

Big-ringing it all the way up Kings!



"Big ringing" a major climb is boastful banter rarely based in fact. The idea that you're so strong you can ride up a big climb entirely in the big chainring, never needing to drop it into the smaller front chainring which is, of course, on your bike to take those big hills.

Well today, yes, it's true, I rode from the upper Huddart Park Entrance (on Kings) all the way to the top, without ever shifting to the small chainring. But it wasn't exactly by choice!

Just myself and Kevin (kid) today; not sure what scared everybody off, as the fog on Skyline was gone and sure, it was still pretty cool at times (mid-40s) but geez, it's going to get a whole lot cooler than that soon. Since it was Thursday we rode up through the park, via Greer. Everything seemed normal enough; I even felt a bit better than I had on Tuesday, when breathing was a real issue. Maybe I felt too good, because, right after we started that really steep ramp within the park, I shifted into the next-larger rear cog and BAM, no power and the chains jumping around. Fortunately (or unfortunately), I knew exactly what had happened. I busted another Dura Ace 11-28 cassette. My 4th one, in fact. The 5th-position cog (counting from 1 to 11 starting with the largest) had completely broken free of its mount, rendering it, and the adjacent (#6) cog not just useless but dangerous to accidentally try to use.

Here's where electronic Di2 shifting becomes very handy. I actually have a display on my Garmin computer that shows what gear I'm in, both front & back, so I was able to make sure I didn't try to use those busted gears. The problem? In the smaller chainring, the gears I could use were either too high or too low for the climb. The best gear remaining, for Kings, was actually the large/large combination. The gear combo a decent bike shop will tell you to avoid, because it's noisy and does a number on the chain (causing premature wear). But that's what it took to keep heading up the hill.

Once up on top, I was able to use more-normal gear combinations, by gingerly shifting across the bad gears down onto the smaller cogs suitable for the rolling stuff. We didn't try West Old LaHonda today though; that would have been a bit too challenging, needing to shift across that chasm of bad cogs too often to be safe.

When I got back to the shop I installed a stronger, heavier Ultegra version. Hopefully this one will last.