

Bar Hoppin' With Hops

The Keep On Hoppin' Tour
Hops MacBarley's Ongoing
Key West Bar Boondoggle

Bar 248:

Rum Row (Gates Hotel)

3824 North Roosevelt Boulevard

www.gateshotelkeywest.com

Sunday, May 17, 2015, 2:00 PM

Jai Alai (draft) \$7.00



I was about ready to pass out. The bike ride here absolutely wiped me. No way it should have but it did. I was dehydrated and dazed when I shuffled to the bar.

Rum Row is the bar of the new Gates Hotel, the first of "the four hotels" on the east end of the island to open. It's a large, white, wooden frame with a peaked roof, and it sits next to the fenced-in swimming pool. The 30-knot headwinds that had battered my ride along NRB had morphed into coooling breezes swirling through the open-air bar.



I took my seat on one of the basketbox stools. Not the most comfortable bar stool I've ever eased my behind onto, but one of the coolest. They were just tightly-woven wicker boxes that were missing some sides. They had rungs for your feet and felt sturdy enough.

As I sat there reveling in the shade, awaiting the bartender's attention, I realized just how stupidly hot it was today. Heat index easily in triple figures, not a cloud in the sky. Great day to take an hour-plus, hard-pumping, and *shirtless* midday bike ride. I was wasted.

The barkeep came to my rescue. He was friendly dude, mid-20's, very red hair and beard, with an eastern European twang in his voice. That makes for a bit of a double take. You expect Irish and you get Polish. KW is such a melting pot. He asked what I needed. I often answer that question with a quip like, "*Need* is kind of a harsh

word...," but this time, I scraped up a smile and said *Waaaaterrrr. Bigggg glass. With ice, please. Then I'll get a beer.*

After my third guzzled glass of H₂O, the true elixir of life, I felt ready for beer. See, *that* was the third strike. After a lively Saturday of Duvalling -- on an empty stomach, no less -- I didn't even have a drink, a swig, or drop of *anything* this morning. What a freaking moron. I've made my living in many capacities, but, in this case, my backgrounds in college coaching and in personal fitness training *should* have come into play. If any of the people I've ever trained had been this **stupid** about a workout, I would have had him flayed. (That's legal in Florida, iddinit?) But, no, dumbass Hops can handle it. Maybe, *maybe, maybe* when I was 25, yeah. But I haven't been 25 for months now. *Hundreds* of months.



The water helped, but I was counting on the beer to be that magical Hair Of The Dog. I was disappointed when the first swig did not right the ship, but that was a pretty unreasonable expectation anyway.



After a few more swigs, I noticed that my barkeep had become a full-breasted Caribbean woman with sunglasses. Neat trick. I regretted missing the actual transmutation.

There were just three other people here at Rum Row: a cheerful young couple across from me, and the consummate grumpy old man at the far end drinking Bud from the can and railing on about all the things that piss him off. Just like having a chat with Dad. I guess when you get old enough, everyone's an asshole and everything sucks. Something to look forward to.

The bar itself is well done: plenty of wood and ropes and nets, old black-and-white photographs in frames, and wide pillars wrapped in nautical charts. And it's all new and looking good. There's a separate section over there that is raised up, has ramps leading up, and is topped with a gazebo. Big Dog gave it high marks as a cigar smoking zone: *It's like you're in your own country up there.*



The food situation looked a bit odd. The Blind Pig is the name of it, and it's a silver food truck that looks like it might be permanently parked about 10 yards away from the bar hut. I don't know what they serve. Acorns, I guess.

We also were being serenaded by a guitarist/vocalist. He had to stand out on the grass to play his music. He had found *some* shade under a palm tree, but, really, palm trees aren't the best shadders. He was playing mmmmmlllllllowwww music. If I had ever given in and put my head down on the bar, I would have been out for the count.

A second beer never even crossed my mind. Content with my Hop, I put my shirt on, gulped down one more glass of water, smiled at the prospect of a tail wind all the way home, and wheeled Trekkio The Wonder Bike back towards The Shanty.