

## Started out questionably, stuck to the plan, worked out in the end (94 miles, 9000ft of climbing)

The day didn't start out so well; Kevin was having some dizziness, likely caused by his various meds, causing him to be pretty wobbly and slow on his bike for a while. The planned ride (remember, there's always a plan) was a 94 mile figure-8 heading down through the foothills to Steven's Creek, up Redwood Gulch to 9, 9 up to Skyline, south on Skyline to Bear Creek, descend to Boulder Creek and return via China Grade, Highway 9 & Skyline. A bit convoluted but Kevin prefers that I try to create something new & different each time, and got to tell you, after a few years that becomes pretty tough!

It should have taken about 1 hour 20 minutes, no longer, to get to Steven's Creek & Foothill. Should have. Today, it took 2 full hours, and a whole lot of patience as Kevin just couldn't get much speed going. What to do. I went for broke. Drugs. Caffeine might do the trick, so we stopped off at the Starbucks outside our Los Altos store and downed a pair of Grande Mochas (White Mocha for Kevin, Caramel Macchiato for me).

It worked.



Mr. Mustard at Skyline & 9. Note the woman on the left with the interesting bottle holder.

By the time we got to the base of Redwood Gulch, which I feared we'd be walking up, Kevin was kicking into full-on mode, up to the challenge and riding stronger as he climbed. No world records, but it wasn't as if I didn't have to work pretty hard at his pace. We made it up to Skyline feeling pretty good, snagged a pair of cokes at Mr. Mustard (more caffeine) and headed south on Skyline. A bit of climbing but pretty easy, followed by some narrow twisty rollers to Bear Creek.

Bear Creek. Yuck. I originally wanted to do East Zayante, but that would have added too many miles, so that was killed in the early planning stages. The problem with Bear Creek are the cars. Evil nasty cars that tailgate you on the steep descents, sometimes blasting their horns, sometimes just flipping you off as they fly past. Today it was the latter. Bear Creek is not, repeat not, a road I'd recommend to inexperienced cyclists who might get rattled by obnoxious motorists. Oh, one more reason to not like Bear Creek- Kevin got a flat tire near the top of it.

In Boulder Creek was snagged more cokes at the local store before heading out towards China Grade for the long haul back up to Skyline. China Grade didn't disappoint; it was as steep and nasty as ever, but fortunately, not nearly as warm as the mid-90s we saw in the Boulder Creek area. Still, I was a bit concerned how much Kevin had left in him, but the subsequent run up 9 showed there was no need. We started up pretty easily, but about halfway through I picked up the pace, hard, and Kevin stayed glued to my wheel all the way to the top. I was pretty close to redline and couldn't have gone much faster. The plan (remember, always a plan) was to get to Skyline before Mr. Mustard left, but even though it was just 5:05pm when we arrived, he was gone. Darn. No late-ride hot dog!

Thankfully, there's a coke machine (acutally Pepsi) at the Saratoga Gap fire station, but today it wasn't taking dollar bills. That was when Mr. Wonderful stepped in. A fireman stationed there opened up the machine to snag Kevin a Mtn Dew. With that we were fully fueled up and kept a good head of steam the rest of the way home. Had it not been for that first really slow two hours, the stats would have been pretty impressive!