

Supposed to be Kevin's first ride post-knee procedure. Nope. Another solo ride.



This was supposed to be the big day, Kevin's first day back on a "real" (not electric, and especially not electric with a throttle) bike. Over six weeks ago he had this nasty procedure where they inject platelet-rich plasma directly into the tendon, 10-15 times, intentionally inflaming it in an attempt to get it to heal. Which would be nice, since he's had on-and-off knee issues in one knee for quite a few years.

But last night, riding his ebike (which he uses to commute) from the shop to home, he got excited about not having to ride a bike he could actually pedal, and pushed hard going up the 400ft climb to our house. And what do you know, his knee really complained about it.

So it was another solo ride this morning, not too cold, about 50 at the bottom of the climb and, according to purpleair, 37F near the top, but mostly upper-40s to low-50s. Not too bad. But pretty wet roads up on Skyline as the cloud cover stayed so roads never got a chance to dry out.

Surprisingly I was doing a bit better this morning than last week with Todd; Strava said I was giving it a 100% effort (not a wimpy 99% like last Thursday) for Kings, and managed to average 215 watts for the full climb. I really want to hope, or maybe pretend, I can get back to at least 220 watts, and wish I didn't have such strong memories of maintaining 280!

I did make the mistake of looking at my history on the climb, as well as comparisons to the best times by anyone. I am now, officially, climbing less than half the speed of a top-flight bike racer. YUCK! My best Strava time was 26:21, today was 36:52. My best-ever time was 21:15, way way way back in the day. Ex-pro Phil Gaimon holds the record at 18:09, over 440 watts average power, back in 2019.

Nevertheless I was good with my effort, never completely falling apart, even though, at the upper entrance to Huddart Park, there were thoughts of turning back. I do get those thoughts now and then, and generally they're just that, thoughts. Think there have only been three times I quit and turned back.

Skyline was, as mentioned, a bit mucky. Had it been dry, I might have had some fun on the descent to Sky Londa, but 25c tires don't inspire confidence on wet roads. Continuing the descent to West Old LaHonda that's not an issue, since it's less steep & twisty. I could actually push a bit and keep the watts up. Why bother? Because I live for that "Weighted Average Power" number, which declines quickly if you slack off and take it easy.

West Old LaHonda? As you can see in the photo, definitely dreary today! And despite that, no rabbits! No turkeys either.

Got back to the start at 9:35, which isn't too bad, only 15 minutes off what used to be considered a good time when everyone, er, I mean I, was faster. One of the reasons others have largely stopped showing up for my ride is because they haven't slowed down as much as I have. But I remain hopeful I will start getting a tiny bit faster as it warms up, and maybe, going into my 69th year, this will be a year I plateau or even improve slightly. That's an increasingly-tough ask as you get past 55 or so!

I think it also helped this morning that this was my first ride after figuring out the logistics of heading to France for the "Tour again. Last year, I held off making plans until quite a bit later, mostly due to my wife's health. Her health could become an issue at any moment. The immunology drug she's on, Keytruda, has "stopped" the cancer from advancing, but it hasn't reduced its presence and while it's performing miracles for many Stage IV cancer patients, like my wife, it's not even remotely a cure... it basically gives time, and during that time, we hope something even better comes along!

I'm not sure what I thought life in my late-60s would be like. I certainly don't want a repeat of this decade of my life, between my own diagnosis of a mild bone marrow cancer (Essential Thrombocythemia), my wife's diagnosis of Stage IV cancer, and an extremely-challenging Post-Covid business environment. Add to that a country that seems close to civil war, and it's been a more interesting decade than I'd wish on anyone. But, I can still get on my bike and ride myself into the ground, which definitely helps with both mental and physical health. So, could definitely be worse!

Well, maybe it is worse... every time I see a post from a Facebook friend, who raced back in the day when I did, and is now living the good life in the Pyrenees foothills, pretty much exactly the best place I've been to, hands-down. Living where the traffic holding you up is a herd of sheep, where the local bakery has rather amazing pastry and fresh bread every morning, the BIG climbs are only an hour away by bike, and using the local trains, you can extend your day's range tremendously. And speaking of those trains, many train stations have "Relay" mini-stores selling cheap and good little cups of espresso. It's my version of "Field of Dreams."