

## My First Ride

I got into cycling because of my Dad, but I didn't know it was going to be this hard!

We leave our house by 6:00 AM. It's foggy and humid in a summer morning, smells fresh like the flowers we have in front of our yard. We are driving and can barely see about 50 feet ahead of us, the fog is so thick. We pass by the Ontario Airport, planes already boring people and I say to myself how can these pilots fly in such poor weather conditions; we pass by the California Speedway, with everyone getting ready for the big race coming up this morning, then me, my dad, uncle and cousin finally get to our destination. At the beach; there are already surfers in the water which amazes me because of this cold weather. We start putting our gear on and getting ready for the long journey ahead.

*I'm nervous, excited and scared of what's to come.*

We start getting the bikes off the bike rack which is located on the hitch of our van. We check if the gears, brakes, tires, rims, computer are ready and have no malfunctions. But wait! We have a problem my uncle's tire was losing air and losing it fast. We needed a solution; what can we do? Then my uncle commented, hey! I live about 15 minutes away from here. We decided to drive back to his house. We get there; he rushes into the house waking up not only his wife but his baby boy as well. "The wife isn't happy" He comes out with an air pump, a new tire, a new tube and we are off again. We get back and there are already riders getting ready to ride off. We hurry up to get our bikes off the rack, check everything else, and we are also ready to go.

It's about 50 or so riders and more are coming. I get nervous and have to use the restroom. I come back and I kid you not, there were at least 100 riders at the start of this ride. I was just amazed of how many riders there were. And these riders were not going to be riding all slow. I could tell how fast there are going to be going by the kind of bikes they have and the size of their calves and thighs.

There were riders drinking nice hot Starbucks drinks which looked very good this morning. Nice cycling shoes; the best money can buy. We started riding out slow just cruising talking

and everything else. But then the group starts picking up the pace; from 18 miles per hour to about 24 miles in about 10 seconds or so. And I said to myself...

*What did I get myself into this time!*

Around this time we have gone approximately 20 miles so far. We pass Marina Del Ray, Venice beach, Huntington Beach, Redondo Beach, and now we are heading for the hardest part of it all, Palos Verde, here come the hills baby.

*I was actually scared for my life.*

We hit the first hill, all you hear is nothing, just the birds chirping, and the ocean in the back ground. You hear riders breathing heavily trying to catch a breath. You hear others shifting to a lower gear because the hill is too hard for them. I'm there just concentrated taking my time. And before you know it the first hill was over. Everyone is relaxed for now. Riders smiling saying "whoooooo glad I got over that thing." But everyone knows in the back of their minds, that there is more to come and it will be getting harder and harder. And then out of nowhere we hear a noise "puff" "a flat" and when someone gets a flat on a group ride; well that is bad, because when you stop, you lose the momentum and you get cold. We help the guy change his tire, others guys start eating their power bars and power gels trying to get their energy back for the big hill to come. People driving by honking at us saying "go kick some butt."

Finally, we changed the tire and we are ready to go. We start again slowly as usual. It's now around 9:24 AM. It's getting very hot I think it was already around 83 degrees Fahrenheit. In the distance we see the hill that we all fear but must get over our fears and say to ourselves *bring it on!* We get to the base of the hill. This looked like a very mean hill. It was around 8% gradient level and around 2 or 3 miles in length. We started climbing, riders once again were quiet and you heard hard breathing again. And out of nowhere this guy shifts down to a higher gear and takes off, then someone from the group yells "let him go; he will burn out on the hill." But some riders don't listen well and another rider gets

behind the wheel of the guy who attacked. A few hundred feet up we see the rider who attacked and the guy who went along with him. They were so tired and looked like if they just came out of the ocean, that's how sweaty they were. We passed them like if they weren't even moving. I look back and see them about 50, 75, 90 feet away and disappear in the hot summer morning.

Finally we made it to the top of the mountain and we are tired and drenched with sweat. Some guy says "good work-out huhh" and everyone starts laughing. You see now everyone is happy because they know what's next, what goes up must come down; a downhill approximately 10 miles of decent and air running through your hair. We start the decent, riders holding the handlebars from the bottom bars. You hear riders braking, tires squeaking, and you especially hear the wind passing through you. At this time we are going approximately 42+ Miles per hour. When we reach the bottom, someone says, "that was a long trip", and I say...

*"Yes it was too long and too fast for me and we both laugh"*

We are now just cruising down back to our cars. We are talking and planning if we are going to go out and have some breakfast; it's now 10:45 AM. We are hungry and decide to go eat at a nearest Denny's restaurant. We get there and have to wait no longer than 15 minutes, which isn't bad at all. We are seated and are asked if we want any beverages. My Dad orders a large orange juice, my uncle orders a large orange juice and a coke, my cousin orders a large orange juice, and I order a small orange juice and a large milk to go with my pancakes. Twenty minutes later the food is coming. I swear to you It smelled like Pancake Heaven. We get all of our plates and start eating.

*"We talk about how the ride went and what happened. We laughed, had fun, and it was a great First Ride for me"*

After we are done eating we asked for the bill, pay it, leave a tip, and we are out. *We give each other a High-Five and say Good Job guys.*

*After that day, I feel in love with cycling; and I will keep riding and try to get better every day of my life.*

**Written by Patrick Torres on June 09, 2006**