IRON BUTT ASSOCIATION • BIG AS TEXAS 2026

RALLY PLANNING

Plan the Rally.
Ride the Plan.

How to approach, plan & prepare for long-distance endurance motorcycle rallies

PLAN THE RIDER YOU ARE

not the rider you hope to be at 2 a.m.

Greg Rice • Allen, Texas • September 2026

How I get ready, plan my route and ride the rally — and what I learned the hard way.



This is how I do it — not the only way

1 APPROACH

Get your head, your bike and your tools ready before you ever see the bonus pack.

2 PLAN

Read the whole rally book, format the bonuses, then build a route you can really ride.

3 EXECUTE

Ride the plan, watch your times, protect the finish and make changes on the fly. Adapt and be flexible.

You can practice all of this on a 6-hour rally, a 24-hour rally or the 11-day Iron Butt Rally.

THE CORE IDEA

A rally is a thinking game you play on a motorcycle



Winning route ≠ most miles • Best route = the most points you can ride safely and still beat the clock

WHERE THIS COMES FROM

I learned most of this the hard way — on the clock

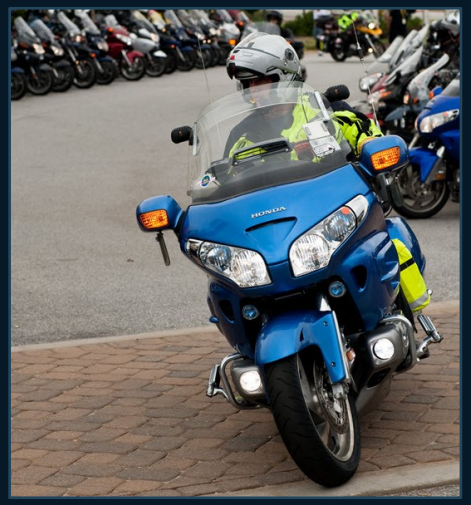
49,700
IRON BUTT RALLY MILES

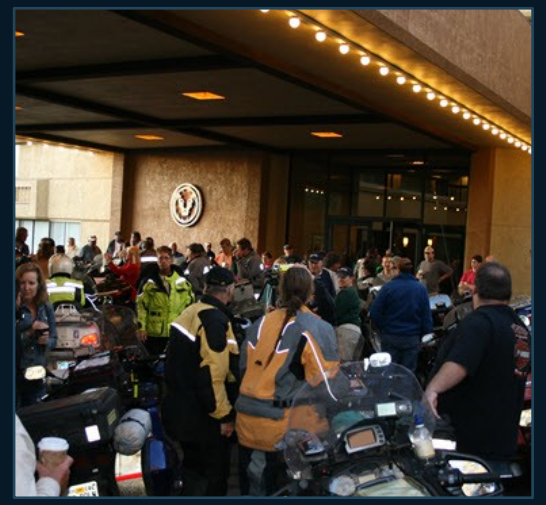
9th
2013 IRON BUTT RALLY

2×
CAPE FEAR RALLY WINS

68,400
COMPETITIVE RALLY MILES







Sources: GregRice.com rally archive • 2009 IBR photo archive

A REPEATABLE LOOP

How I approach every rally



NON-NEGOTIABLE

No bonus is worth getting hurt over

> **“If you are tired, the only option is to stop and rest.”**
>
> *— Iron Butt Association safety guidance*

NO SCORE IS WORTH IT

Tired, hurting, bad weather or riding sloppy? Those are reasons to stop — not something to “push through.”

PLAN REST ON PURPOSE

I put the rest bonus and gas stops in my route as placeholders. If there's no rest in your route, it's broken.

FINISH WITH MARGIN

The buffer is there for traffic, weather, wrong turns, slow roads — and for when you get tired.

Source: Iron Butt Association SaddleSore safety guidelines

01

PREPARE BEFORE THE CLOCK

A lot of rallies are won or lost before you ever get the bonus pack. Get the rider, the bike and your tools ready.



Being committed

PRACTICE THE TOOLS

I use my GPS's, Basecamp and my planner on every ride I do — not just rallies.

It's too late to learn your GPS the week before the rally.

