



Official Newsletter
September 2005
Come Ride with Us

Free Wheelin'



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The Ride

By Ralph Bruni

The tarmac shimmers in the heat
Birds are twittering in the shade
Cycling uphill has us beat
Our eyes scrabble up the grade

Another sip from the bottle
A frantic grasp for a lower gear
We are definitely not going full throttle
Dreaming of watching TV with a beer

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**Next Membership Meeting
7 pm, September 8, 2005
Rockridge Branch Library
5366 College Ave (at Manila)**

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Blinking away the salty sweat
No spit left to swallow
It is nice we have just met
which makes us feel less hollow

Do you remember a while back
you sitting at the side of the road
The front tire was flat
and your pump was croaking like a toad

My forceful manner
caused the inner tube to bloat
All I could do was stammer
when it did ex-plode

We are now back in motion
and my ears no longer ring
We laugh about the commotion
and wonder who will be the mountain king

At last the crest is reached
We gasp like fish on a beach
Now the descent finally starts
and we can turn into road sharks

Manic grins split the visage
Insects give additional protein
The landscape becomes a mirage
We feel we belong to a pro team

The tires sing and hum
The mountain has become a hill
Squirrels are acting dumb
and almost become road kill

Alas, we are back in town
We can scrape the flies from our glasses
Nothing but buildings and cars around
Now we can rest our asses



How to Contact Us



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Mt. Tam Double Century

By Alfie Estrada

I think I'll dub this one "Tour of the Innumerable Pesky Hills". It was double century *numero seis* for Lisa and me this year, but hardly "just another". While the Marin Cyclists have staged the ride officially only once before, it has taken its firm place in the California Triple Crown family. No doubt, it's one of the most challenging rides in the growing list of annual double centuries, but it definitely has its own character as well.

15,000 feet of elevation gain in 200 miles might be the event's main claim to fame, but the beautiful scenery offered by the daylong adventure is a class-A offering as well, even to folks who may call the parcours their backyard. The route begins and ends in San Rafael, and essentially takes riders along a path that showcases the best of Marin County cycling. Lucas Valley, Alpine Lake, Mt. Tamalpais, Muir Woods, the Pacific Coast, Nicasio Valley, Tomales Bay, Bodega Bay, Coleman Valley, Chileno Valley: really, a dreamer's bike ride.

Perhaps the most distinguishing feature of this ride compared to other double centuries is its brand of hilliness. One might assume that a ride that racks up about 15K feet of climb has to traverse some major mountain passes. Not so here. In fact, Mt. Tam is the only major climb and summit throughout the whole ride, with a peak at a mere 2,500 ft. above sea level. There are only three other notable climbs throughout the ride: the Marshall "Wall", Bay Hill and Coleman Valley—but none of these are particularly long nor high. Translation: all elevation gain is served up through an endless series of 100-300 ft. rolling hills throughout the course. Really, there's hardly ANY flat stretch on this ride.

EVERYBODY ON THEIR OWN CLOCK

Lisa and I arrived at Vallecito Elementary School in San Rafael at around 4AM, deciding to check in the morning of the ride. As we pulled into the parking lot, there were scores of riders already departing. Lots were taking advantage of an earlier start to better their odds against the 10PM overall course cutoff. "Big Ring" Dave Evans was so determined to be an official finisher on this ride, in fact, that he was actually on his way at 3AM. Lisa and I hadn't even hit the alarm clock snooze button by then. Dave did finish this ride, his 114th lifetime completed double century (and the dude's well into his 70s).

Among the 4AM starters was a friend, Dana, who probably was the main instigator that ultimately convinced Lisa to sign up. And once Lisa signed up, of course I felt the urge to tag along. Dana, who had already bagged her first Triple Crown this year, had expressed a lot of nervousness about this ride. She went as far as saying that she was convinced she wouldn't be able to finish a ride like this. It was great to see her giving it her best shot, but I already knew it would take less than that for her to finish well.

I personally decided to sign up for this ride at the very last minute. Knowing that I had a family reunion in LA to attend on the same weekend, it seemed hardly prudent to sign up for one of the most difficult double centuries in the state. But I did anyway, and re-planned my trip so I'd leave on Sunday instead

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(granted, needing to be in the airport by 5AM the next day to make the flight).

