



Boulevard Road Race

February 7, 2009

Boulevard, California

42 miles, 4100' climbing

Descenders present: Rick Bienias, Drew Peterson,
Logan Fielder, David Voris, Arlyn Asch, Mike Hodges

By David Voris



Logan, Rick and Drew lead the front group in lap 2

The Descenders are not a racing club. But that doesn't mean that we can't race. Arlyn Asch <http://www.adventuresonabike.com>, arguably the Descenders most ambitious cyclist in the club, posed a challenge last Fall to the club to make a showing at a real amateur road bike race. You know... licenses, finish lines, etc. So he gathered up the big guns for the Cat 5 race – our first as a team. As with everything we do, we did it with gusto. All six of us showed up, despite the threat of harsh winter weather and one club member's medical procedure DT last week ("DT" is medical lingo for "Down There").

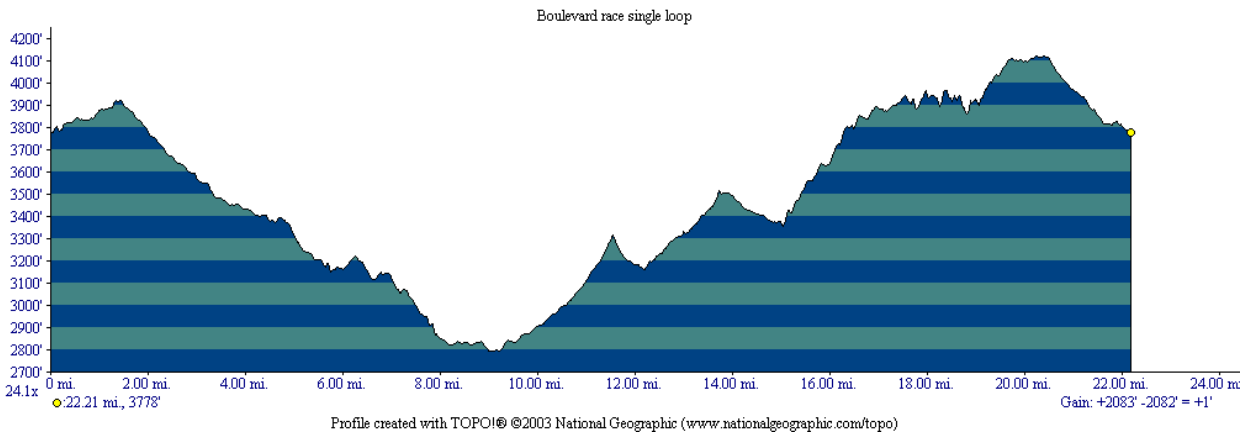
Once Rick, Logan and Drew signed up I knew that the podium was out, so I considered other ways to make the race fun for me. I wanted Arlyn to get as high of a showing as possible since he prompted this new adventure so I committed to be his lieutenant. That would mean navigating the descents, blocking the wind if he gets isolated and closing gaps. I would hold up from joining attacks that get away if Arlyn was getting permanently separated. I know Arlyn's riding strengths well, since he and I battled it out two weeks ago on this exact course.

It is hard to fasten a helmet strap with full fingered gloves while you are shaking in the cold. That describes the start. Perhaps some of the shaking was the result of eyeing the field. These were not normal looking men. Cat 5? Dang, what do the pros look like?



Dave, Rick and Logan prepare for start at Descenders headquarters.

300 feet into the race, in our first corner I thought I was going down. A rider turned wide in to the shoulder potholes, double pinched flatted, then steered his near-tumbling bike right in front of me. Somehow he recovered and we both stayed up. Ok, this really is the cat 5 race.



Profile of one lap. Race consisted of two laps – but the last lap excludes the final 2 mile descent

The race started with a long descent, which Mike did a good job of keeping our big three guns together at the front to start the climb (Rick, Drew and Logan). Arlyn and I stuck with our plan, and Arlyn gave it his all. He made some great revories after I though he was toast. We rode together the whole race. Once in a while our chase group seperated from Arlyn. Rather than falling back with Arlyn, I stayed with the group knowing that Arlyn would not give up if I was in sight. He kept returning to the group. At one point, I rode ahead to convince a lone ride to slow down near the end of the first climb – “some big guys on your heels who will help you on the descent – could you please slow down?” He eyed my 6’5” inch 200lb frame, looked back at Arlyn hammering away 50 feet back, then slowed down, and grabbed a gel... “works for me”.

