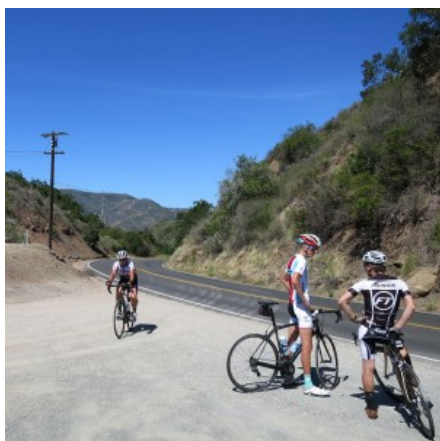


So hot sweat evaporated before it could get to your eyes!



Taylor Phinney heading for the stage win in Santa Barbara

As short rides go, this one was pretty epic. Just under 40 miles, how tough could it be? Pretty much exactly the distance I'd normally ride on a Thursday at home... 31 miles on my regular morning ride up Kings, another 6 commuting to/from work. But those rides don't happen in 96 degree heat (single digit humidity) with some 16 year old kid pushing an insane pace, not just on the climbs but motoring the return on the flats as well.



Dan (on the left) proving that experienced (56 years old) big (he's a sprinter) guys can make it up the hill pretty darned fast! But not nearly as fast as that skinny 16 year old kid in the center. Hate that.

This was the middle of three rides Trek is doing for dealers at a Santa Barbara Trek Travel gig. We have the options of short, normal, & "avid." Not much choice eh? It started out flat to rolling, and truth be told, I was in a bit of distress pretty quickly. It takes me a bit of time to get loose, and I might have been just a bit stiff from yesterday's initial outing, when the bike I was using was set up 1cm too high on the saddle, 2cm too long and 3 or 4cm too high on the stem. As the road finally started tilting upward in earnest, I was, at first, being passed by quite a few of the 30 or so riders in our group, but as the hill continued and the heat took its toll, I found my rhythm and reeled them back in, one or two at a time. I assumed they'd be right on my wheel but that was never the case; nobody I passed was coming back. By the end I was the 3rd or 4th rider up on top, probably because everyone was suffering in the heat but, for me, their suffering helped level the playing field vs my breathing.



As Oasis in the Desert- a kind-hearted resident has a drinking fountain for cyclists. We made use of it today!

Did I tell you it was hot? I've ridden in hotter weather; 106 for an hour or so some years back in France. Today was different; while the 106 in France was miserable (a bit on the muggy side), the absurdly-low humidity today felt "crisp." It really was the case the the sweat that normally would be streaming into my eyes didn't get the chance.

On the way back we stopped at a water faucet a property owner had graciously installed in front of the gate to his house; I'm told that he's a cyclist and knows this to be an area people run out of water. That was certainly the case today!

Strava doesn't quite get the story right; the 102 suffer score seems absurdly-low, not taking into account the heat nor the wild pace being set by a few on the return home. We burned a lot of people off the back end, finishing with only 8 (the rest didn't die out on the road; they came in a few at a time over the next half hour).



Trek's President, John Burke, talking with Jens Voigt after the stage.

Later on we walked down to the finish area for today's stage of the Tour of California, getting to see Taylor Phinney take the win 30 seconds in front of the pack, and then were joined at a local eatery by a few members of the Trek Factory Racing Team, of which the

most-popular, by far, was Jens Voigt. Pretty amazing guy. More on that later. --Mike--