

# Oceanside Harbor Loop

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by Rob Verfurth

The group ride on Saturday was fairly flat but super-fast. We started with 16 riders, a mix of the usual suspects and some new riders. At the corner of Black Mountain and the 56 bike path were Claus, Ernst, Geoff, Voris, Rick W, Tony O, Hodges, Eric, Farkas, Guido, Bob P, Jeff S and me; along with Flo, Jurgen and Paul P. Jurgen and Flo are from Heidelberg, Germany and live in the US now. Paul is a new Descender, having just joined the club recently. All three of the guys are super strong riders. They were at or near the point of the group all day.



Jeff waves to Serena and Gail



Eric ready to roll

We pedaled west on the bike path at a comfortable pace. The group split as we exited the path and made our way to PCH. Everyone except Claus came back together in Del Mar. Claus has been over training and he fell off the back. At the light by the Solana Beach train station Claus caught back up with the group. The pace line now formed as we rolled up PCH. An omen of the wacky day ahead played out as Farkas and Eric led us through Cardiff. There were 3-4 bike riders stopped in the bike lane with one guy trying to cross the PCH toward the beach. We were going 30 mph and closing fast on this indecisive group. Fortunately we blew by them as one guy darted across the PCH traffic and the other riders stood in the bike lane. Farkas exchanged pleasantries with one of the riders and we hauled up to the light by the Cardiff Kook statue. Eric had either seen enough for the day or he had to get home, but in either case, he bugged out at Manchester Road.

The group pulled toward Swami's and turned off to take our usual coastal route along Neptune. We lost Claus again but he eventually caught up with us when we returned to PCH. Farkas had to head home and turned south onto PCH while the group rolled up past La Costa Road and toward Carlsbad. The pace line was again fast with a much needed red light keeping the group together. As we were stopped at a light at Tamarack, we saw another group of riders making the turn onto PCH. One rider cut off another and caused him to lose his front wheel and flip over his bike. He did a hard bounce off the pavement and hit his helmet hard. After a minute of recovery on the ground, his riding buddies picked him and his bike up and moved him to the curb; another omen noting the challenges of riding on the coast.



Guido pleased and on point



Farkas and Hodges

Thankfully, for me at least, our pace slowed a bit after witnessing the hard crash. Rick W and Ernst made it through the light before the crash and they pedaled ahead to Oceanside. We cruised through Carlsbad Village and into Oceanside. Traffic was heavy with lots of folks with surf boards, beach goers crossing the street, cars stopping, etc. It made for a very disjointed ride through Oceanside. I did my usual pull away as we crossed the bridge just a mile before the harbor turnaround. Flo came with me and I pulled us toward Ernst. Rick W was still a long way ahead. Right at the bathroom a car pulled a U-turn in front of Ernst. He had to slow so we were able to pass Dave with only a few turns left to the end. I pulled hard but Ernst accelerated again to pass me. I motioned Flo to pull around my spent legs to chase Ernst. Flo easily caught his wheel and they finished in a line well ahead of me. The rest of the guys closed fast as we all made our way to the water break stop where Rick W was waiting for us.

The return leg back through Oceanside was even more crowded. The crosswalks near the pier caused a particularly painful log jam of cars, riders and walkers. Through fits and starts we made to out of Oceanside. Hodges, with Flo following, kept going straight while the group took the left and over the railroad tracks. The pace again accelerated going south from Carlsbad Village. At the smokestack we were going 30+ mph and I fell off the back. The rest of the group motored on. I kept up a good pace and watched the peloton going farther away from me. I suffered alone but enjoyed the views along



PCH. I was surprised but pleased to see the group waiting for me at La Costa. We waited a minute more to have Hodges and Flo regroup.



Voris leading group along La Costa

We flew along La Costa with speeds approaching 30 mph. I was burning matches all the way to El Camino Real. Jeff S and Tony turned off onto Levante St as they were adding miles towards Elfin Forest. The rest of us rolled to turn onto Olivenhain Road. I had nothing left and fell back, slowing making my way to the climb up El Camino Del Norte to Lago Lindo. I was suffering but content to pedal at my own pace back through RSF. I was again surprised to find most of the group waiting for me right before Stud Loop. Bob P and Hodges were already heading back and were a bit ahead of us. The group decided to skip Stud Loop and just head back to Three Witches. I took off and blasted to Via De La Valle with Paul on my wheel. We had a big gap on the remaining guys as we hit El Apajo. Paul took over point and we rolled toward the light with the rest of the guys approaching fast.

I was out of water, out of legs and in dire need of a rest stop. I took a break at the deli while the remaining guys chased Hodges and Bob P up Three Witches. After three bottles of water and a nice break resting at one of the outdoor tables, I got back on my bike to climb Three Witches. I rolled up the hill and back to my house, 65 miles in distance and only 2,600 feet of climbing but no legs left. It was another fast and furious Descenders group ride.