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**“Bike powered by Motorrad – Europes most important motorcycle magazines”**

It's all about will....and being stubborn.



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Text: Svein Berli [svein@bike.no](mailto:svein@bike.no) Photo: Svein Berli, Bård Flageborg og Kristen Knudsen

Rolf Knudsen from Grimstad has been riding a motorcycle for longer than a large part of our readers have been alive. He was born in Grimstad in 1951 and had his first motorized two-wheeled ride well over half a century ago. He claims that he got his basic motor skills from Joerg and Paul Johanson, two brothers who lived in Grimstad and who were specialists with British Ariel motorcycles. Additional info was supplied from the undersigned when we discussed mc and technical issues over coffee served by my wife Astri (which Rolf claims must be Norway's most traveled mc passenger!) To quote him: "In a shed in our small town - the workshop of Joerg and Paul - I was initiated in as many MC technical secrets as my young brain could receive. I specifically, and painfully, remember the trick of making gaskets yourself. Was told to give it a try - it was easy. But it had to be done again and again and again and again and now - more than 50 years later - I still see this as the only way. Adjusting the ignition and carburetor by ear became the norm. This was a time when the ignition was controlled manually - it was not considered 100% serious to have a centrifugal controlled ignition advance on a mc, and vacuum was still locked in the vacuum cleaner. So, a bygone era. The mc languages (Swedish, German and English) we had to learn or remain ignorant. It was there the longing for extended non-stop drives was planted in me."

The organizations ..

These long distance non-stop drives makes it natural to sooner or later get in touch with the Iron Butt Association (IBA) and Long Distance Riders (LDR). The IBA was officially established in 1982, but existed as an informal organization before that. The IBA is headquartered in the United States, but the motto is: "The world is our playground." What is required in Europe is 1600 km in 24 hours, 2000 km in 24 hours or 2500 km in 24 or 36 hours. There are strict documentation requirements. Long Distance Riders come on the scene in 2007. They have equally stringent documentation requirements, but fewer challenges. On the other hand, they have much cooler logo and effects. If one is to judge by average mileage in Norway, a long drive is very short in the IBA or LDR context.

But here as very often otherwise: These are definitions. Nick Sanders drives around the world, but that doesn't necessarily mean long-haul stages. The guys in "The long way ..." programs were also out on a long trip, but they had the full support teams and again: The daily stages were easy to overcome. Those who drive the IBA or LDR must travel 1600 or 2000 kilometers in 24 hours, possibly 2400 in 24 or 36 hours, and that is their definition of long haul. It is worth noting that these are individual achievements where preparation and execution depend entirely on the individual. And not least: That you are physically and mentally able to spend a day or a half in the saddle ....

Planning and more planning

Planning a trip that involves having to put 2,000 kilometers behind you in 24 hours is not just something you scribble down on a napkin. Everything - absolutely everything - must be taken into account, for the project to have a chance of being implemented. It is not just the purely physical, such as body and steed, that must be prepared – a trip like this is so demanding that it is not feasible

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unless one is mentally 100% prepared and motivated. Rolf and his friends with similar interest are consciously training for this.

If you feel that Iron Butt is a challenge you might want to try - here are Rolf's tips on how to prepare and make the trip:

It is important to control the intake of food and drink so that it is in line with your own demand for calories and fluids - then you avoid too many toilet visits and fatigue. Both too much and too little make us tired - being awake is literally vital. Find your own stage length. How far is it okay to drive between short stops? For Rolf it is between 15-20 miles and preferably no more than 1 1/2 hours continuous.

Fill the tank, drive. Do not use more than 10 minutes, if possible. Every 6 hours, a small extra break of 20-30 minutes max. Be sure to have some energy bars or something else high in calories that you can take a few bites of at the stops. Time must be used in motion, otherwise the time schedule will :

Rolf plans the route all the way down to gas station level. Each time you stop, consider whether you are in shape for the next stage. If unsure, stop by and get into the nearest hotel. Bring at least 2 cards: Debit cards and credit cards. Try to bring some cash in the currency of the country you are in. BUT: THE MOST IMPORTANT RULE IS TO STOP TIME ...It's Vital...

The overview of Rolf's attempt to meet the Iron Butt demands is a story of a man who has had more adversity than most, but it is also a story of a hard will and a mind that refuses to give up - no matter what happens to the body . The stories of the trips and the circumstances speak for themselves.

The first trip was approx. 15 years ago. At Malmö (after about 850 km) after 5 hours of pouring rain, the cup was full in more than one way and the trip was canceled. The following year another attempt was made, but it was interrupted when Rolf realized it was not a good day. The same thing happened again the following year. It was clear that more mental training was necessary - it was not enough that the body was ready, the head must also be prepared for hours on end with what eventually becomes a rather grueling experience. Rolf spent a few years getting his head in gear and in 2016 he thought it might be time.

