

# There and back again

By: Tim Zsoka

On Tuesday something unusual happened. I suffered on my bike. Not once, but twice. In exchange for some valuable information (it is far less James Bond than it sounds) I agreed to torture myself for a 20K time trial, all in the name of science. My noontime slobber-knocker was grueling. The only instruction I was given was ‘go as hard as you can from beginning to end’. The only data I was allowed to see were the black “gnats” that kept circling my eyes and the kilometer countdown. For a half hour of I suffered like a dog, but since this was all in the name of science I felt pretty good about it. Though the suffering was great, in hindsight I believe I left a little on the table and here is why – I rode an ergometer (stationary bike designed to gather power-based data) in a university lab. Ultimately the monotone colors and performance measuring equipment left me feeling like I was working out in an abandoned ward of a hospital.

Looking for greener pastures to work out the kinks of the “experiment”, I decided to ride alone from Folsom to Rescue and back again. The ride is simultaneously perfect and useless for training. There are no significant climbs, no real flat stretches, not much straight road, etc. However, on this day it was perfect because my legs were completely melted from my lab work. I decided to take the advice I received earlier – “go as hard you can from beginning to end”. So I did. Amazingly enough, the ride started well. The skies threatened rain but this is June – it does not rain in June. The air was cool – perfect! The beginning of the ride lopes downhill until you crossover the city limits and hit EDH. Here is where I started my effort. From the gradual rise of the first hill, to the consistently moderate grade of the second hill I slowly but surely increased my power the whole way. Not too much to handle just yet, but then again I was just getting started. Turning on to Malcolm Dixon Rd I thought maybe this could be my fastest time for the route. With that thought pinned to the back of my mind I starting pressing harder, not so much that I would blow up but enough that I felt the lactic acid burn. And burn. And burn. Malcolm Dixon left me a sweaty mess. I turned onto Green Valley with a HR of 178ish and legs like butter. But God wired me in a weird weird way. Once a thought enters my mind and becomes a goal I get this pesky thing happen to me – I don’t give up until I have succeeded or failed. Unfortunately for me, this means the pain will continue to increase. Deer Valley almost broke me. After turning left onto the road you get a brief moment of pain followed by a brief moment of sweet downhill respite. Only to be followed by an annoying mild grade. Go harder I keep telling myself. Sweat was profusely pouring down my face when I reached the top of the hill at the halfway point. Again my HR was pushing 180 and I knew that my pace could not continue. Nature decided to make a liar out of me though, and boy am I glad it did. At my weakest point of the ride the skies open up and soaked me. This caused two things to happen, both good for me. First, I was cooled down and the sweat washed from my brow. Second (and probably more importantly) it forced me to slow down a bit because I began the downhill portion of Deer Valley a little afraid that the accumulated oil on the road would cause a major case of road rash if I went too hard. After a few minutes of active recovery (riding at a moderate pace) I arrived back at Green Valley ready to rock and roll downhill

all the way home. Despite that evil 2-3 mile section of slight uphill to start and a 15-20 mph headwind, I was able to push hard all the way back to Folsom. The rain-showers that doused me on Deer Valley had not migrated south enough (yet) to hit Green Valley so the cruise home was fast and dry.

All in all the ride was a blast. The measures by which we cyclists define a successful ride were all in place. A personal best on the course – check. Beautiful landscapes to take in while riding – check. Legs that feel like Jello for a couple days – check. Rip-roaring hunger pains that make you want to eat like a lion – check.