

Ride Report

Alpine Challenge – 72 Mile “Pine Valley” Ride

By Dave Ernst



Event	Alpine Challenge
Date	April 25, 2009
Location	Alpine, San Diego County
Distance	72 miles – “Pine Valley Ride”
Climbing	8,400± vertical feet
Web Site	http://www.alpinechallenge.com/
Publicity	http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fcbFwjGjMBk http://echerald.smugmug.com/gallery/8005844_7meyx/8/520610760_mCuc9#P-1-25

This 9th annual version of the Alpine Challenge enticed most of the San Diego Descenders, such as:

- | | | |
|--------------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Aryln Asch | 6. Dave Seeba | 11. Scott Dinslage |
| 2. Dave Voris | 7. Dave Sheehan | 12. Rick Bienias |
| 3. Dave “Guido” Guidotti | 8. Drew Peterson* | 13. Rob Verfurth |
| 4. Dave Boyle | 9. Jeff Cresap | |
| 5. Dave Ernst | 10. Mike Hodges | |

** First rider to finish in the 2008 Alpine Challenge*

This popular East County ride began early at 7:00 am and presented cloudy and cool weather, perfect for a long and frankly grueling ride on the beautiful backcountry roads.



L to R: Rick; Scott; Seeba; Mike; Aryln; Rob; Boyle; Voris; Jeff; Sheehan; Guido & Ernst

The Start – The First Climb!

The opening segment of the ride travels east on Willows road and begins nice and level, for about a ½ mile! Thereafter a steady 4% grade awaits for the next 2.5 miles. Virtually all of the SD Descenders are in the lead group at this point, pushing the pace as usual. The SD Descenders do a lot of things well; relaxing during the opening stint of a ride, even a grueling 72-mile ride, is not one of them.

As Willows Road circles back south to I-8, a nasty little ¼ mile climb presents itself with a 10% grade right before the bridge over I-8. This is enough to crack about all of the riders other than about an elite group of 20 riders, which includes Rick, Drew, Mike, Voris, Scott and Seeba to name a few. Aryln and Ernst fall back but are determined to join the elite group at the front and form a quick pace line with another rider to catch up. They are motivated by the fact that the next 15 miles is downhill.

The Opening Descent

Ernst is already feeling blow-out while convalescing at the back of the main field after the mad scramble to the front, and tries to reassure himself that the rest of the 69 miles will be easier than the opening 3 miles...meanwhile, the lead group, about 25 riders strong now, continues to push the pass as it travels west on Alpine Blvd next to I-8. The ensuing 15 miles are a mix of fantastic rolling, roller coaster style descents and turns through the rural community of Alpine. During the descent the entire SD Descenders, something about large bodies go fast down hill, rejoin the lead group along with several other riders. Looking like a proper peloton now, all are enjoying the fast pace while exerting token effort, all the while avoiding the odd neighbor considering exiting his/her driveway for the first errand of the day. A total blast, a little scary.

The Party is Over

So after 25 miles on the road, of which 22 miles were spent going down hill, the left turn at Dehesa Road arrives directing the peloton back east. The trek uphill begins. Ernst does not feel like he's fully recovered from the opening burst to catch the lead group and considers for a moment to bypass the Dehesa Road turn and rather continue downhill, perhaps all the way to the coast. Regretfully and for reasons that remain unclear, Ernst turns left on Dehesa Road. Rick, Voris, Seeba and Drew quickly drop the rest of the SD Descenders within a couple of miles of the Dehesa Road turn. Ernst pushes to catch Mike and is joined in short order by Aryln, Jeff and Scott. The rest of the SD Descenders will have to find their own way from here.

With the slower, steady 9 mph pace, Ernst visualizes the hand-out of the route profile and remembers that the Dehesa Road segment is something like 20 miles long. That's 20 miles *up hill*, with the odd downhill teaser tossed in. Ernst doesn't recall any route in the Tour de France (or any Tour for that matter) with such a long uphill route, and wonders why he's so lucky.

Rick and Drew were up a head not only leading the SD Descenders, but the entire ride Alpine Challenge. Rick was pushing the pace and pulled much of the ride in spite of having suffered a separated shoulder, and his legs inflamed with poison ivy, both the result of a crash or two the previous weekend while in the Julian Death March mountain bike ride. Voris and Seeba followed and rode together the rest of the ride. Mike assumes the leadership of the 5 man Mike, Ernst, Arlyn, Scott and Jeff. Rob, Boyle, Guideo and Sheehan brought up the rear. Ernst soon lost contact with the group of 5 and rode the rest of the 72-mile route more-or-less on his own, though he and another two riders missed the outer Pine Valley loop and turned left off Dehesa and did the 60-mile loop instead.

Various Musings to the Finish

Some of the highlights of the rest of the ride to the finish:

- ✓ Dave Sheehan coming down Old Highway 80 screaming like a Kamikaze; he was not going to be denied the full 72 mile route even with his significant travel demands to and from Tokyo;
- ✓ Rob's excellent adventure getting to "hang" with Andy Hampsted (1988 Giro d'Italia winner) and his group for a bit;
- ✓ Rob blowing past Andy Hampsten and his group when they stopped at the 2nd SAG break and Rob pedaled on alone;
- ✓ Mike as the Captain on the road of the Aryln, Jeff and Scott group. Mike regulated the pace; steady tempo on the hills so not to drop each other. Fast pacelines on the descents to make up time on the leaders. A flick of his hand could mean, "Slow down just a touch to let someone rest a little", or maybe "Hurry, hurry and pull through – get the pace line moving. At the pee stop, he was full of, "Come on boys, let's not stop for tea, time to GO!"
- ✓ Voris and Seeba riding tandem virtually the entire ride starting at Dehesa Road and finished in the second group of the San Diego Descenders;
- ✓ Rick and Drew riding at the front to the finish;
- ✓ Aryln and Mike finishing strong together along with Aryln's joy of having his family see him finish strong, all the while waving cowbells and cheering for all of the riders;
- ✓ Ernst making himself do two 6-mile loops in quiet suffering around I-8 at the finish to insure the full 72-mile ride;
- ✓ Ernst witnessing Rick and another guy who was stuck to his wheel blow past Ernst the final mile at the finish on Willows Road; Ernst witnessed the one of those "your speed" speed limit signs flash "28 mph" by Rick (yes even getting out the saddle, apparently he does that after all) even after 71 miles of hard riding; Rick is insane...;
- ✓ Rick and the wheel sucker finishing tied for 1st in the Alpine Challenge in 2009;
- ✓ Drew finished a strong 3rd after having rode with Rick the entire time until getting dropped at the nasty little climb right before the overpass over I-8;
- ✓ Overall, Team San Diego Descenders took 8 of the top 20 spots, including the above mentioned 1st and 3rd positions;
- ✓ It was a good day to ride...