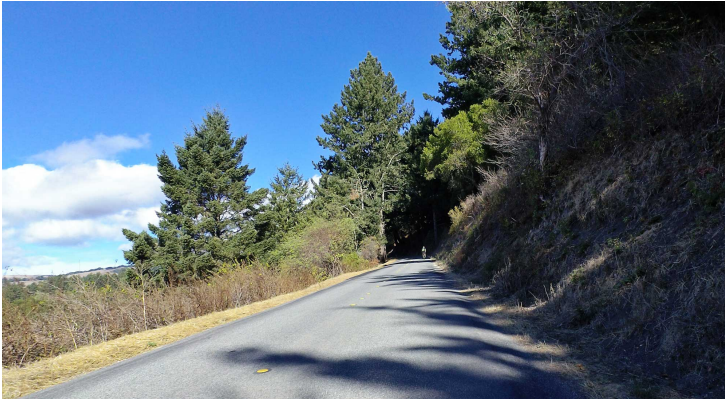


So slow on West Alpine a tick latched onto me. Such humiliation!



This was the last time I saw Kevin, climbing West Alpine today. Amazed I hung on this long. After a couple of weeks where it seemed like I couldn't be stopped, one pretty good ride after another, with definitive numbers (power meter, climbing times) showing I was doing better than a year ago... well, it had to end sometime, right? Today was that sometime.

Kevin (younger Kevin, my son, not the older "Pilot" Kevin) and I did the ride we had wanted to do last year, but had to shorten due to Kevin's painful knee. So up Old LaHonda (which wasn't terrible, but awkward because my power meter wasn't working for the first half of the ride), out to the coast (where I was mostly sitting on Kevin's wheel as we headed out 84, taking a few pulls now & then to give him a break and so I could learn it was time to throw out the shorts I wore today because they'd become transparent from behind), and over the two Stage Road hills to Pescadero. It was pretty clear on the Stage Road climbs that I wasn't doing too well, because those climbs are among the very few where I usually still ride better than Kevin. Not today. We were riding Stage southbound, and Kevin just flew up the second climb. On a normal day, I always find it in my legs to take that climb, usually passing him 100 meters from the top. As I said, not today.

Pescadero- no cookies!!! The Olallieberry Strudle isn't bad though. It was nearly perfect weather and hard not to just want to hang out for a while, especially when you've got the reverse-Haskins run ahead of you. Think we did hang out a bit too long because my legs felt like lead as we got going. At this point Kevin had his knee pain again, but he wasn't doing a good job of showing it. Climbing the steeper section of Haskins we, or I should say Kevin, acquired a target (rider ahead) and his knee issue seemed to become irrelevant. Before that, he was thinking about riding back 84 instead of West Alpine, to shorten the ride a bit, but that thought vanished as he drove the pace, catching the guy and eventually dropping me, shortly before the top.

West Alpine? Wish I had knees that hurt more when I ride slower than when I go faster! You can see in the photo at the top how much of a gap Kevin had on me shortly before West Alpine intersects with the road that goes down to Portola State Park. I think I did catch a glimpse of him way, way, way ahead at one point a few minutes later. He was flying while I was dying. I had power showing at this point, but it wasn't showing much power.

And the, once up on Skyline, I noticed what looked like a bit of food on my left arm. I went to scrape it off and find... blood. I'd apparently picked up a tick on the way up West Alpine. I was riding so slowly a tick was able to jump onto me????!!!

Some days you get the bear, some days the bear gets you. The important thing is to survive and keep battling that bear.