

## Working back up to something bigger (but where was the ride support at Saratoga Gap?)



You've climbed Redwood Gulch & Highway 9, the last couple of miles you're thinking about the reward at the top. Mr Mustard's hot dog stand. Cokes for a buck, hot dog for three. Not the healthiest thing in the world, but it works. And for the second time in a row, he wasn't there! This puts a serious damper into Santa Cruz loop ambitions; you live for that coke at the top. The coke machine at the fire station only takes quarters now, and what cyclist wants to carry a bunch of heavy, noisy change? The horror!

Yet another pretty darned awesome day to ride a bike; from 71 to 83 degrees or so, very light breeze. If Kevin and I had been in better shape, this would have been the perfect day for a late-summer Santa Cruz loop! But that wasn't in the cards; not quite up a 115 mile ride right now. Actually, I could do it without much trouble, but Kevin's been off the bike too much during the past month.



Kevin displaying a cookie that doesn't pass the "cover your face" test. It's simply too small.

But if it wasn't going to be long, it had to be something "ugly." You know, a ride that you wouldn't normally consider much fun to do. Redwood Gulch quickly rose to the top of the list. Ride along the foothills, up Redwood Gulch to 9, up 9 to Saratoga Gap (Skyline), reward ourselves with a coke (and, gasp, a hot dog) at Mr. Mustard, then north on Skyline to West Alpine, descend to LaHonda and then back home via 84. It all worked out nicely until we got to the top of Highway 9 and Mr. Mustard wasn't there. We were both feeling a bit hungry and beginning to feel a bit bonked, but it's not too hard a ride north on Skyline, and in LaHonda there's a relatively-new market with sandwiches, cokes, and substandard-sized cookies.

We stopped along the way at the LaHonda duck pond; it's getting rather ugly looking as the water recedes and the surface is becoming scummy. It was almost surprising that three ducks were able to swim through that stuff and make it to land!



Kevin on the ground on West Old LaHonda. When he takes off on a climb, the only way I'm going to catch him is if he has a seizure. But I'd rather he didn't.

On the way up the west side of 84 I suggested to Kevin that perhaps we should add additional ugliness by heading north on Skyline to Kings... his response was to promptly ditch me and fly up West Old LaHonda so fast that I kept him in sight for only the briefest of moments. He was on this way to a stellar Strava time, unless he either cracked or had a seizure. Given that there has been some past evidence of an adrenalin component in his seizures (probably the only "trigger" we've been able to identify), I wasn't too surprised, coming around a corner on the upper, forested section, to see him on the ground. Thankfully, as usual, his seizures give him enough warning that he can safely get off the bike.

In the end it was 65 miles at a pretty moderate pace, probably exactly what was needed today. Unfortunately, I'm off the bike through Thursday, as I have to fly to Las Vegas to attend the Interbike trade show. Kevin will hopefully be keeping everyone in line on the Tuesday & Thursday morning rides this week, something he can do better from the front than I can do from the back.

--Mike--