If that plan sounded ambitious, how about this? I encountered a father and son riding together in the early hours, outfitted in matching RUSA (Randonneurs USA) jerseys. Joseph lives in Mountain View, but his son Sebastian flew in from New York one day before just to do the ride, and was planning to fly out again Sunday at noon. What a great way to spend time on a family visit: busting each others' asses going up hill after hill.

TURN ON THE INFRARED VISION AND FIRE UP THE MENTAL IPOD

Joseph, Lisa and I formed a nice trio of blazing Schmidt headlights that torched through the foggy morning along Lucas Valley and Nicasio Valley. Daybreak finally arrived as we descended upon Woodacre, and sunrise finally shone above the ridges once we reached Pine Mountain. For the rest of the day, the weather would be downright divine—hardly a surprise given our proximity to the coast. It probably never once exceeded 85F all day (great for August); in fact, it was probably below 70F for much longer than I anticipated, thanks to persistent fog.

Folks who did the Marin Century or 200K that day may read this in disbelief, as some friends reported to me of having ridden through some oppressive heat when they reached Petaluma. It's as if we on the double century were on some sort of parallel universe.

The morning fog that surrounded the descent from Mt. Tam was so thick that visibility closed in to less than 50 feet in so many places. Ever seen the film *House of Sand and Fog*? Based on a dispute over of a home in Marin County, half of its transition scenes were soaked in fog. This is what it was like, with many moments of near white-out: eerily serene. Dew accumulated so quickly on my

glasses, that I had to ride without them for the next 2 hours or so.

Between Pine Mountain and Nicasio (mile 22 to 110), I pretty much rode by myself. Occasionally a cyclist or two passed me, and seldom did I pass any other rider, but there just didn't seem to be too many opportunities for pancelining. I felt content to just find my comfort zone and just enjoy the scenic individual time trial. I don't make a regular habit of riding with headphones, especially on event rides, but the stretch from Muir Beach to Hicks Valley would have been a nice time to have them on with some hand picked tunes.

The seeping monotony was broken on the way to Dogtown on Highway 1, where a whole bunch of Corvettes passed in the same direction. A road rally or club drive, it appeared. Despite the obvious muscle underneath the hoods of these cars, the drivers were surprisingly calm to pass with plenty of room.

FEELING JOSEBA BELOKI

During my solo exploits, my well-maintained state of calm and balance quickly got upset as I descended Dillon Beach Rd on the way to Valley Ford. After rounding a corner at about 35MPH and accelerating quickly down a straightaway, a large bug (or bee) smacked me hard in the face. I flinched for a moment and lost focus on the road. A very large group of potholes and bumps came to view and looked like a destroyer ready to take me out.

I hit the brakes... a bit too hard, that my rear wheel locked up and, at that very same moment, made contact with a sizable bump on the road. The rear wheel caught air while I was fishtailing right... then came down and bounced up again, then started fishtailing left. I was starting to feel like I was re-enacting a certain, spectacular incident in the ninth stage of the '03 Tour de France. Meanwhile, the nasty bumps and holes were now down to 50

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feet ahead of me, quickly approaching. I let both brakes go, still flying down the hill and just hopelessly headed for the bad patch of road. Damn it all. Let the mountain bike skills take over and roll through as lightly as you can. Bunnyhopping was no option at this point. I was sure I was gonna pinch flat both tires now at the very least. If I was lucky, I'd stay upright.

Perch... wait... LIFT. Fahhrrrrump BBAAM! DANG. It was way worse than I thought, but I got past the sucker, still upright, tires still inflated, wheels round and true. Phewww!!!!!!!!!! Whoa BABY!

KUDOS, MARIN CYCLISTS.

Overall, ride support was first-rate. I found it to be among the best I've had on any double century (measured by my own perception of basic ultradistance needs). Rest stops were stocked very well with the essentials for a double century rider; good products, no less. Mobile SAG vehicles were frequently present on course all day. One particular guy in the morning appeared so frequently, I could have sworn he was a ghost. But then he actually also helped me hoist my bike over the closed gates on Ridgecrest Rd on the way to the top of Mt. Tam.

