

It's been three years since I've done a Santa Cruz loop? Easier 112 mile ride than expected!



Lunch? Breakfast? Our first stop, 50 miles into the ride. Hey, it works!

I figured it was going to be tough, doing the Santa Cruz loop, which Kevin and I hadn't done in a while. When I looked it up on Strava though, I had no idea it had been... 3 years????!! Yikes. My last 100 mile ride was probably the Sequoia Century two years ago. Nothing last year due to Covid-19 shutting things down. So yes, a bit of fear & trepidation when I discovered how long it had been.



West Old LaHonda, early in the ride.

Fortunately, there's safety in numbers, and we had Colin coming along with us as well. Does that really make a difference? Mentally, somehow, yes it does. With three people, it's likely that, at any given time, one of them is feeling pretty good, and on a long ride, that works great when you're heading into the wind. And three is small enough that it's not likely you'll have a situation where you're really held up by a straggler on the climbs either.

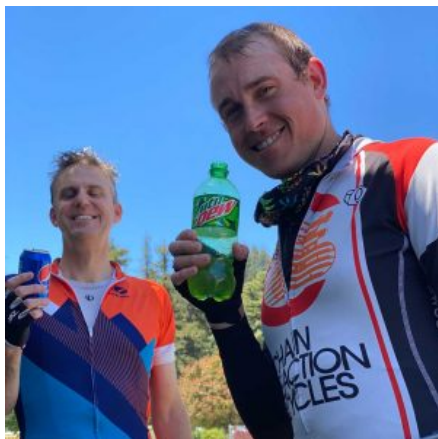
The toughest part might have been figuring out how to dress for the ride. The day started pretty cool but promised to warm up later. So leg warmers, base layer and long-fingered gloves at the start, which you put exactly where when you have to remove them later? Just one of those things you find a way to work with. Pretty stuffed jersey pockets. And being prepared for cooler temps did pay off as we saw it get down to 49 degrees once we got up over Skyline, via Old LaHonda.



93 degrees in Boulder Creek

Old LaHonda. Didn't exactly start up; the hill very strongly, but for some reason things got better as the hill went on. Better enough that Kevin and Colin were having a bit of trouble keeping up with me towards the top. Haskins we all seemed pretty evenly matched.

The miles rolled by pretty nicely; I never had that feeling of, oh my, we're just 30 miles into this, 80 to go! I know that feeling. Used to get it pretty frequently on centuries (100 milers) but as I've grown older that feeling seems to have completely gone away. In general, endurance isn't much of an issue for me, just speed.



The very important stop in Boulder Creek for Caffeine & Sugar!

We rolled into Davenport for lunch, hoping to hit up the taco place, but it was take-out only, no place to eat! So back to the Whaler Bakery, which we've visited many times before, but never for pancakes. Pancakes? Seriously? We saw others having them and somehow it just made sense. Pancakes and a mocha fueled us through the Santa Cruz maze, up the San Lorenzo Valley all the way to Boulder Creek, our other traditional stop, at the last gas station in town. Snickers bar and a large Mtn Dew worked wonders for the long climb up Highway 9 to Skyline. Colin was fading a bit, but he hung in there.



7.54 miles to go on this climb? Yikes! But Highway 9 goes pretty fast.

It's sad there's no Mr. Mustard at Saratoga Gap anymore; no hot dogs, no cokes. But there is water at the Fire Station, where we picked up another source of power, Brian, long-time customer at the shop, who'd just ridden up Redwood Gulch. Together we made pretty good time to Sky Londa, but with a brief stop on the way when Kevin pulled over for a seizure. No problems; he was back on his bike in just a few minutes, stronger than ever.

112 miles, over 8000ft of climbing, and felt pretty good at the end. I'm still alive!