

# Highland Valley Road, Bandy Canyon and Ramona Grade

By Rob Verfurth

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Distance: 56 miles

Participants: Arlyn Asch, Mike Hodges, Dave Guidotti, Dave Voris and Rob Verfurth

Start/Finish: Voris house on Spring Meadow Rd, 5 mile warm-up and return from PQ

Weather: high 40's, low 50's with some light sprinkles and rain

**Route:** Poway Road to Pomerado Road to Highland Valley Road, down Bandy Canyon and up the Ramona Grade. Dye Road and return on Highway 67 to Scripps-Poway Parkway.

**Comments:** I gulped down my oatmeal and hustled to meet Guido on the corner of Black Mountain and Route 56 by 6:40 am so we could rendezvous with the boys at Spring Meadow. It was cold, dark and looked like rain when I pedaled from my house. I was late as usual, Guido waited patiently for me at the top of the hill. As we descended down Poway Road and over I-15 under very overcast skies we smelled rain in the air. The rest of the group met at Dave Voris's house and after some delays deciding on what to wear we were off to meet more riders at the designated corner of Pomerado and Rancho Bernardo Road. The ride was posted on the web site to meet there at 7:30 am. Arlyn attacked from the start to hit the Poway city sign first, one of many he got during the ride.

No one else showed at the 7:30 meet time-it was just the 5 Descenders for the ride so we decided to head up HVR. Mike had a flat before the ascent which gave us a quick rest before the climb. We all started together but quickly split as Guido and I could not keep pace with Dave, Arlyn and Mike. We all descended fast down Bandy Canyon with cool winds in our face and looming clouds overhead. This route is part of the Tour de California last stage and we discussed where we would want to be on race day.

The Ramona grade is a steady climb about 5 miles up Highway 78 into downtown Ramona. Dave led the group up the first two miles before I fell off the back. Mike was kind enough to join me while Dave led Arlyn and Guido to the top of the grade. Guido had his flat near the top of the grade when the rain started to fall. We grabbed all our rain gear and made it to the Fire Station to refill the water bottles. We decided not to return via HVR due to the weather so instead went along Route 67, around Mount Woodson and down Scripps-Poway Parkway.

As soon as we hit Dye Road Arlyn made another break. Dave was ready for the attack so he quickly closed the gap. Mike, Guido and I struggled to pull closer to the two as they sped along Dye at 28+ mph. Mike and I closed the gap when Dave and Arlyn eased the

pace. I kept Dave's wheel when they again powered away but lost it quickly. Arlyn took off again so Dave and I tried one last effort to get him reeled in before we got back to the corner of Highway 67. The legs were shot so Arlyn hit the light alone with Dave and I a few seconds behind. The rain spitting increased a bit as we regrouped and headed around Mount Woodson to Scripps-Poway Parkway. This is a 2 mile descent that was fast and not too slippery as the sprinkles died down a bit. We pulled together down SPP toward the end of the ride.

Back at Pomerado Road Arlyn, Mike and Dave headed south up the hill while Guido and I headed back towards PQ. The ride was fast at times and the weather cooperated during most of the ride. Guido and I struggled with spent legs as we slowly climbed the hill on Rancho Penasquitos Road and headed back along the Route 56 bike path home; another great Descenders Ride.