

## They just might kill themselves off first...



We'll start off with Sunday's ride first. Nothing big; the plan was to head out to the coast with Kevin, but Kevin was beginning to come down with a cold and didn't feel up to it. I had a lot to take care of anyway, shop stuff, trying to come up with ways to get people into the bike shops for the holiday, you know, business stuff, that I wasn't in a big rush to get out anyway. I made good use of my time while waiting for Kevin to feel better, but that never happened, so I finally headed out at 2pm. Obviously nothing too challenging; just a version of "the loop" that I added the Alpine Road/Joaquim section onto, for fun.

Fun? Joaquim is so nasty-steep it's just never felt like fun to me. This time was not an exception. When it gets sufficiently steep, say, over 12% or so, my ability to generate power goes out the window. You would think that 280 watts = 280 watts, regardless of how steep it is. It's simply power. Adding insult to injury, I got a flat descending the other side. Me. A flat. Something I get maybe just once/year.

Still a good fun ride, on a really clear & beautiful day.

OK, now for this morning's ride. Kevin skipped out again... same cold, worse today than Sunday. Obviously I told him that's because he didn't ride Sunday. Cold? Yeah... this time of year, that's what it's going to be. Hard to believe it wasn't that long ago I could ride without leg warmers. 36 or 37 degrees and you're into long-fingered gloves and toe warmers. The base layer has been a staple for a couple of months. Nothing heroic yet; no ear warmers, no jacket (actually, I bring the jacket, but it stays stuffed in the seat bag).

Ride roster? Lanier is keeping to his threat to show up on a regular basis; with his ability to pull us along on the flats and slight descents, it's a threat we're happy he's made good on. JR, Kevin (pilot), Eric and Marcus. It started out deceptively easy and stayed deceptively easy and for some reason that gives me trouble. I typically get blown off the back about halfway up the hill; this morning, I lasted about 2/3rds of the way, despite the pretty easy pace. It was just prior to my exit off the back that we saw the car trying to pass us at a very bad place and time. We weren't in danger ourselves; as you can see, we were riding at the far right, single file, and the car passing us did so with plenty of room. He just did so in a really wrong place. Why? Plenty of sections where the road straightens out. Even if he didn't know the road, he would have figured out by that time that Kings has many curves and many straight stretches; you don't have to wait long for either.

Maybe I can blame getting dropped by being rattled due to the bad car pass? But it wouldn't be true; that sort of thing doesn't rattle me anymore. Good ting, that. If you let things rattle you, you're more likely to ride off the road, or worse. Calm is always best.

Eric stayed back with me while the rest very very very gradually increased their lead. I could write a book on the different ways you can be dropped on a climb. But once I'm up on top, I'm good. I can suck a wheel with the best of them. Keep the grades reasonable and fairly short, and I can hide my limitations.

Limitations. That's the cool thing about cycling. There are times when experience and skill are more important than raw strength. Learning how to stay close to the wheel in front of you so you can take full advantage of getting sucked along. Knowing how long it takes to recover from a hard effort and riding in a way that's sustainable for the long haul. Working on descending better. Just because you might not be the best climber doesn't mean you can't do a ride with those who are.

Of course, the day will come when everyone else is finishing a day ahead of me. Let's hope they've got those miniature motor assist

gadgets down to a reasonable price by then!