I rode in rain nearly non-stop all the way to north Oklahoma! I guess that 30-40% chance was right over my head and following me north. It was a light, misty kind of rain; just enough to muddy up the bike and keep my visor wet but not enough to cause any delays on the road. But I really hate that kind of “wet” at gas stations. Makes for very slippery footing.

Every stop along the way was effortless. Gas pumps spewed out receipts upon command. Receipts had all the correct information. Traffic was reasonably light considering I rode smack dab through the middle of two of the largest cities in the country. A Kansas state trooper even gave a friendly wave as I passed him on I-70, so I have forgiven that state agency for giving me the speeding ticket last summer.

It was so cold in northern OK and KS that I finished my business as expeditiously as possible at the gas stops so that I could get back on the bike to warm up. The wind was cold, and I cooled down quickly without my gloves and with my jacket unplugged as I pumped the gas. The warmth flowing over me each time I got my Gerbing plugged back in on the bike was delightful, and the anticipation helped to keep my time at the pump as brief as possible. On the return leg, I appreciated the cooler temps as they helped keep me alert. I could definitely feel it warming up, though, the further south I got. By Huntsville, I had turned off my Gerbing and my heated grips. By the time I got to Houston, I was sweltering in all the gear, and anxious to get home and get out of the heavy riding clothes.

When I made the gas stop near Corsicana on the way home – 200 miles from the finish – I knew that I’d made it! I could now say, “*Only* 200 miles...piece of cake...I ride that distance easily on a Saturday morning before lunch!” And then I realized. WOW!...that’s what we runners say when we get to around the 20 or 21 mile mark in a marathon: Only 5 or 6 more miles...piece of cake...just a 10K...I run that on Saturdays before breakfast. It’s a great motivator to finish. So the analogy to long distance running continues. They really are so similar. They’re both a mental and a physical sport. And I was really getting excited at that point in the ride, because I knew that I had it in the bag, that I’d done it. I’d just ridden a BBG! I was really awake and alert then, savoring every one of those final miles to the ending gas station. There’s also something to be said for the end point of a difficult ride such as this being just one mile from your house. It’s very motivating, sort of like the open barn door that beckons a horse.

Just to be on the safe side, I went ahead and stopped at the gas station that I’d scouted on the north side of Houston, to fill up and get a timed receipt before heading to the final gas stop at the end of the ride. This being Houston, there was no telling what I might run into on those last 25 miles toward home going straight through the downtown area. Any delay – an accident, construction, spilled load (which happens frequently in Houston) – could have the road shut down or cause serious delay. With 23 miles remaining and only 45 minutes to play with, it would be a tragedy to DNF due to something out of my control. The total miles to this north side gas station would be about 1528 miles by S&T and the finish time would be 2:35 AM. From here, barring any delays, I should make it to the original start point by around 3:05-3:10 AM to get another receipt. I really wanted to get that south side receipt because I was concerned about the distance from the north side location and my ending witnesses. The IBA rules say that mileage on the witness sheets should be reasonably close to the mileage on the receipts. I didn’t know if 23 miles difference would be considered “reasonable.” Thankfully I made it to the final gas station in time.

### **Efficiency:**

From the 50CC attempt, I knew my gas stops were about as efficient as I was going to get them. If it was only a gas stop, it was around 7 minutes; if I had to go inside to use the bathroom, the stop time jumped to 12-14 minutes, and I need a bathroom stop, on average, every other gas stop. So my stopped time was averaging around 10 minutes overall. This is maddening, but can’t be helped. It’s a greater struggle for a woman, dealing with layers of riding gear in a tiny bathroom stall. Over all, I have found it to be faster and more efficient to leave it all on (except the helmet and gloves) than to remove the outer layers before

going in, even though it's a huge hassle to "manage" things in cold weather, with all those layers. Otherwise, I find that something will not get fastened correctly when I suit back up, or I'll have a gap where cold air or water sneaks in which will become an enormous annoyance until the next time I stop.

Only one gas stop – the return stop at a Flying J near Corsicana – had a problematic receipt and I did lose a lot of time unsuccessfully trying to get a suitable replacement. The two clerks were covered up with trucker customers and I had to wait in a long line to try for an inside receipt which, in the end, still did not have the time imprint. It does have the date and location, and fortunately is bracketed by a gas stop on either side with correct time/date, so I think it will be okay.

