

## There are good reasons to stick to the plan (smart people don't ride road bikes on dirt Montebello)

The plan. Remember, there's always a plan. Do an "ugly" ride, maybe up 92 to Skyline, then south to Kings/Tunitas, ride down to the coast, Stage Road to Pescadero, over Haskins, up West Alpine and back to Woodside via Skyline & 84. Not such a bad plan, but nobody wanted any part of it but me. Kevin didn't think it sounded "fun" and Michael and Andrew from the shop didn't look forward to riding up 92 with all the traffic.

So Plan B. Leave at 9:30am with Michael and Andrew from the shop and head over to the coast, maybe over Kings and down Tunitas (leaving out the ugly part going up 92 and south on Skyline) then the rest of the route from the first plan. Only it's pretty nasty up on Skyline, with heavy fog coming over the hill, so Kevin and I opt for a later start. Plan C.

Plan C involves staying "low" for a while, giving the fog up on Skyline a chance to burn off. Ride south down through the foothills, up Redwood Gulch to 9, then north on Skyline, descend West Alpine and back over the hill via Tunitas Creek. Seemed reasonable, until, heading up Stevens Creek towards Redwood Gulch I got the idea of skipping the West Alpine/Tunitas section and doing an out & back up Montebello instead. I don't even remember for sure if I'd ever been up there before; maybe 40 years ago, not sure. But I do know that it's a heck of a lot steeper now than it was before!

35 (hard!) minutes up Montebello and we come to the end of the paved road. Time to turn back and take on Redwood Gulch! And here's where we should have stuck to the revision of the revised plan, because instead of heading back down, we decided to try out the dirt "road" that supposedly connects up to Skyline and Page Mill. How tough could it be?



This is not what you want to see on a tire. Especially the front!



You don't want to see this on a tire either! This tire was clearly worn too thin long before we hit the nasty stuff.

Well, it's one of those roads that starts out looking not-so-bad but, as you'll see in the video, deteriorates into a tire shredder, something much better done on a mountain bike with big fat tires at 40psi rather than very skinny 23c road tires pumped up to 120psi. And while there were places we definitely would have felt more comfortable walking, that's just not terribly practical with road-style cleats! And even if it was, it seemed like we might be many hours from civilization at walking speed. So ride we did, and somehow, miraculously, we avoided shredding our tires. Sort of. When we inspected them upon our return to pavement, we found Kevin was riding on casing material in several areas, rubber either torn or completely worn away. I fared a bit better, with just a few spots worn through, but at least mine were on the rear, while Kevin's were on the front.

With Kevin's tires on extreme borrowed time, we descended Old LaHonda instead of 84, wanting to keep our speeds down in case of

a blowout. Fortunately we made it home without such an event, but by Tuesday morning, it's likely all tires on both bikes will have been replaced.