PRACTICE THE PROCESS

Grab an old rally pack, set a deadline, then read it, format it, route it and load your GPS.

Then ride a short mock rally and score yourself honestly.

PRACTICE RECOVERY

Break something on purpose: lose a GPS, close a road, delete a route, run 30 minutes late.

Practice getting back on plan — not just the perfect plan.

Do your homework on the rally

PAST BONUS PACKS	Not the bonuses — they always change. How does this RM build the bonus pack?
PRIOR WINNING ROUTES	Can you look at the old bonus list and come up with the route that won?
CHECKPOINT / FINISH WINDOWS	Know the leg times early. They set the shape of every leg.
SCORING CULTURE	What trips riders up at the scoring table? Photos? Receipts? Flags? Call-ins?
YOUR COMPETITIVE GOAL	Finish? Top 10? Win? Your goal decides how hard you should push.

Source: GregRice.com — Rally Planning

Know your own numbers — and be honest

MOVING SPEED

Real average for this terrain

FUEL RANGE

Comfortable, repeatable range

STOP FREQUENCY

Fuel • food • hydration • bathroom

REST NEED

Planned sleep / off-bike recovery

NIGHT TOLERANCE

How much night riding preserves performance?

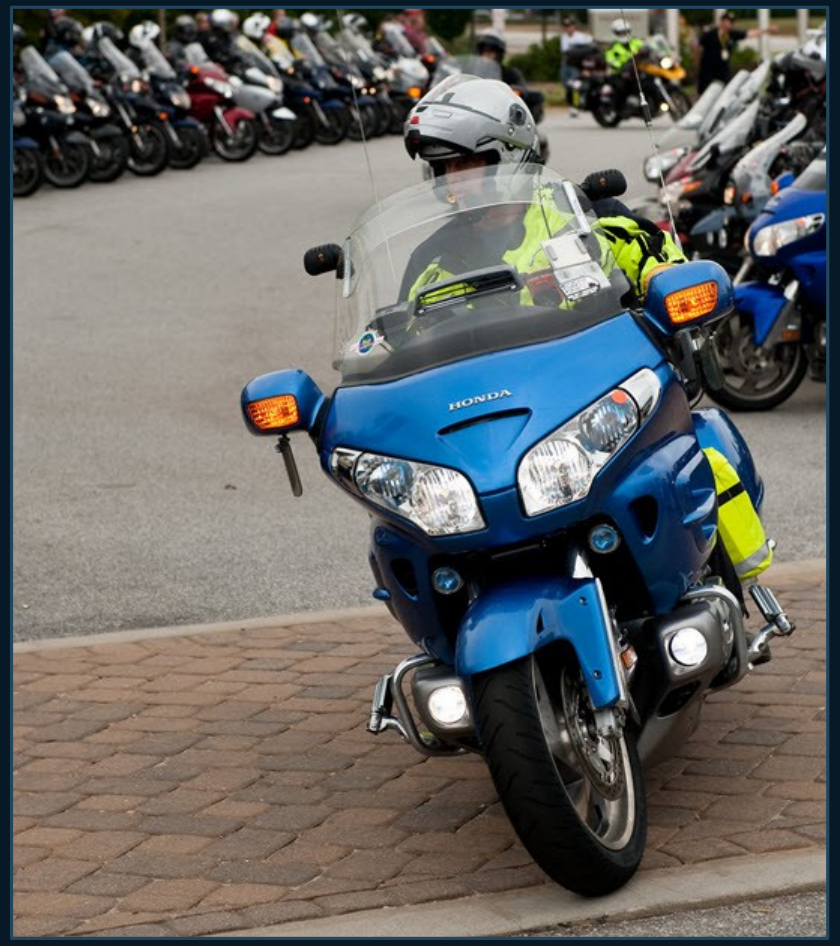
WEATHER TOLERANCE

Cold • heat • rain • wind

A route that depends on becoming a different rider after midnight is not a plan.

A conservative number you beat is better than a fast number you chase.

Motorcycle readiness: boring is fast



- I keep my bike in “ready to ride” mode — usually just tires and oil.
- Old IBA proverb: don’t make big changes to the bike right before a rally.
- Check it front to back: suspension, brakes, fuel system, lights, AUX tank.
- Carry only tools and spares you know how to use.
- Every farkle mounted solid and out of the way of riding the bike.

