



## Palomar Challenge

**June 25, 2011**

**Lake Henshaw, California**

**40 miles, 4,500' climbing**

Descenders present: Rick Bienias, Drew Peterson, Dave Guidotti, David Voris, Dave Ernst, Bernie Bogard, Bob Proulx, Len Nathe, John Moran, Rob Verfurth, Mike Farkas

*By Dave Ernst and Dave Voris*

We had a hybrid ride with Rick, Drew and Bernie competing in the Palomar Challenge while the rest of us were there for a "group" ride on Palomar Mountain (befitting the Descenders) and indirectly offering support to the competitors.



Rick and Dave warm-up before race

A little background on the Palomar Challenge: in 2009 Rick and Drew held the course record of 48:26 for the 12.22 mile ascent on the East Grade. In 2010 Drew smoked that time with his 44:56 and was treated like a certifiable celebrity at the finish by the other riders (as Ernst reported at the time). Nick Venuto won the 40-45 division in 2010 with a 52:51, good enough for 4th overall.



Rick starting warm-ups



Rick heading back down to start line

To summarize the Palomar Challenge ascent, Drew, Rick and another "25 something Cat 1 rider" separated from the rest of the group early, with Drew and Rick doing a lot of the work. After a short pull by the Cat 1 rider, Rick sensed some weakness and attacked, promptly gaping both at about mile 8. Over the next 2+ miles Rick rode solo in an all out effort to the finish. The Cat 1 rider quietly closed the gap to Rick in the final few meters and surprised Rick by nipping him at the line - both with a time of around 43:47, or about 1:09 below Drew's incredible 2010 record time. Drew ended up coming in 3rd another 1:05 back, which was still: 04 below his 2010 record time. Bernie arrived with a time of approximately 55:00 which is quite good for this first time and will no doubt be a high placing in his age division; any sub 1 hour time up the East Grade is impressive.



View toward Ocean climbing Palomar East Grade



View South near top of grade

After the timed climb we decided to cruise out to the Observatory before heading back to the cars. Mike Farkas wanted to get in a bit more climbing so he tackled the South Grade while the rest of us enjoyed a beautiful morning ride out to the Observatory.



Group at Observatory

We stopped for a few minutes before cruising back down the East Grade to the cars.



Group at the bottom of the East Grade

So a little bittersweet finish for Rick but we should all celebrate his incredible time - which was a good 4:30 better than his previous time. The legend continues...