

Skyline between Page Mill & Hwy 9- why so much tougher heading south?

One of these days my son is going to finally realize that his perpetual challenge, expecting me to constantly come up with a ride he hasn't done before, isn't such a great idea. You see, there are traditional rides often repeated, for good reason. They're fun, they're challenging in a rewarding way, and they're easily described to others because they're well-known. For example, if you tell someone you did the Pescadero/Tunitas loop, everyone knows that's shorthand for Old LaHonda, La Honda, over Haskins Grade to Pescadero, Stage Road to Tunitas and back over the hill and down Kings back into Woodside. A great ride.

But we couldn't do anything categorized as "the usual." I have to come up with new twists constantly, at least until I run out of odd permutations. Today was no exception.



The Yellow Jackets weren't giving Kevin much chance to eat his pastry in Pescadero

It started out like a pretty normal ride, heading from Woodside up over Old LaHonda, out to San Gregorio and then Stage Road to Pescadero. Then up over the "harder" side of Haskins Grade, and up the always-challenging West Alpine. OK, so far, tough, but nothing out of the ordinary. On Skyline, you're expected to head North. Why? Because for some reason heading south on Skyline, especially between Page Mill/West Alpine and Highway 9, is infinitely-tougher than doing the same stretch in the opposite direction. Why? The Highway 9 end is only a few hundred feet higher, and heading north, you fly through those 6 or 7 miles. But it's a whole different story heading south.



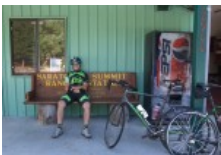
Along the way we came across Katherine, out for a 91(.1?) mile ride to commemorate 9/11



West Alpine's "Bridge of Death"

Once at Saratoga Gap (Skyline & 9) we descended to Redwood Gulch and then plummeted (seriously; Redwood Gulch is incredibly-steep) to Stevens Creek. From there it was a long & largely-flat run back north on Foothill, then back into Woodside via Sand Hill.

Kevin got his best time yet on Old LaHonda (21:45) and rode strongly again on the West Alpine climb (famous for its



It's tough to beat an ice-cold Mtn Dew on a tough ride!

"Bridge of Death" shown in the photo, marking the start of the climb), at 44:36. But once on Skyline, heading south, it was another story. Consider Kevin one more person done in by that should-be-easy but merciless piece of road. He was incredibly happy to pull into the fire station where the machine was happy to take his dollar bill in exchange for a Mtn Dew.

The long haul back on the valley floor wasn't much fun for him which, again, was something I figured would be the case. One of these days he'll figure it out. The regular loops, the usual rides... there's good reason for them being "regular" and "usual."