It’s not the motorcycle that drives you to the finish — it’s the rider. A reliable bike sure helps.

Source: GregRice.com — IBR preparation

Gear: broken in, simple, within reach

1	**WEATHER**	Gear you've ridden in — not gear with the tags still on.
2	**VISIBILITY**	Lighting / reflective gear that does not create new complexity.
3	**HYDRATION**	Drink while you ride; know where you'll refill.
4	**FOOD**	Small, familiar, predictable. Avoid experiments under stress.
5	**COMFORT**	Seat, earplugs, gloves, boots, helmet liner — tested for hours.
6	**ACCESS**	Rain layer, glasses, meds, snacks and chargers where you can reach them quickly.

The less you have to stop and change gear or dig for something, the better.

Laptop, GPS, camera and power

NAVIGATION

Test waypoint loads, which symbols show, rerouting without the laptop

COMPUTER

Software installed and working, folders made, updates done before you leave

CAPTURE

Camera/phone, rally flag, photo review, timestamps, storage, backup

POWER

Bike power, USB, laptop, battery packs, spare cables, labeled adapters

Practice it both ways: RM files → planner → Basecamp → GPS, and photo / receipt → scoring table.

Have a backup for anything that can end your rally

SINGLE POINT	FAILURE MODE	BACKUP / RECOVERY
NAVIGATION	Primary route display	Multiple GPS’s with ALL bonuses + routes loaded
POWER	One charging cable	Spare cable + second power path
RALLY FILES	One rally book / one laptop copy	Second copy (check with the RM first) + USB
BONUS EVIDENCE	One photo / unreadable receipt	Verify immediately; backup capture method
KEYS	One motorcycle key	Secure spare carried separately
FINISH ETA	Same device as bonus routing	Third GPS routed straight to the finish

Being organized is free time on the clock

Same item • same pocket • every time



The “Sunday before the IBR” checklist

RIDER + BIKE STAGING

- ✓ Clothes / gear laid out
- ✓ Wallet / cash / cards
- ✓ Hydration ready
- ✓ Keys + backup key on bike
- ✓ Snacks / water
- ✓ Camera / phone / flag

COMPUTER + ROUTING STAGING

- ✓ Laptop powered + network verified
- ✓ Rally folders already created
- ✓ Email / download workflow tested
- ✓ Planner / spreadsheets open
- ✓ Basecamp open, old data cleared
- ✓ Leg 1 route started: start → checkpoint

Source: GregRice.com — pre-rally checklist

02

DECODE THE RALLY BOOK

Reading comprehension is the most important thing you do. Read the whole rally book before you route.



Read the entire rally book before routing



The rally book decides your route. Don’t route until you’ve read all of it.

Source: GregRice.com — “How I Read The Rally Pack”

MY MOST EXPENSIVE MISTAKE

One poker chip cost me 19,000 points

19,000

POINTS LOST

2019 IBR, Isle of Capri Casino: five photos with my flag — but I never bought the poker chip the rally book asked for. Top 10 to 40th.

STOP BEFORE YOU SHOOT

At every bonus, read the requirement again — photo, receipt, token, whatever — before you ride off.

Source: GregRice.com — 2019 IBR lesson

MAKE THE PUZZLE SORTABLE

Get every bonus into one list you can sort

CODE

ABC

POINTS

423

AVAILABILITY

Daylight

WINDOW

Sunrise–sunset

COMBO

MISS1

LAT / LON

Exact coordinates

REQUIREMENT

Photo + flag

NOTES

Access / parking / clue

Once it’s in a list, you can toss what you can’t reach, spot the patterns and rebuild a route fast.

My bonus name tells me what I need to know on the GPS

ABC — 423 — D

BONUS CODE | POINT VALUE | AVAILABILITY

A	Anytime	D	Daylight	T	Timed
AC	Anytime combo	DC	Daylight combo	TC	Timed combo
G	Group photo	H	Checkpoint	S	Special

Source: GregRice.com — sample naming convention

SHAPE = AVAILABILITY • COLOR = VALUE

Symbols and colors: see the big rocks at a glance

AVAILABILITY



24-HOUR



DAYLIGHT



TIMED / SPECIAL

POINT VALUE



≤ 1,000



1,001–2,500



HIGH VALUE



VERY HIGH

Zoom out in Basecamp and the big rocks, daylight-only and timed bonuses should jump right out.

