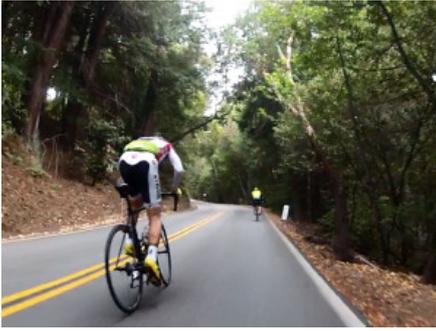


## Biggest Monkey off my back (Kings under 27)



This is what a fast time up Kings looks like. You resist temptation to jump onto someone's wheel too early. You let them ride ahead, and maybe they'll blow and you catch them. Or not.

For the longest while I wondered if I was going to get back to a 26-something time up Kings this year; it was getting a bit discouraging seeing a lot of 28s and then finally some 27-somethings. I even looked back at past years (almost-daily diary entries, of course!) to get a feel for where I am vs where I should be. In general, it appears my fastest times have come after returning from my annual trip to France, so even though it seemed like my climbing sucked, I held out some hope.



This is what 26:23 looks like at the top. Not much different than 28 or 29 looks like.

Surprisingly, things started turning around a couple weeks ago. For the first time in ages I felt really good on Tunitas (perhaps it helped that it was a day my son wasn't doing so well on the climb?), and last week, the scale started to become my friend, with my weight now about 3-4 pounds lower than it's been in quite a few years! Still, I wasn't so sure how I was going to do on Tuesday, since with my trip coming up, I haven't been sleeping much and probably got about 4 hours Monday night, not considered ideal for peak performance.

Or is it? Maybe sleep deprivation is the answer, because I pulled off a 26:23 Tuesday on Kings, my fastest time in the past five years that I have Strava data for. I don't actually think sleep deprivation is the key though; I'd noticed lately that I've been pretty sloppy with my breathing, standing on the pedals and synchronizing breathing with cadence, which is absolutely positively not what you want to do! Ever! It seems kinda cool and natural, but you end up either breathing too quickly or pedaling with too-low a cadence, and you get messed up when the grade changes. So I stayed in the saddle, worked on the breathing, and let people pass me at the start because the only way I could have stayed with them would have been to stand on the pedals. It's frustrating, watching people ride away, and hoping that you can claw them back further up the climb (but now knowing if you really will). But it worked! It didn't seem all that fast, and that's probably the most-important takeaway. It's not how it feels, it's what it is that counts, and it's easy to think that you're faster when you're standing or breathing hard, but that might not actually be the case.

26:23 on my Garmin; Strava actually says 26:05, but using the Tripp Road sign as the starting point and the broken remains of the street sign at the top as the end, 26:23 is the result I trust. Good thing, that, since otherwise I'd be thinking about 6 seconds I need to deal with so I could call it 25-something!

Am I ready for France? Bike-wise, probably. Lots of details at the shop that still aren't fully taken care of, with the big Trek Summer Sale which starts the day I leave. Fortunately we've already got the bikes on sale, and most of the signs already up. I leave the Redwood City store in the capable hands of my daughter (Becky) to manage, with Andrew, Michael, Chris & Will taking care of the sales end of things, and Patrick managing our service folk (Roger, Charlie & Daniel). Hopefully they won't have to deal with any power failures like we had towards the end of yesterday!