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Hardest 73-mile ride ever? Bohlman/On Orbit/Black Road can do that!

With the Tour de France trip just over two weeks away, it was time to throw something at Kevin (and me!) designed to test the limits, and this ride did. Not just because it had some tough climbs, but also because it never lets you develop a rhythm. You're never feeling like you're ready for what comes next.

91 degrees in Saratoga. A warm day for climbing!

Climbing Bohlman/On Orbit

We started out rolling through the foothills, from Redwood City through Woodside, Portola Valley, and eventually Los Altos, where we stopped for lunch and took care of a couple of computer issues in our Los Altos store. It was hoped that eating something a good half hour away from the first real climb would be a better choice than grabbing a bite at the base (in Saratoga). I'm certain that was a wise choice, but it doesn't really matter how you prepare for Bohlman/On Orbit... it's a leg-breaker. 1600ft of elevation gain in just 2.7 miles. Kings Mountain climbs the same amount in 4.34 miles. A couple of spots where it exceeds 20%. And it's exposed, with temps reaching up to 90 degrees today. Ouch. But while we had to make one unscheduled stop on the way up (Kevin had another seizure, a common thing for him during intense climbs), we reached the top in good spirits, ready to take on the dirt road that bridges between Bohlman and Montevino.

The End is Near!

The dirt road that bridges Bohlman to Montevino

That dirt road is actually pretty nice, with visibility extending all the way to Monterey Bay. What's not so nice is the descent on Montevino that comes at the end, a a road the drops quickly toward Lexington Reservoir and requires full brakes almost the entire way down. It is not fun! So you hit the bottom a bit fatigued and get a brief break from either descending or climbing of... about 1000ft or so. And then you make the right turn onto Black Road and it's up, up, up and more up. We had a planned stop at the school, but a mile or so

Kevin cleaning up and cooling off

before that we had to stop for a rare flat tire (Kevin's) before finally making it to the school. The big attraction to the school is water. Water to make Cytomax, water to pour over your head and whatever else feels like it could benefit. I also used the opportunity to send an email to Eric, one of our regular Tuesday/Thursday-morning riders who lives in the area, asking if he could leave a couple of ice-cold cokes by the roadside for us. It was a humorous suggestion, but it wasn't long after we got going again that we actually saw Eric driving past in a car, offering us water and energy gel (we were OK at that point). Did he get my email or was it coincidence? I'll find out soon!

At least once you're past the school you're not out in the open anymore, and the temps dropped from the mid-80s to lower-70s pretty quickly. You've still got some pretty steep sections, but not hopelessly-so, and there's the promise of arriving up on top (Skyline) soon.

Mtn Dew never tasted so good!

You hit Skyline at about 2400ft; Kevin thought that was pretty much it for climbing, but not quite, you've still got another 700ft to go. We got there, but it would be lying to say it was easy. It was pretty much survival mode at this point, with the thought of an ice cold coke from Mr. Mustard at Saratoga Gap (Skyline & 9) keeping us going. Unfortunately, our delays caused us to arrive after Mr. Mustard had left, but it's only a short distance further on to the Saratoga Summit Fire Station with its own coke machine, dispensing Mtn Dews for just $1 each. That plus a Honey Stinger Waffle were all we needed to refuel and motivate us appropriately for the mostly-downhill run on Skyline to Sky Londa and then home.

73 miles, about 7500ft of climbing, temps as high as 91. This felt like a much tougher ride than either of our recent 100+ mile trips to Santa Cruz! Are we ready for France? Almost. Not yet, but almost. --Mike--