Source: GregRice.com — waypoint symbol method

Combo bonuses change the math



10-bonus 2019 IBR combination

18,799	4,172	22,971
MISS COMBO 1	MISS COMBO 2	COMBO VALUE

That 211-point bonus was the Isle of Capri — the one I blew. Small bonus, huge combo.

Source: GregRice.com — 2019 IBR combo example

03

BUILD A ROUTE YOU CAN EXECUTE

Start with the clock, plan around the big rocks, build your routes and protect the finish.



Start with time — not distance

RIDING HOURS = LEG CLOCK − REQUIRED REST − FUEL / FOOD − BONUS STOPS − CHECKPOINT TASKS − SAFETY BUFFER



Riding hours × a moving average for that part of the country = about how many miles to plan.

RANGE RINGS

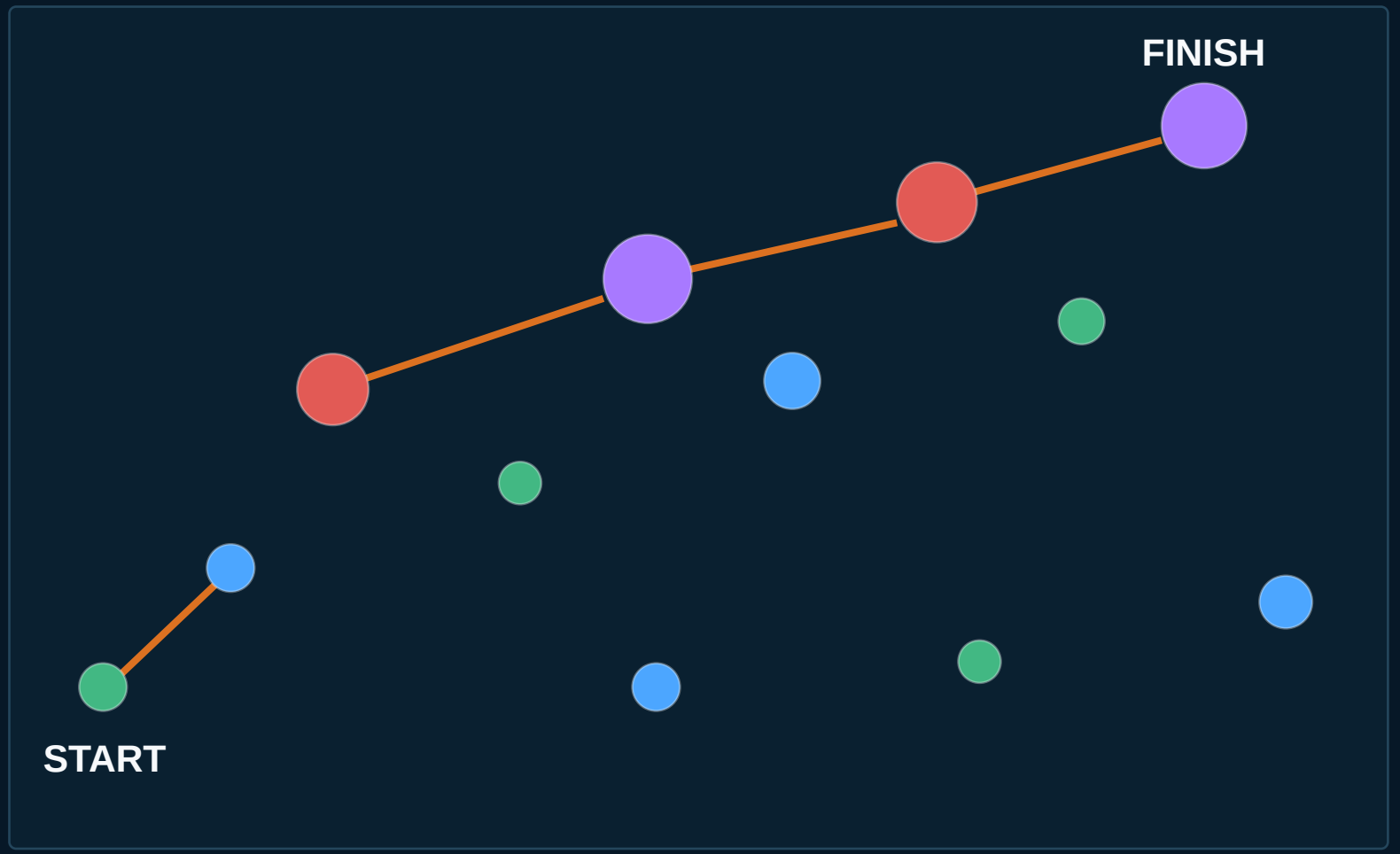
Draw range rings in Basecamp.
Bonus outside the ring? Skip it.

