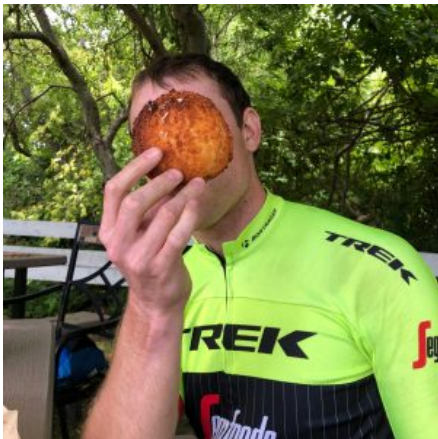


Would have been a great ride if not for the deflating rear tire. Best time up Hammer of Thor in almost 4 years!



An alternative view from West Old LaHonda today!

So a few days ago I was talking about maybe 5 strong rides in a row, quite the surprise. Thursday broke that string; not that we were really all that slow, but it was just a ride, nothing special. Today was a bit different, on all accounts.



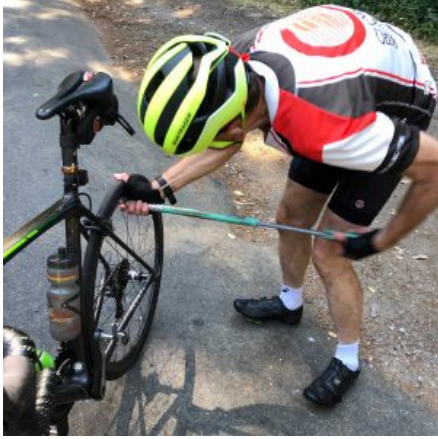
A Macaroon is a poor substitute for an oversized cookie.

As usual, I didn't feel that great starting out, yet, once again, I climbed Old LaHonda pretty well. Tied for my best time last year; have to go back two years to find something faster. And then, later in the day, I got my best time up the infamous "Hammer of Thor" section of Tunitas in nearly 4 years. That was quite a surprise; I really didn't expect to be feeling that good. But-

I don't get flat tires. Neither does Kevin. But this morning, before the ride, I discover my rear tire is almost flat. So take the tire off, look to find the cause, can't find it, install a new tube and off we go. Except that, as we pass through Loma Mar, I'm noticing my bike is beginning to ride a lot more smoothly than normal. I look back and the profile doesn't look right. We stop and, sure enough, it's about half-pressure. So pull it apart, check even-more-carefully for a cause, and still not finding it. This is a problem; could be a Michelin wire, a very tiny piece of steel radial tire belt that's shredded off someone's too-worn car tire and embedded itself between the tread and the casing of my tire. The sort of thing that doesn't poke through until there's pressure on it (from the road). But we're hopeful, replace it, fill it with CO2 and off we go.

In Pescadero we met up with the Mark & Laura duo, which proved fortunate for me later on. Laura is close to my age and

unbelievably strong and fast. She believes only the "strong" part, but even my son admits she's pretty darned fast. But she's also smart, and when the pace picked up a bit (thanks to Kevin), she dropped off the back a bit while Mark kept burning matches trying to keep up with Kevin. Eventually, on Tunitas, that caught up to him. Kevin was setting a pretty strong pace on the steeper part of Tunitas and Mark quickly got shelled. Surprisingly, I managed to keep up with Kevin, with Laura just a minute or two back at the top of the Hammer of Thor section.



One of several stops to reinflate the leaking rear tire.

Laura went on ahead, chasing after Kevin, while I nicely waited for Mark. Turned out to be a very good thing I waited for Mark, as he had an old-school but very-efficient Silca pump with him, and my rear tire was almost flat. We pumped it back up, finished the climb, and inflated yet again. Kevin screamed down Kings while I was a bit slower, thinking I didn't want to risk sliding out in a corner on a flat tire. Smart move on my part; halfway down I had to stop and borrow Mark's pump again. This would happen once more at the bottom, after which Kevin and I managed to make it to home before losing too much air again.

Overall a really nice ride because we met up with friends and I was riding strongly again. Too bad about the tire, and too bad also that the Pescadero Bakery had run out of cookies, and a Macaroon isn't a suitable substitute for a cookie face test.