

Eric was right; Kevin doesn't need to start ahead of the group anymore

Up to last night Kevin was still thinking he wanted to head up the hill a couple minutes early, and even as we rode out to the start, I wasn't sure if he was going to come to a stop or keep on riding. But today, June 14th, 2011, Kevin stopped and became one of the gang.

Karl, Marcus, Eric, Kevin, Karen, and of course young Kevin on the ride with me this morning, a morning that started out gray and cool but once we got a bit higher than the park we were in bright sunshine and moderate temps. I warned (young) Kevin that the group tends to start out fairly fast on the climb, faster than he would normally start, and I was a bit worried he'd get quickly blown off the back. My fears about the speed on the first part of the climb were well-founded, as we hit the first timing point at 3:05, a very fast pace... yet Kevin was still there. We hit the park just past 9 minutes, an indication that, if Kevin held up, he'd be beating his prior best time (from last Thursday).

At the park we did the mandatory re-group thing, except that I had to tell Kevin no, don't circle, just keep going (because he was going for time, after all). If there was a part where he slowed down and took things kinda easy, it came right after the park. Thursday, he'd held between 9 & 10mph on that stretch, and today, he was pulling 8 or so. Reassurance the kid is mortal. But, he didn't collapse, he was recovering, gradually picking up speed and continuing to get solid times at the various reference points. I think it helped when the faster guys, who had held back for the regroup at the park, passed him a bit further up and provided wheels to follow.

The 2/3rds timing point (the 1.41 mile marker on the wide-open stretch) was hit at 19-something, so I knew that he was still moving. Possibly towards a 28-something time. Even the nasty steep stuff about a mile from the end was handled pretty easily (by him, not me; for me, the steeper stuff is a bit of a pain when I'm using the video camera, because I have to stay seated when I really want to stand!), and at the archery range hairpin it looked like he was still in the running for 28-something. But he's not wired quite like I am; at some point, if it's looking like 28-something, I wonder if it really makes much difference if it's 28:52 or 28:30... because what I'd really want, and couldn't have, would be 27-anything. For Kevin, he approached the last quarter mile like he was running from a fire, pulling out all the stops and finishing with a 28:16. A full minute and a half better than last week. There was no chance he could get 27-anything, but he wasn't going to settle for 28-something, he was going to get the best-possible 28 he could. Maybe it will be different when he becomes more familiar with the reference points and what times mean at each, but for today, I can't imagine him riding any harder than he did.

The rest of the ride was pretty much the normal Tuesday pace, which means a bit tougher than Thursdays (but not quite as tough as a typical Tuesday because George was on vacation). West side Old LaHonda was warm but not toasty, and no notable car incidents (other than the turkey who passed a few of us on a corner as we began the 84 descent, but proving there is some justice in the world, that same car got stuck behind another car the whole way down, with us sitting a short distance behind).

Kevin still can't sprint well when he's dead tired; turning off the warning signals telling you that your legs are about to melt is something he still needs to work on. But he'll get there. --Mike--