The Kawasaki ZX 10 R was purchased, but in late September the bike decided to kill a moose - with Rolf on board. For his part, the result was, what could have been, a disaster. 23 fractures: neck fracture, back fracture, most ribs etc. There was a 3 month recovery and the time was spent on body renewal, and getting a replacement for the bike that got the same fate as the moose. Therefore a newer ZX 10 R, bought unseen on Finn (an on line sale site), picked up in December. In 2017, a new attempt was planned. This time with his daughter, Lisa Helene, as a passenger. Start was at 9 o'clock in the evening with 20 Celcius degrees and a weather forecast that claimed a minimum of 12 degrees through the night. On the way out of Oslo, the temperature had crept down to 8 degrees and they froze like crazy through the night until Jönköping in Sweden. Then both body and soul were worn out by the cold and the trip was interrupted. The return trip was via Gothenburg with long good breaks. The two had driven 1400 km and had the trip not been canceled they would have met the requirements with a good margin. Rolf is aware that Lisa Helene deserves honorable mention: Sitting in the back for 24 hours... is awesome.

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Two must be better.....

...It is always easier when you have someone to share the madness with and Bård Flageborg joined a 2000 km run in less than 24 hours. Rolf had become familiar with the ZX and Bård was well familiar with his not very young Transalp. The reserve plan stopped at 1600 km, possibly an extra "loop" which could yield 2500 km if the energy was there. The trip was successful with 2000 km at just over 23 hours, proving that the will is more important than the mc choice.

New plans were made for 2018: 2500 km and finish in Moldova. Departure was set for a Thursday in September, but the day before departure Rolf got a call from the hospital: Forget the trip, you will be in for cancer treatment in a few days. It was an effective stopper for those plans.

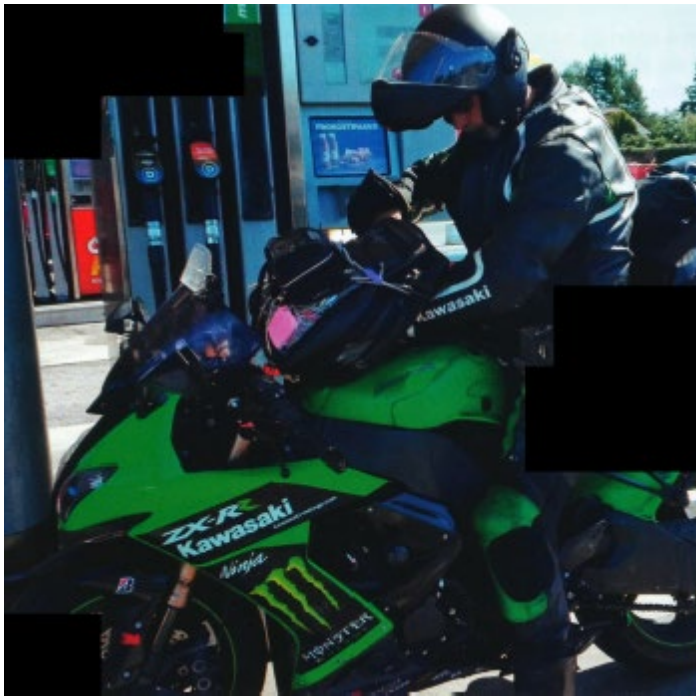
Autumn and winter were long and boring, but after finishing the treatment a new trip was planned for Easter 2019. The goal was Nurburgring by way Of Sweden, Denmark and Berlin...The team of 2 had become 3: Bård, Wiggo Webjørnsen and Rolf. It got colder than planned and after just over 1200 km Rolf had to throw in the towel – his breathing was simply terrible. The next stop was a hospital where Easter was spent. In retrospect, it was found that the aftermath of the chemotherapy regimen was the cause of the breathing problems.

So far the last try was last started the last weekend in June with goal Moldova, still with a team of 3 where Kristen Knudsen replaced Wiggo. After a little over 1600 km, the chain broke on Rolf's bike and ruined every opportunity to reach Moldova in time but the trip was memorable, although the goal was not reached. Rolf's health had now become so dependent on access to oxygen and it was this, combined with the hard work of his teammates, that made the trip possible. At this point, one would think the man would realize his limitation, but Rolf is aware of one thing: The last attempt has not been made .. ...We shall never surrender ..

Mental strength is required to meet the challenges Rolf has faced and he is proof that anyone can find challenges that strengthen self-confidence as long as it is accepted that temporary defeat is only part of the learning process. "Long Distance Riding" is not something for everyone, but with good planning and the right mental attitude it is doable for most people. Rolf can no longer cope with the challenges alone, but he is aware that with the right measures almost all obstacles can be overcome. He is dependent on having fellow travelers, his own pack of medicines and his oxygen machine on the trips and he always checks with a doctor before starting. He stubbornly claims that although he may have to be carried to the bike, he can still drive himself. The lung capacity is around 25%, the cancer surgery means he has to go to the toilet about every three hours, but as he himself says:

"What is the problem?"

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Nesten fremme. Kristen med sin G5A, Rolf på GSX-R600 og Bård bak kamera.



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**Akutt behov for oksygen. Rolf må ha med oksygenapparat og hjelpere på hver tur.**

*Oxygen is a must, sometimes....*