I do recognize that the Marin Cyclists pull off a major coup by holding their double century simultaneously with 200k, 100mi and 100k rides as well. Organizationally and logistically, this is VERY challenging. Several folks who did the double have reported some dissatisfaction (to put it mildly in some cases) with the nature of the support, specifically because of widely spread resources. Some insisted the double century rest stop supplies were not well varied until the stops that were shared with the other routes. I hardly thought so. But then again, I don't pay my registration fees in the hopes of being pampered on a ride... just assured that some reliable folks got my back.

One notable flub I did encounter was a water stop on Coleman Valley Rd that ran out of water. I'm told this problem was remedied some time after I passed through.

RE-ENTERING THE SOCIAL REALM... JUST IN TIME

I caught up to Dana at the halfway point during lunch and we rode together from about mile 110 to mile 170. She looked very comfortable on her bike as she did during a night ride we did earlier in the week. My assurances—and her delightful surprise—that she'd finish well before 10PM did manifest themselves in the end.

It was nice to have company for a change, especially on Bay Hill and Coleman Valley. The latter was probably the one feature of the course I was most concerned about, as I knew from having descended the hill many times before how steep the climb would be from the coast. It turned out to be much more manageable than I imagined. No one can deny that it was tough, but the steep section doesn't last terribly long. Thankfully, good weather was still on our side. A hot day would definitely have made Coleman Valley a bigger bear.

When we got to the arbitrary summit of Coleman Valley, the water stop sans water had some cold sodas to offer instead. Stupidly, I

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opted to press on with probably no more than 2 ounces of fluid in my bottles. I figured I'd stop by a store below the hill to get some water and a Payday bar. But when I turned on to the next road, I quickly remembered: there *aren't* any stores between here and Valley Ford. \$#@*%. I carefully rationed what few sips I had left in each of my bottles, but still ran out of fluids completely and ran dry for about a half hour during the warmest time of day. Thanks to Dana, I at least had one more gulp of Perpetuem during the dry spell, but upon reaching Valley Ford again, I pounded down 3 bottles of fluids and salt-laden snacks galore. What relief.

The next section to Petaluma turned out to be a very relaxed ramble. At this point, I wanted to reconnect with Lisa, who was further behind the ride by now than I expected. Dana and I encountered our first real paceline all day when a group of cyclists decided to suck wheel for a while. We quickly detached from it, too, since as soon as I finished my pull, the group upped their pace. Ingrates. Just as well. I really didn't want to be riding fast then anyway.

At McNear Park in Petaluma, I persisted with waiting until Lisa showed up so we could finish the ride together. I urged Dana to move on whenever she was ready, and I stayed behind yakking away with a couple of Grizzly Peak folks I know who were staffing the checkpoint. As I waited, it was great to see and chat with so many other familiar folks rolling in and out of the rest stop. Among them, fellow O-towner Dave Clemes, chipper as ever.

COMING FULL CIRCLE

As Lisa and I departed the Petaluma checkpoint together, the last words we heard from our friend Rob at the rest stop were "Try to get off Pt. Reyes-Petaluma before dark." Remembering the volume of traffic there and the complete lack of shoulder on the roadway, I then realized why this was good ad-



vice, and started riding like it was an urgent mission. I don't think Lisa was too happy about the brisk-ish pace, but soon enough, she'd appreciate what it was for.

We did get into safer territory (Nicasio Valley Rd) about 15 minutes before nightfall, relieved to be in less traffic. And so we came upon Lucas Valley once again, mostly in the dark. What a strange feeling to have been on the bike all day, twice on this road, and yet not been able to see the hillsides on this 7 mile canyon stretch. Yet the sense of proximity to the finish (and good road surfaces the rest of the way) made it all the more rewarding to be there.

The same could be said, of course, about pulling into the main courtyard of the school at the finish, checking in, and hanging out with fellow a caballero Dan as we chowed on our post-ride meal. Dan had unwillingly abandoned the ride due to a busted pedal cleat, and was waiting for another friend of ours, Doug, to finish the ride. We didn't make much of the vegetarian lasagna as we shoveled fork loads of it into our mouths, but it definitely left me still craving for a greasy gutbomb cheeseburger afterwards.

Overall, I was extremely happy about my ride. I was even more content with having felt very relaxed all day and finishing comfortably, despite a 2-week-old battle with a chronic cough (later determined to be caused

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by pneumonia). I think not caring one bit about whether I'd finish the ride or not really helped me enjoy it so much more. Thanks to excellent route marks on the road, I never once had to consult my map nor have to anticipate the hills that lay ahead (I mostly knew where they were anyway). I never really even looked at my clock nor bike computer all day either. Care... Free.

