

The plan didn't seem so bad; why was the ride so hard?

The ride was Kevin's idea, but Kevin didn't ride... what's with that? Up Old LaHonda, west of San Gregorio, Stage Road to Pescadero, over Haskins, then up West Alpine and return via Skyline & 84. Petty straightforward ride, done many times before, but usually with someone else.

Unfortunately, we got going too late, and with Kevin, it seems like things always start going badly if you don't get out the door at a reasonable hour. This morning he was feeling fine at 9am or so when I returned from Noah's with Bagels & Coffee, but by 10:30 (much later than we should have been getting out there) he was having stomach issues. I waited around for an hour but things didn't get better, so I finally took off, late & alone.



Best to avoid Stage Road for the month of August. Pavement's being replaced.

It took a very long time for me to start feeling like my legs wanted to go anywhere; pretty much about the time I finished climbing the second hill on Stage Road. Which, by the way, I'd stay away from for the next month because they're doing major roadwork and today it was just the second climb and descent that was dirt, but I suspect very soon it's going to be a big mess of black goo. I believe the sign near San Gregorio said the construction would run through the beginning of September, so I'd definitely advise using Highway 1 for now.

At Pescadero I had my usual "lunch" at the bakery; better pastries than anyplace I've found in France. Keep in mind we're talking different degrees of "exceptional." I think I stayed there too long as my legs felt like they lacked motivation. Maybe I should have yelled "shut up, legs!" like Jens Voigt. Nevertheless I forced myself to maintain a reasonable pace using all means at my disposal, which meant breathing properly and mind games. Mind games as in, I know what my legs are capable of, so that's what they're going to do! That didn't work too well until I picked up a rabbit going up Haskins, an older guy (probably not as old as me, so why call him "older"?), who was moving pretty quickly. Took a very long time to run him down, and after doing so I had to live the horror of hoping that I could stay ahead of him because rule #1 is to never pass someone that you can't stay ahead of.



My rabbit on Haskins

I did stay ahead of him, and Strava tells me I posted my best recent time up Haskins. Too bad there's no way to know that in real time, as it might help motivate you to ride harder. That would be tough to accomplish though; you'd need Strava to somehow download onto your Garmin the relevant segments and times for those segments before your ride. But should that really be so tough? Why couldn't we have some way of identifying key segments ahead of time, download them into your Garmin and then it lets you know when you've started and completed the segment?

And then it was time for West Alpine. I didn't drive really hard on the flatter bottom section; my legs just lacked any sort of snap, but once I crossed the Bridge of Death (there's always one at the bottom of legendary climbs) I just told them what they had to do, and they did it. They complained, they slowed down a few times, but I just stood hard on the pedals and there was always something more to give. It became an exercise in technical hill climbing; pulling out all the tricks to ride as quickly as possible when your overall feeling is that you're not going too fast. A couple of time checks told me a different story though, so I kept on going, hoping that maybe, who knows, I could set a new (within the past 5 years) best time for West Alpine.

Unfortunately, no, I was more than a minute off my best time. More to the point, I was still a minute or two off Kevin's best time. Even the "personal best" on Haskins was still slower than Kevin. Darn. Just means I have to work harder next time.