

Classic Woodside/Santa Cruz loop (but we didn't beat the rain)

Each Saturday the same question comes up. Where are we riding Sunday. I decided it shouldn't always be my responsibility to come up with the route, so I told Kevin to come up with something interesting, and maybe Mike (not me, but the other Mike that works at the shop) and Andrew (who also works at the shop) might want to come along too. Of course, that means a shorter, not-too-challenging ride is out, because Kevin doesn't want the other guys to think he's not up to something tough. I wasn't think he'd want to do the Santa Cruz loop though!

So we met up with Mike & Andrew at 8:30 (Olive Hill & Canada Road, the center of the universe) and headed out through Woodside and up Old LaHonda. My thoughts of a moderately-paced ride quickly evaporated as even the run through Woodside was pretty fast (I later explained to Kevin that the danger of a ride with 4 fairly-strong riders on it is that, at any point, the ride will not be paced slower than the speed of whomever's fastest at the time, with the slower folk hanging on for dear life).

Kevin and I started out with leg warmers but removed them before climbing Old LaHonda since it was in the mid-60s by then, great for climbing! By the half-way point it was looking like the four of us were going to be breaking 21 minutes, until Kevin had a seizure just a bit further up the road. Even so, 24:26 is still faster than his times last year! And a bit later, he finally got under 10 minutes on the Haskins Grade climb to Pescadero.

As long as we were on a good climb we were OK, but once out towards the coast Mike & Andrew were pushing the pace hard... hard enough that I was wondering how I was going to hang on and finish the ride with them! Even into the stiff headwinds on the coast (yes, heading south, we had headwinds!) the dynamic duo was able to plow through the wind at a remarkable speed.

We made the usual food stop at Davenport, skipping the Whaler Cafe this time (the lines were way too long!) and opting instead for the Taco place next door. Great Burrito for \$6, and, like so many places on the coast, they have bottled coke imported from Mexico (made with real sugar and yes, you can taste the difference).

Leaving Davenport brought two things. First, the rain that had previously been teasing us with big drops that were few & far-between finally became something you could actually call rain, wet roads and all. And second, Andrew paid for his sins (riding the first part of the ride so fast that I was in danger of being blown off the back) and became mortal, developing cramps and running out of gas. Or maybe better to say a few cylinders stopped working. I think Mike could have just kept on going full speed, but nicely opted instead to stay with Andrew.

We had our mandatory second stop in Boulder Creek, picking up Mtn Dew and water, as well as a \$5 school lottery ticket that could win me \$25,000! Suckered into it mostly by the woman telling me that she knew how much nice bikes cost since her husband was a serious cyclist.

The run up 9 was uneventful but pretty fast on the section between Waterman Gap and Skyline; I think that's my new favorite hill to climb. One of the few I can do with real power, and also one of the few where I feel I still have a big advantage over my son. That's something I can't take for granted anymore!

We arrived at Skyline early enough that Mr. Mustard was still there, with everyone but me having a hot dog. Me? I wasn't all that hungry, opting for a Honey Stinger Waffle instead. From that point on it was a bit cool and varied between light & pea-soup fog, not the best riding conditions, but we were feeling a lot stronger than should have been the case at that point in a long ride, and finished feeling pretty strong.