

Toughest 75 miles ever? Alone against the wind...



Classic Tunitas Creek switchback

My son was off doing paintball with friends, the Primavera Century had already filled up, so I was on my own. I needed miles, badly. Last year I'd done the Santa Cruz loop, all 114 miles of it, by mid-February. This year I've been tied up with work (yeah, you own a bike shop and your bike riding time is limited by work just like everyone else), my membership on the board of the National Bicycle Dealer's Association, the usual family stuff. whatever. So what else is new?

But today I was going to get in some miles, a fair number of them, at an easy pace. That was the plan. So I went to mapmyride and put together the ride you see below. The typical "Coastal Classic" but with an extension at the southern end (the Cloverdale/Gazos Creek loop) and a bit tacked on at the north, accessing Tunitas Creek from Los Lobitos Cut-off. 75 miles, about 7500ft of climbing. Tough, but doable.

I didn't count on coming across a guy named Twain as I pushed through Mountain Home Road in Woodside, near the start of the ride. A guy who rides Old LaHonda in 18:30 or so, vs my 22 on a good day, and kept me company on the way up, severely taxing my pathetic lungs. Nice guy, but just a bit too fast for me, and left to my own devices, I was thinking more in terms of a "relaxing" 25 minute time, now 22:30 and breathless. But I brought it on myself by initially passing him on Mtn Home; he rested on my wheel for a bit, came around, and it was all I could do to hold his wheel. I had my chance for a "relaxing" ride and blew it.



It's true, the dollar isn't a strong-enough currency!

I also didn't count on 5 or 6 hours in bright sun and warm temperatures, something I haven't seen in quite a while. That, too, took its toll on me. Nor a flat just a couple miles outside Pescadero, caused by a prior casing "patch" using a dollar bill that somehow provided rough-enough edges to eat a hole in a tube. And yes, I'm beginning to wonder why I don't carry CO2 like everyone else, so I can get back on the road more quickly.



Mastadon and Triceratops doing battle outside Pescadero

But in the end, it was the wind that made this an incredibly-tough ride. Nice tailwind most of the way south from Pescadero to Gazos Creek, but I paid for it dearly on the way back. It didn't take more than a few miles heading north (from Gazos Creek to San Gregorio) before I was thinking, is this even possible?



Add streetcars and it's 1890 all over again

But there's this strange thing the past couple years with me and headwinds. They just don't bother me like they used to. Don't get me wrong; one of the reasons I'd never consider a cross-country ride is a fear of long straight roads through endless cornfields, battling a headwind for hours, perhaps days on end. That won't change! But for 10 or 20 miles, I can handle them, keeping up a moderate speed even.



Tailwind down the coast, now the hard part turning onto Gazos Creek

On a related note, I passed two riders during times of heavy headwinds, and suggested they draft off me. For some reason that was a completely-foreign idea to them; they just didn't get what I was offering.

But it was very nice when I finally got to Los Lobitos Cutoff and only had to deal with climbing. Any concern I wouldn't have anything left was erased as I found a bit of power in higher gears, and I could "rest" at will, choosing anyplace I liked to ease off for a few seconds before putting more power to the pedals again. Still, it was nice finally getting to the top of Kings and knowing that all of the tough stuff was behind me, leaving a fast descent on Kings (possibly could have been one of my fastest if not for a really-slow-moving MiniCooper I caught up with about 2/3rds of the way down the hill).

Hours later and I still feel like the ride did me in. As I mentioned, the sun was likely a factor, and that's something I'll get more used to as the season goes on. The wind was the biggest issue, and a reminder that it would have been nice to have someone else along with me. But that's OK, this was an opportunity to blow out the cylinders and get things moving again, if possible. And I think it is possible.

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