

Don't get Nigel started about doping in Pro Cycling. He will hurt you!

Let's see, today's crew... Claude (who's shown up on some TurkeyDay rides and a few years ago, I think, a regular Tuesday/Thursday-morning ride), Eric, Kevin, Ludo, Nigel, John. 7 total. Feels like I'm missing someone? Beautiful cloudless morning with a bright sun, just the slightest hint of a breeze (so much unlike Tuesday!), and a bit on the cool side. Eric saw 37 degrees on a computer that he says reads a bit high. 35 might have been the actual temperature, which to some might sound darn right cold, but when the sun's shining, you're dressed reasonably warmly and you keep moving at a decent clip, it's really not that bad. It doesn't hurt that you know it's going to get warmer as you go!

We did the ride through the park, with a bit of a rude awakening at the bottom entrance when we were surprised by a park truck heading out as we were heading in. The odds of that are so astronomical you don't even think about the possibility, so when it suddenly appeared, there wasn't even time to think about riding around it, we all just rode off the road (not a problem as it was flat dirt) and stopped. It seemed like a far more dramatic encounter than it actually was.

We're going to have to pace ourselves a bit better on the way up through the park though; since once again we got to the top just a minute, maybe less, before the park ranger (in the same truck?) came by to open it up. This enforced the mandatory regroup, since those of us in the lead walked our bikes around the closed gate, giving those a bit behind a chance to catch up and ride through. Somehow that put me up in front a bit with Nigel, which was fine, for a while. He was riding a pretty consistent pace, something my lungs could keep up with, until somehow the subject of doping in professional cycling in general, and the Tour de France specifically, came up.

Nigel's a strong believer in Floyd's tell-all stories, while I have some strong reservations because I know of several things that he has absolutely positively made up since supposedly coming clean and telling the truth about everything (the most-glaring example being his assertions that he was racing on second-rate equipment compared to everyone else, while the truth is that everyone on US Postal and later Discovery had current-model bikes in exceptional shape, which I know because I was at a training camp as well as the team hotel during the Tour de France once year, and got to inspect their bikes). It's my opinion that Floyd "fills in the gaps" with stories that seem plausible based on other things he's said. I seriously don't think he even realizes it when he still lies about things; he can't help himself. His credibility, with me, is extremely low, and not just because he fooled me badly and took a small amount of money from me via the "Floyd Fairness Fund." I just don't buy into the instant-conversion theory. Remember, this is the same Floyd that was there, in the same room, as his friend who called Greg LeMond and claimed to be an uncle of his (Greg's) who had abused him as a child. And didn't do anything about it. That speaks volume about someone's character, and the substantiated lies that followed after his conversion are enough to put me well past "trust, but verify." I'd say it's more like "Don't trust this guy until you have corroborating evidence." Just because he's saying things that seem plausible doesn't mean they are. Remember he still denies taking testosterone in the TdF.



Stopping for Nigel's bike repair on Kings. Left to right is Kevin, Nigel, Claude & John.

OK, a very long-winded way of saying I really would have liked to have engaged Nigel in conversation on the way up, except that the more he talked about doping, the faster he rode. He was like a man possessed, an inner anger that he was unleashing on his pedals (and me!). So I'm just barely hanging on, with lungs that just don't work in the cold, completely unable to respond (either vocally or with the pedals). So Nigel, if you're reading this, the paragraph above pretty much says what I would have liked to have said when you were, as Phil Liggett would say, turning the pedals in anger! It's possible that Nigel was in so much anger that that's what caused him to break his bike almost at the top of Kings. Well OK, he didn't break his bike but had a problem with his seatpost, which required stopping for repair.



Can you ever get too many pictures of the view of the coast from west-side Old LaHonda?

This was a Thursday ride, so in general it was reasonably-moderate in pace. We were missing some of the guys who suffer from too much natural (I assume it's natural) testosterone- George, Karl and Chris. Not that Kevin and John can't start something on their own, but we lacked the critical mass for a Tuesday sort of ride. At least that was the case until we got to west-side Old LaHonda, when Kevin and... darn, Nigel I think, took off as we entered the forrest, and it was a bit of time before John and I reacted. Of course I didn't realize Ludo was on our tail, until way too late. Not that I could have done anything about it, other than maybe pass on the sprint up that final steep pitch to Skyline, which might have seemed more dignified that at least trying and then coming to a nearly-complete stop about a quarter of the way from the top.

At Skyline we met up with several other long-time Chain Reaction customers who'd come up east-side Old LaHonda, including Dennis, whose hub had been giving him (and us) trouble for some time and had taken us forever to get the right parts for, so it was with a small measure of fear & trepidation that I asked if it was working OK. Thankfully, it was. Moments like that are always risky, but not to be avoided. Better to know and find a way to take care of something if it's still not quite right.

The only noteworthy event after that was the disappearance of Claude. We don't know where we left him, but at the bottom of 84 (in Woodside), he was nowhere to be seen. Yikes. That's not the way this ride is supposed to be run, and I take responsibility for that. I don't recall Claude mentioning anything about turning right at the bottom of the hill and I sure hope he didn't end up with a flat somewhere along the descent. It's not like there's 30 people for me to keep track of. I'm going to make a point of working on this in the future. --Mike--