

Mt. Hamilton, Kevin, Andrew, Eric, Patrick, Bryan, Ravi(?) & me



Things didn't go quite exactly as planned, but we'll get to that in a minute. Getting the annual ride up Mt Hamilton off at all was questionable, due to the fire they'd had the day before near Grant Ranch, but last night Caltrans reported no closures, so we were on. I had posted about the ride here and in an end-of-year email to our customers, and so Kevin and I were joined by Eric (a regular on the Tuesday/Thursday-morning ride), Patrick, Bryan & Ravi (I think it was Ravi... as usual, I'm so bad with names I lost track). All but Eric & Andrew rode Caltrain to the San Jose station, where we rode what would normally be an easy 6 miles to the base of Mt. Hamilton except for all the stop lights. Grr. Didn't bother one guy we saw though; he just sailed right through them, weaving through the cars. Real classy. Not.



Andrew & Kevin on the lower flanks of Mt Hamilton

My thoughts about keeping everything together as one big happy group quickly evaporated, not because some of the group was slower, but because Eric was in fine form and I just had to follow. For context, Eric, being a regular on our Tuesday/Thursday-morning ride, is someone whose wheel I try to hold. It's one of those Pavlovian response things. I can't help myself. By the time we got to the top of the first climb, my thoughts had shifted from socializing to Strava times, thinking maybe I could get a new PR if I could keep the pace up. Even Kevin and Andrew dropped off the back (Patrick had previously dropped off to ride with Bryan & Ravi). I was also interested in pushing the pace because I had a bit of a pull in my left hamstring that I was trying to work out, and I know no better way to do that than to ride up a hill, hard.



Eric not exactly showing appropriate respect for the climb

I was doing really well up through the second climb (Mt Hamilton is a climb in 3 parts, with the 2nd & 3rd parts coming after small descents), but that last 5 miles on the final climb found me in trouble. Eric was gradually beginning to ride away from me, not intentionally, just happened because I was fading. I could see it on the power meter; where I was able to keep up 250-275 watts without too much difficulty on the first two climbs, I was in the 225-watt area on the final. And I was going through liquids (Skratch Labs) at a much faster-than-normal pace... which meant I was actually drinking, and I typically don't drink much at all on a climb, since it's tough with my ragged breathing to drink.



View of Mt Hamilton from top of second climb

Eric never did get too far ahead of me, which kept things from feeling hopeless. I don't know if he was being nice, not taking advantage of my obvious weakness, or he was just riding up at a comfortable speed. Doesn't matter; his pacing helped me to my best Strava time on Mt. Hamilton of 1:33.31, 9 seconds faster than October 2012. Not such a bad thing, getting a bit faster as I get a bit older.

Kevin and Andrew arrived 5 minutes later; Kevin could have been just a bit faster but decided to stay with Andrew, doing the social thing. Patrick came up shortly after that, which meant he must have been flying up the climb since he'd stayed back with the others earlier.

The views from the top were a bit hazy today, but guess that's a trade-off for the mid-60s temps. Biggest disappointment was the coke machine refusing dollar bills, no matter how crisp. We tried quite a few and it kept kicking them back to us.

I do wish we'd kept better track of everyone, but that was probably an unrealistic expectation, fueled at least partly by my desire, in the days prior to the ride, for a more-moderate & social pace. Boy did that go out the window. --Mike--