

Lessons Learned

Date: Sunday 8/4/07

Ride: Folsom to Bogle Winery

Miles: 50

Climbing: None!!!

When I decided to take up cycling, it was mostly for enjoyment, a little exercise, and some social interaction with a group that seemed to be full of good people. I never imagined that within three months of getting on the bike, I would enjoy it as much as I do today. Even after Sunday's ride.

Saturday went just as Saturday should. Up at 6:30, breakfast, shower, dressed... and on the bike at 7:40 headed to Karen's Bakery for the usual Saturday ride. This day's route; Indian Hill, forty miles, 2000' of climbing; all seemed just fine. Up until, earlier in the week, a Sunday ride to Bogle Winery was introduced. So, as I pondered the Saturday ride I made the decision that I was going to shorten my route, cut out the big hill, and keep it at 30 miles, so that I didn't wear myself out for Sunday.

As we headed up Taylor I felt pretty strong. Slower than the lead pack, but still feeling pretty good. Dave and I chipped away at the hills, and during the ride I decided, what the heck, I can do the whole ride today. Tomorrow is all flat... 50 miles. I can do that. It meant the most miles in a weekend for me, but I was up for the challenge.

Sunday morning, same routine as Saturday. Up at 6:30, breakfast, etc., on the bike at 7:30. It was cold. And windy. And I already knew I was in trouble. We rode to the Hatchery, and then on to William Pond. I was holding a faster pace than I was used to, we were riding straight into the wind, but told myself that at some point we would all have to slow down. There was going to be 20 of us for goodness sakes, we can't all go that fast. I was wrong. We left William Pond, at a pretty decent pace. After 10 miles or so I just couldn't keep up and fell off the back. It seemed that no matter how fast I peddled I just couldn't keep up.

Then Curt came to my aid. Slowed down, let me draft, once I recovered a bit, we hit it hard (for me, not the IronMan); up to about 22mph to try and catch up with the pack. Knowing that if I could just sit in, I would be in much better shape. But I couldn't do it. And then, coming down the trail towards me... who could it be... Coach Ward. He turns around, pulls up next to me and looks over and asks "did you drop off the back 'cause you want to, or because you are tired?" I think I nodded, as talking took too much energy. He pulled up close to my left side, and said "here is what we are going to do. We are going to get around these corners, and I am going to push you up there, your going to sit in the middle of the pack, and rest." We found a straightaway, he put his hand on my back, and we took off. I have never peddled so hard, and he got me there. And once I was there, I was good. For a while.

The longer I rode, the harder it got. The harder it got, the more I wanted it to quit. But there were a couple of people who wouldn't let me give up. As I would fall off the back, they would bring me up. When I felt like I couldn't do it anymore, they had the words, even if to just make me laugh to take my mind off the pain. And every now and then, I would feel Coach's hand on my back, pushing me along. Telling me "I told you I would get you there, and I will!"

For me, today's ride was as much physical as it was emotional. Up to now, cycling has been fairly easy. I got on the bike three months ago, and just rode. The first ride 18 miles at an average speed of 12.8mph. And in two months I could do 60, with an average of 15.5 mph. And when we hit the hills a month ago, I made it. Maybe with a few new swear words added to my vocabulary, but made it nonetheless. Each week getting stronger and stronger, and getting more and more excited about riding.

Today was the first time when I asked myself "Why am I doing this? This isn't the fun that I was looking for three months ago. This sucks!" At one point, I welled up with tears, as Steve was pushing me along, and remember looking over at him and saying "I can't do it Steve, I just can't do it." He looked over at me and said "yes you can, you are doing great, and you WILL make it."

I finished the ride. With more help than I would have ever asked for. But those who were there to help, they knew that I needed it.

Being a part of Cycle Folsom has allowed me to build my physical strength. Getting to know the people of Cycle Folsom has helped me build my courage. I wouldn't still be on the bike, if I was riding with any other group. That I know for sure.