

Another Sequoia Century... wonder how many over the years?



Kevin coming back up to speed now that the 25mph speed zone is past! My very first century I was 15 I think, the "San Andreas No Fault" century that started & finished somewhere in Mountain View. 47 years ago. I don't even remember how much climbing it did, or what those climbs were; I do remember quite a bit of riding through the Santa Clara Valley (which was a lot less built up then than it is now). And I remember that I finished 6 hours, 5 minutes after I started, and back then your "time" was total time, including all stops. We didn't have Strava or bike computers that could tell us what our "riding time" was. Heck, we didn't even know our mileage through the ride, apart from looking at the maps. Fastest time for the day was a group that left 10 minutes behind us, catching up at the lunch stop and finishing with us. Hated that!

Sunday's Sequoia was a very different matter, of course. Having done the same route a couple of years, there are no surprises, no opportunities for wrong turns (between maps and road markers and pre-programming the course into your Garmin, the only time for mild confusion is when the course doubled-back on itself in Pescadero). Instead of driving to the start, Kevin and I essentially start & finish the ride from home (just a couple miles off the course) and pass through the official start at Foothill College.

That warm-up on Moody, followed by Page Mill, well, that's just plain mean! At least we were well warmed up at that point, having already ridden 18 or so miles, vs maybe 2 for those starting at Foothill. This year I was 21 seconds slower than last year on the Moody climb, and just under a minute slower on the Page Mill section. Haskins, 25 seconds off last year. Tunitas, about a minute 20 seconds slower than last year.

What does it all mean? Overall, about a 5% loss in speed, which just happens to correspond to the 5% lower average power for the ride as a whole, according to Strava's analysis of my power meter data. That's actually not that bad, since this time last year I was just a couple weeks into my mild bone cancer diagnosis (Essential Thrombocythemia) and taking about 1/3 of the amount of red-blood-cell zapping medicine I'm taking now. Not because I'm worse off now than then, but because they start you off on a pretty low dose until they figure out what works best for you.

The good news is that it's **only** a 5% loss, despite also being a year older. And the even-better news is that I'm going to be switching shortly to a different medication for my breathing issue, and if that works out, I could potentially gain back a lot more than that 5%!

But getting back to the ride, it was, as always, wonderfully well-organized and included a mechanic station at the top of Tunitas manned by my brother Steve. Not too much work for him; by that time in the ride, most bikes that were going to fail, had already likely done so. The weather was very nice, although a bit of a surprise to see it very quickly kick up to 80 degrees for the climb up Page Mill!!! I just as quickly kicked back down to the low 60s once heading towards the coast. A bit of a headwind on the run north from Gazos Creek to Tunitas, but the part on the coast was perhaps the only time I felt just a bit stronger than Kevin, able to pull him for a bit. The rest of the way, I was trying to stay on his wheel (not too successfully once the road tilted upward).

I am really hoping my breathing gets fixed so I can get back some of my power though; Kevin is leaving quite a bit in the tank on

these rides, and I'd like to see him challenged more than I can presently give him. I still have endurance and towards the end of the ride I can still put on miles while he's thinking about short-cuts home, but I hate that he can't really "play" on the climbs without being concerned he's ditching me and leaving me in a bad place.