From the time we got back from Marin, I had about 8 hours before meeting my family in LA. Boy did I wish I could have just slept in, but I knew I brought this madness upon myself. And I was actually more anxious about the family reunion than the ride. There were some relatives I'd see for the first time in over 15 years. I suppose that, as with high school reunions, it's always nice to show up at the party with a notable story to tell. I had another.

[See tales and photos about this and other cycling adventures at sonofabike.com]



From the Office of the President

THANKS

To a wonderful group of people. First to those who put on the Auction, and all those who were gracious enough to purchase the items. The final tally is still being calculated but we will surely exceed our goal of \$5,000. **JOB WELL DONE.**

REMINDER

Bike Against The Odds is still our primary focus. If everyone signs up and participates, we will have the best year ever. **CAN I COUNT ON YOU?**

RIDE SAFELY.



Meeting Schedule

Membership meetings are on the second Thursday (unless otherwise noted in the newsletter) of every riding season month. Meetings are held at the Rockridge Branch of the Oakland Public Library, located at 5366 College Ave. (at Manila). Meetings start at 7:00 p.m.

September 8, 2005

Ride Schedule

September 3 – LAKE

Newark

32/54 miles

START: Children's Fairyland, Oakland

Departs: 8:00 AM

Nearly flatter than a pancake. This ride is designed to be a pre-Monterey ride taper-off workout: an out-and-back trip to Newark via Doolittle, Hesperian and Marsh Roads.

September 5 – LAKE

Labor Day Decide-and-Ride

START: Children's Fairyland, Oakland

Departs: 9:00 AM

Meet at the Children's Fairyland parking lot and depart on a decided route at 9:00 AM.

September 10/11 – AWAY

19th Annual Monterey Ride

120/85 miles | maps supplied at ride start

PACIFICA START (120 MILE): Pacific Manor Shopping Plaza

PESCADERO START (85 MILE, no overnight parking): Pescadero State Beach

Our famous season highlight: a one-way ride to Pacific Grove in the Monterey Peninsula with dinner banquet and overnight accommodations at the Asilomar Conference Center, then a bus trip back to the start the next day. Registration and advanced room reservations required.

September 17 – BART

Fog City / Grand Prix Option

35/38 miles

START: Embarcadero at Bryant St, San Francisco

Nearest BART station: Embarcadero

Departs: Lake @ 7:15 AM // Ride Start @ 8:00 AM

Take a scenic tour around San Francisco and get a taste of the T-Mobile International pro race course (an optional climb up Fillmore Street) if you dare! Light riders travel to the beach along the Great Highway and have the option to end at BART. Others enjoy stretches of the San Francisco scenic drive, including Twin Peaks.

September 24 – AWAY

Lucas Valley

25/42/63 miles

START: Smith Ranch Rd Park-and-Ride

LIGHT RIDERS START: Nicasio General Store

Departs: Lake @ 7:15 AM // Ride Start @ 8:00 AM

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RIDE-AND-DECIDE OPTION: Those who prefer to ride locally may meet at Children's Fairyland and depart on a decided route at 9:00 AM.

Light riders start in Nicasio, and enjoy a scenic trip to the Bovine Bakery in Point Reyes Station and back. All others start off with a trip through Lucas Valley along Miller Creek before joining the same route to Point Reyes Station. Intermediate and Advanced riders take a turn for Marshall, up the 'wall' from the coast, then visit the Nicasio Cheese Factory before returning to the start via Lucas Valley.

**October 9 – LAKE
Bike Against the Odds**

12, 20, 30, 47 and 66 mile options | event registration required

START: Children's Fairyland, Lake Merritt, Oakland

For event registration and information, please visit **The Breast Cancer Fund** event site.

The Yellowjackets have a no drop policy and will leave no light or humane intermediate rider behind!

REQUIRED: Helmet, waiver, ID with emergency Info.

RECOMMENDED: Two bottles of water minimum, high energy food, pump, spare tubes, tools, patch kit, padded gloves, padded cycling shorts, protective eye wear, sun block.

Club Officers, Chairpersons, and Ride Coordinators

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