CORRIDOR THINKING

Look for a fairly straight line from the start to the checkpoint or finish.

Source: GregRice.com — Hours & Miles / range-ring planning

Find the “big rocks” — then connect them efficiently



1 SEE THE PATTERN

Where are the high-value clusters, combos and natural corridors?

2 CONNECT BIG ROCKS

Plan around the big point bonuses, then add what’s on the way.

3 CHECK THE CLOCK

Every route has to pass the clock: rest, gas stops, finish time.

GIVE YOUR FUTURE SELF OPTIONS

I plan aggressive — then build my outs

WEATHER / FIRE ROUTE	**Routes around storms, snow, hurricanes or fires**	Built before the start so you can switch fast when it hits.
LESS AGGRESSIVE	**The one I build after I come to my senses**	Fewer fragile timed stops and more room to the checkpoint.
AGGRESSIVE	**More bonuses than I can really ride — on purpose**	It’s a lot easier to drop bonuses on the fly than to add them.

Load ALL the bonuses and ALL the routes into EVERY GPS. Stopping to boot up the laptop will cost you.

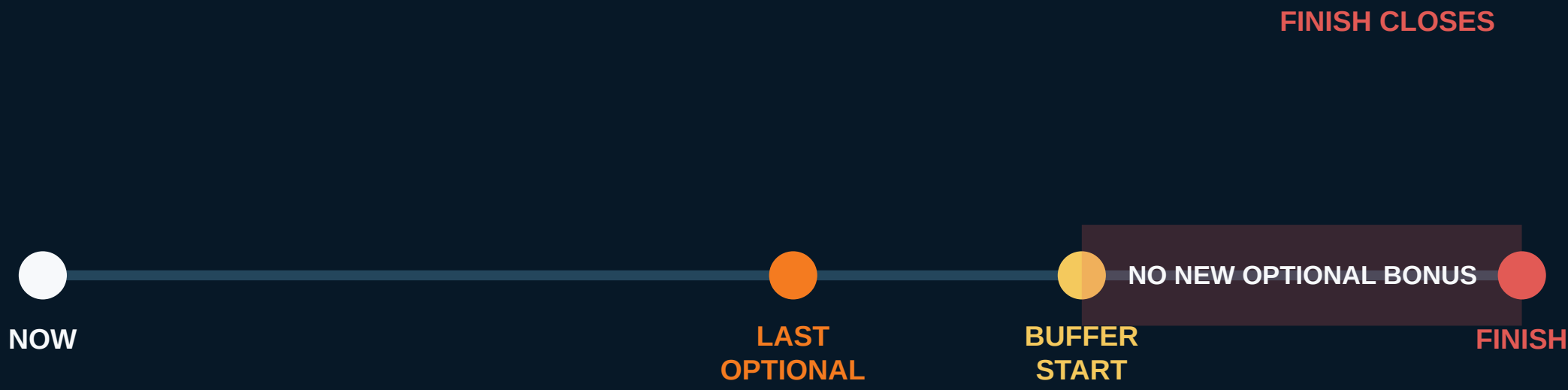
Source: GregRice.com — Rallying / My Route Planning

Schedule every bonus — then watch the variance

PLAN ETA	STOP	LEG / GAP	ACTUAL VS PLAN
07:00	START	0:00	—
09:05	ABC-423-D	2:05	**+0:05**
11:20	JDC-1200-DC	2:15	**+0:10**
13:10	FUEL / FOOD	1:50	**−0:05**
15:45	XYZ-2500-T	2:35	**+0:20**
18:30	**DROP DECISION**	2:45	**+0:35**
22:00	REST	3:30	**+0:20**
06:30	**FINISH ETA**	—	**BUFFER 1:30**

Decide now: “If I’m an hour behind here, what’s the first bonus I drop?”