Arlyn nicely describes the event on his web site:

<http://www.adventuresonabike.com/2009/02/08/postcards-from-boulevard/>.



The last 3 miles will never be forgotten. It had been raining since the start of the 2nd loop climb. The drops got bigger and bigger. Then sleet. Then big wet snow flakes. My socks were soaked, and my finger tips were frozen, and my arms were covered in slushy snow. Arlyn was in front setting the pace on this final climb, and doing really well. The thought of a warm car is what motivated me now.

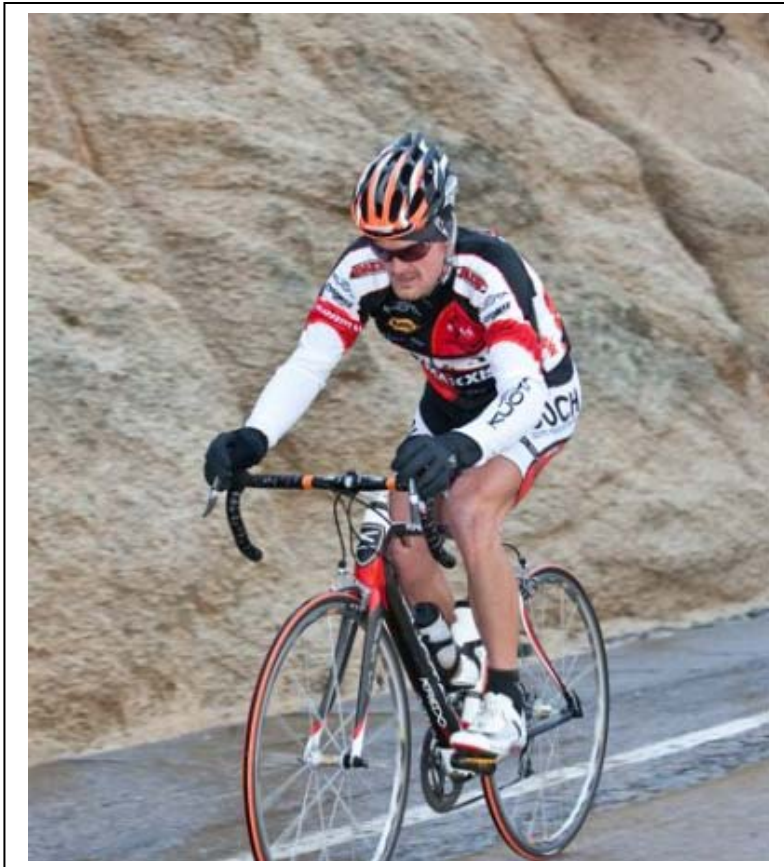
Arlyn sets the pace on the final climb while Dave whimpers on his wheel.

Arlyn and I finished 22 and 20. Mike was a few spots behind. The ride to the car was the coldest two miles I can ever remember on a bike. Mostly a 6-7% 1 mile downhill, being pelted by snow.

So back to Logan, Drew and Rick. They continued in the front group all the way to the 2nd climb on the second lap (See top picture). The group then split as a result of a furious pace by Drew, and Logan was a part of the carnage. Logan ended up with a stout 10th place. Drew continued to decimate the field with Rick on his wheel, until only one stow-away remained – leaving 3. Mind you, Rick and Drew are maniac climbers. However, they are two of the friendliest people that I know. This is not always a good combination in bike racing. They are thinking ‘surely a lone surviving wheel sucker would be honorable at the finish of the race and take third’. Not. He deviously slipped away in a last moment sprint and took 1st. Oh well, the Descenders had 6 finishers, 3 in the top 10 - clearly the best represented team in our race.



We waited out the snow storm after the race in the local café, very content with a great day. From left to right: Dave (red), Arlyn, Rick, Drew, Mike, Logan.



An unknown rider suffers in no man's land - alone in the Pro 1-2 race. Ok, kidding – this is Floyd Landis doing some cold weather training in preparation for the TOC. Let's see what weather Palomar Mountain can drum up on stage 8.

