

## Felt so good to ride hard enough it hurts to walk down stairs

Back in the day, which is, oh, a year ago now? Back in the day I'd ride every Tuesday, every Thursday, every Sunday.. no matter what. Which meant sometimes in the rain. Sometimes in really nasty rain. Sometimes in really nasty rain and cold. And, sometimes, although far more rarely, in the snow.

Something happened this year. Somehow the appeal of riding in really nasty stuff, or even just damp, went away. Some of it came with the increased responsibilities making sure my wife is getting the best-possible care with her cancer, some of it from my Raynauds (circulation issue to my hands) worsening, and some because, as I get older and lose power, I can't generate the same amount of heat to stay warm. That last part is likely overlooked by many; when you can do 280 watts for an extended period of time, you're burning a lot of calories and generating a lot of heat. At 200 watts, not so much!

The problem is that I lose a lot of strength when I skip those wet days and ride a trainer instead. I'm good for far fewer watts on a trainer, maybe 155 watts average, vs 180 in the real world. After a number of wet days, that deficit starts adding up.

So Sunday (yesterday) I was determined to get in a longer-distance albeit slower ride in the real world. Texted ex-pilot who was good for the same. What I didn't expect was 4 other guys showing up, all much stronger, and I was quickly in a very bad way heading up Kings. For that matter, I do Kings too much as it is, so I wasn't in a good mindset for a Sunday ride up Kings as well! They nicely waited at the top, and I had didn't have much trouble hanging onto wheels on Skyline. Should mention we were doing a coastal loop, heading out to the coast via 84 and back Tunitas.

Heading out 84 to the coast, it was all about following wheels. Bruce M is a powerhouse, but I was determined to hold that wheel and not get dropped. Did fine until one of the final small rises maybe 4 miles from San Gregorio, when I just couldn't get up the small hill without losing speed (and the wheel).

No stop for coffee in San Gregorio!!! This train wasn't stopping for anything, and I didn't want to be left behind. So right up Stage Road to Highway 1, again, me behind, maybe 30 seconds or so, at the top. Followed by the descent to Tunitas on a beautifully-clear day.

Kevin and Bruce (forgot to mention Bruce, who was providing the "muscle" on the flats and downhills) stopped at the Bike Hut for relief, while I headed straight up, hoping to not get passed by them too quickly. Turns out they spent a LONG time stopped; Bruce caught me just before the end of the steep part, and Kevin finished a minute or two behind me.

It was really nice to finally get in some real climbing and have my legs hurt when walking down steps afterward. That's my test. If the legs hurt walking down stairs, I done good.