The finish is the one bonus you can’t miss



INDEPENDENT ETA

On the last day I route one GPS straight to the finish so I always know my time.

BUFFER IS REAL

Don’t keep spending it because “traffic looks good.”

TIME BAR = ZERO

Time barred = DNF. A late big route loses to an on-time smaller one.

Points per mile is useful — points per elapsed hour is better

A	**2,500 pts**	80 mi	1h 35m road + 10m stop	**1,429 pts/hr**
B	**4,000 pts**	155 mi	2h 55m road + 20m stop	**1,231 pts/hr**
C	**1,700 pts**	35 mi	0h 42m road + 8m stop	**2,040 pts/hr**

Illustrative example — road type, bonus-stop time, timing windows, combos and risk can matter more than raw miles.

The tools changed. The process didn’t.

2013 Spreadsheet workflow

- Import / enter bonuses
- Format code • points • availability
- Calculate sunrise / sunset
- Export GPX to Basecamp / GPS
- Build multiple routes manually

AUTOMATE THE MECHANICS

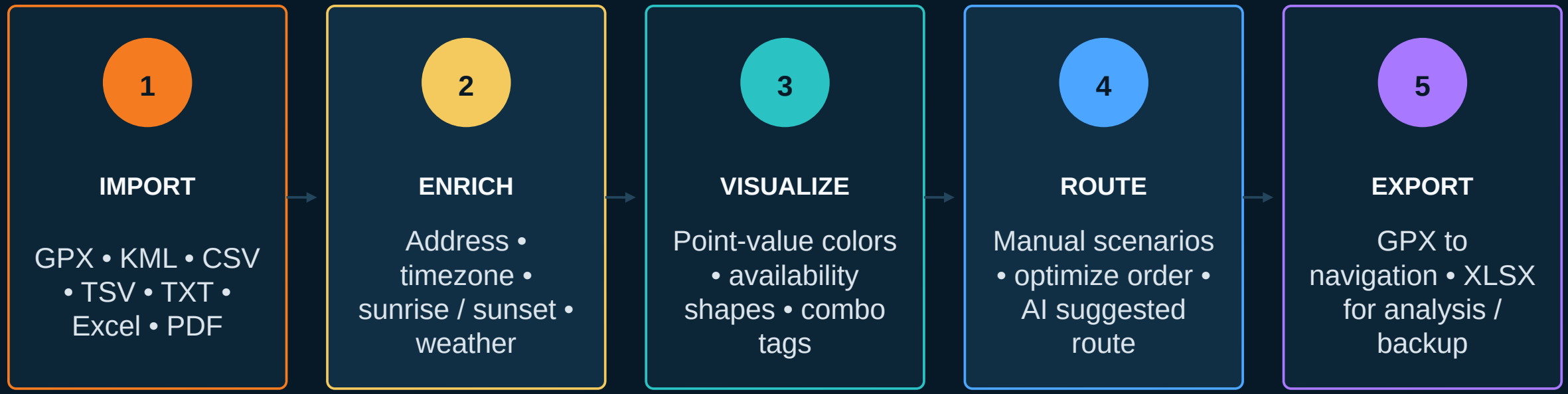
2026 Web-based Rally Bonus Planner

- Import GPX • KML • CSV • Excel • PDF
- Auto address • timezone • sun • weather
- Map by value and availability
- Route / export GPX and XLSX
- AI suggested route to get you started

It does the grunt work. You still read the rally book, manage your rest and decide when to stop.

Source: GregRice.com Rally Bonus Planner help

A modern planning pipeline



Heads up: the AI Suggested Route only picks from the bonuses you give it. You still check required bonuses, daylight/timed windows, rest, gas and the finish.