Life is a continual learning experience, and I hope that I've learned something from this adventure. Here are the results of my "Sanity Check" cheat sheet that I kept in my map pocket on the tank bag. The estimated times were calculated by Streets & Trips, assuming a 3:15 AM departure time, average driving speed (sliders centered), and 10 minute gas stops (15 minutes in Tonkawa, where I planned to take a longer snack break, both on the outbound and return legs):

Location	Estimated	Actual	Net Variance Adjusted for later start time	Analysis
Buc-ee's (Pearland)	3:15 AM	3:19 AM	+ 4	Got start receipt 4 minutes later than estimated.
Shell (Corsicana)	6:30 AM	6:15 AM	-19	Apparently I made better time than S&T estimated getting out of Houston.
Shell (Ardmore)	9:10 AM	8:50 AM	-36	Still making better than estimated time.
Love's (Tonkawa)	11:50 AM	11:23 AM	-31	Took a coffee break after gassing up. Lost 5 minutes from last stop.
Toll booth (Wichita)	12:45 PM	12:45 PM	-4	Loss of significant lead reflects longer break at Tonkawa
Shell (Salina)	2:03 PM	2:09 PM	+2	
Amoco (Russell)	3:04 PM	3:16 PM	+8	
Shell (Salina)	4:05 PM	4:17 PM	+8	
Toll booth (s. Kansas)	6:00 PM	6:07 PM	+3	
Love's (Tonkawa)	6:20 PM	6:29 PM	+5	Took a snack and coffee break after gassing up.
Flying J (Ardmore)	9:05 PM	9:25 PM	+16	Reflects coffee break at Tonkawa. Spent time at Flying J trying to get good receipt.
Texaco (Streetman)	11:40 PM	00:22 AM	+38	Streetman is about 18 miles further south accounting for about half of this time. Lost much time at Flying J trying to get good receipt.
Buc-ee's (Pearland)	2:55 PM	3:12 AM	+17	Made up a lot of lost time on the last leg (euphoria will do wonders!), and this includes stopping at a Shell station on the north side of Houston to fill up and get "insurance" receipt.

I learned that leaving the speed "sliders" at their default settings on MS S&T and building in 10-minute and 15-minute breaks at the gas stops is "on the mark" for my riding style when planning my strategy for

these kinds of rides. This is good to know and will be useful for other events such as timed and scavenger rallies.

I learned that I did waste some time on this ride and can clearly identify where these time wasters occurred. I probably shouldn't have bothered with the Flying J receipt, since it wasn't a critical start or ending receipt and the overall receipt "picture" is quite clean otherwise. I also accidentally unplugged my headset while pulling out of a gas stop, and had to stop to get it plugged back in. At another stop, I meant to retrieve a banana and eat it while heading inside to use the bathroom. I remembered it just as I got to the door, so I turned around and walked back to my bike to get it. That was silly, because I could have just eaten it standing next to the bike afterward, and spent the same amount of time. On the other hand, my routine at the pump had already been honed to fit my own compulsive habits and personality. It works very well for me, as proven on this ride, in keeping track of the receipt, the odometer reading, my credit card, my key, my wallet. Nothing else gets done – no food, no drink of water, no bathroom break – until the gas pump part of the stop is squared away. So, if I'm going to waste time, it's going to be with little inefficiencies not related to pumping gas.

I probably waste a minute or so of gas stop time before getting on the bike and pulling away, to check that everything is in order: ear plugs in, helmet buckled, the gloving ritual properly completed (those of you who tuck your glove cuffs inside your sleeves know exactly what I mean), wallet safely stowed in tank bag, odometer re-set (my BMW analog odometer is very difficult to reset once underway). But I've learned from experience that not doing this can cause me a tremendous amount of inconvenience or angst and will often result in an unplanned stop to fix it.

I also learned that despite my long (by LD rider standards) gas stops, it is still possible to do one of these "extreme" rides in a safe manner, take breaks off the bike, stay hydrated and eat food, do it without aid of an auxiliary fuel tank, and do it on a bike with only a 200 mile range. The "insurance" gas receipt shows that I did a BBG (1528 GPS miles) with 45 minutes to spare, despite some dawdling and time wasted at a few of the stops. Speeding ticket last summer notwithstanding, I'm a fairly conservative rider, speed-wise, usually going no more than 5-over, exceeding it only if the traffic is flowing faster, or using the occasional burst of speed to get out of a dangerous situation or around a truck, or around one of those drivers who unconsciously speeds up when being passed. There were considerable stretches along my route with 55 or 60 mph posted speeds, a "corner" on the route that required stops for gas receipts, and a toll road that necessitated stopping to get a ticket and stopping again at the exit to pay. Even so, my time at the receipt location in north Houston was well within the time and miles requirement and I really didn't even need to get that receipt at my original start location.

All in all, I would put this IBA ride up there with the other major accomplishments of my life. It was equally as rewarding as finishing my first marathon. I will await Mike Kneebone's analysis and if it passes his muster, my little red BMW will wear her BBG license plate backer with pride.