

## It's not my favorite hill, but maybe it should be



The final "bump" on Stage Road, heading north towards Highway 1 and Tunitas Creek.



You tell me, does Jasper Stuyven look like Matt Damon or what?

No better way to start the day than watching one of the early "spring classics" on TV! This morning was the Kuurne-Brussels-Kuurne in Belgium, won by Matt Damon! Well, not really Matt Damon, but Trek rider Jasper Stuyven sure looks like him! Great inspiration to get out and ride to the coast and see if I can get my climbing legs back, and maybe start to lose some of my winter weight.

Some things are tough to figure out. Kevin (my son) has become quite the climber. Even if he doesn't ride for a while, he can still climb. It's been at least three years since I could reliably keep up with him, or even have a chance really. Kings, Tunitas, West Alpine, Old LaHonda, you name it, he can nail it. Except one.

Stage Road. For some reason, Stage Road, particularly heading north, has always given him trouble. All three separate climbs. It's not as if I enjoy any of those climbs, with the exception, perhaps, of that first climb out of Pescadero. Back in the day, before they repaved it so badly, it was a pretty fun climb, especially on one of those rare days with a tailwind. Even today I find the grade to my liking, and on days with a stiff headwind, you get some shelter from the hillside. Kevin does OK on the first, but can't drop me and generally finds his legs failing close to the top. The second climb starts out really ugly for me; I've never been able to get a rhythm on the first part of the hill, as you come out of the big curve at the bottom. I'm always thinking I'm going to get dropped big-time there, but since it doesn't happen, I guess everyone else has trouble on it too. Once I get to the steeper section a bit further up, I'm good, and once again, Kevin has trouble finding his legs.

The last climb, the one from San Gregorio up to Highway 1? I hate that climb. There are some really impressive Strava results for people who have that climb nailed though. People doing serious wattage! Back in the day, I'd sometimes fly up that section, but more often than not it would be a grind, something that you had to get past before getting to Tunitas. These days, I can do OK, not great but OK, because I know how to suffer. You pass a lot of people struggling up that piece of road, and sure, they're suffering, but

they're doing it poorly. You've got to stop trying to minimize the suffering, and instead work to maximize it. Kevin has proven that he knows how to make himself suffer, but his motivation is sometimes lacking, and Stage Road just doesn't seem to motivate him.

No way of knowing how long before things change and Kevin figures out Stage Road. I'm going to try and by myself some time though; a week from Monday I've finally got a pulmonary function test scheduled at Kaiser, something that will hopefully lead to better breathing when the road tilts upward. One of the biggest issues with my breathing is dehydration, because if I'm climbing at a speed that allows me to finish on the same day as the fast guys, I can't drink. I literally cannot hold my breath long enough to drink, or rather, I can't afford to miss the few breaths required. The irony is that dehydration tends to exacerbate breathing issues! I did force myself to drink a few times when climbing Old LaHonda though. Interesting to think it's likely been 10 years or so since I last drank anything on that climb (or Kings, for that matter).



There were two noteworthy events today; the first came while climbing Haskins, when there was some traffic coming down the road and a very large pickup decided to try and pass Kevin and I when he shouldn't have. First time I've been shoved by a car in a few decades. It was an odd experience; it seemed like I heard it as much as felt it. No damage to me or the bike; some part of the car managed to hit me, not the bike, on my tail end. Not even marks on my shorts. Guess I have a lot of padding there. Kevin was surprised I stayed up, but it's pretty tough to rattle me on a bike.

The other item was far more pleasant. The Olive Hill Corgis were out! We always check to see if they're up at the fence, looking for attention. We never, ever see them on Tuesday & Thursday mornings; apparently these are smart Corgis that either sleep in or don't like to go out in the cold.