Source: Rally Bonus Planner Help — current September 2026

04

EXECUTE & ADAPT

A great route is just a plan. Points come from doing a lot of little things right while everything keeps changing.



Ride the plan — and keep checking your times



Don’t wait until you’re way behind. Ten minutes late is easy to fix. Ninety minutes late forces ugly choices.

Do every bonus stop the same way

1 → 2 → 3 → 4 → 5 → 6

1	2	3	4	5	6
PARK	**READ**	**SET**	**CAPTURE**	**VERIFY**	**LOG + GO**
Safe • legal • easy exit	Reread exact requirement	Flag / bike / object positioned	Take required photo / receipt	Zoom in — can scoring see it?	Write it down, stow it, next bonus up



The costly stop isn’t the 90-second one. It’s the one you have to redo — or the one that scores zero.

WEATHER • TRAFFIC • CLOSURE • MECHANICAL • FATIGUE

Something will go wrong — you know it will

1 STABILIZE

Get safe. Stop moving if the problem requires attention. Do not troubleshoot while mentally overloaded.

2 RECOMPUTE

What time remains? What requirements remain? What is the new finish ETA?

3 SIMPLIFY

Drop fragile / low-efficiency work. Preserve required items and margin.

4 COMMIT

Pick the new route and quit mourning the old one.

Sunk miles and missed bonuses are history. The only question that matters: “What’s the best safe move from here?”

MOST ARE PREVENTABLE

Five ways I’ve seen riders lose a rally

1	**ROUTING BEFORE READING**	You optimize the wrong game.
2	**FANTASY SCHEDULE**	Moving average and stop times assume your best day all day, everyday.
3	**UNFAMILIAR TECH**	You learn your GPS during the rally.
4	**STOP-TIME CREEP**	Every “quick” stop turns into 15–30 minutes.
5	**NO FINISH BUFFER**	A small delay turns into a time bar.

My first IBR: the route never looks like the plan



WHAT THE MAP TEACHES

- Solve the leg you're on — don't try to solve all 11 days.
- Weather and closures can wipe out a good plan fast.
- Build routes that are easy to shorten and still make the checkpoint.
- Push too hard in one leg and you'll have nothing left for the next.

35th • 92,614 pts • Silver

Source: Greg Rice 2009 IBR archive / official results supplied by Greg Rice

Practice the skills separately — then combine them

20-MINUTE ROUTE

Take an old bonus pack. Give yourself 20 minutes to read, format and choose a route.

BONUS-STOP DRILL

Set up 5 fake bonuses. Practice park → read → capture → verify → log → leave.

FAILURE DRILL

Mid-route, “lose” a GPS, close a road or remove a planned bonus. Rebuild fast.

6-HOUR MOCK RALLY

Ride a short event with real ETAs, rest/fuel plan and scoring. Debrief where time leaked.

You don’t get better at rallying by thinking about it. You get better by practicing it.

If you forget everything else, remember these

1	**READ THE WHOLE BOOK**	before you route.
2	**PLAN THE RIDER YOU ARE**	**not the rider you hope to be at 2 a.m.**
3	**START WITH TIME**	then convert realistic hours into distance.
4	**MAKE THE MAP VISUAL**	so the big rocks and daylight bonuses jump out.
5	**PLAN AGGRESSIVE**	it’s easier to drop bonuses than add them.
6	**PROTECT THE FINISH**	with a real buffer and independent ETA.
7	**ADAPT WITHOUT EMOTION**	the next decision is the only one you can change.

SCAN NOW — USE LATER

Resources to keep learning

RALLY PLANNING

gregrice.com/rallys/rallys.html

RALLY BONUS PLANNER HELP

gregrice.com/rally-planner/help.html

2021 RALLY PLANNING SEMINAR

YouTube • 3-hour deep dive

MY IBR PREPARATION

gregrice.com/ibr/ibr.html

I keep updating all of these. If you have questions, reach out — greg@gregrice.com

QUESTIONS?

Plan the rally.
Ride the plan.
Get home safe.

Greg Rice • gregrice.com

Thank you to the Iron Butt Association and the Big As Texas organizers.

