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Hicks - Mt Umunhum (white line)

Week 6 of the 2014 Low-Key Hillclimb Series

Report

A huge thanks to coordinator Will von Kaenel and Los Gatos Bike Racing club for a historic Low-Key Hillclimb this week up Hicks-Mt Umunhum.

Will's tireless and excellent work resulted in Low-Key being granted the first-ever road cycling permit for "beyond the gate" on Mount Umunhum Road. We hope this is a major step towards cyclists being able to ride all the way to the Umunhum summit, one of the major four Bay Area summits, next to Tamalpais, Diablo, and Hamilton.

But for today, we broke new territory for Low-Key and for Bay Area cycling. Low-Key had previously climbed Umunhum in 1996 and 2010, but only to the gate. Going beyond wasn't a matter of just "more of same" -- it added a major new steep portion in the additional 2 km, exceeding 13%, which substantially changed the character of the climb from "steep but not so long" to make it the #1 combination of sustained grade and distance per the Low-Key rating formula.

And for the historic occasion we were granted supernaturally good weather for the late date. Indeed, while we've gotten rained on here both in 1996 and 2011, for 2014 it was warm sunshine with temperatures well into the mid-70F's. This is cyclocross season, people!

And on the day, there were some impressive division leaders, with Amy Cameron leading Anne Valta and McLovely Brown for the women's top 3, Janet Gardner and Marty Scott not far behind. In the men's division, it was an incredible finish between Low-Key week 1 winner Nick Bax edging out Low-Key Über-Junior Adrien Costa for the incredible win, followed by Stefano Profumo and, in 4th and 5th, slow-starters Brian Lucido and Chris Evans. Indeed, it had been a fast start on Hicks Road, and Brian, riding a steady number from his new PowerTap, came storming past most of the lead group as the early enthusiasm of trying to follow Nick and Adrien's unsustainable VAM faded.

One big story today was the juniors. At the front, it's easy to forget Adrien Costa is still a junior, as he's been dominant in Low-Key so long, and has won several major international races in his racing career. But another story was team Vikings led by cross-country runner Lucas Matison. **Here's Lucas crossing the line for 110 points** (as calculated after week 6; points subject to change). Put this guy on a racing bike and Adrien and Nick will have some more competition... But a super-strong ride as well by Lucas' Vikings teammate, **Parker Gara**, with **Kent Slaney**, also riding in running shoes, not far behind to put the Vikings in a super-impressive sixth place overall to put them 9th overall for the series so far, making Vikings one of the best if not the best all-junior team in Low-Key history.

We had two tandems today: Pauls McKenzie and Chuck (tandem teams always seem to share one name) showed off the former's super-impressive custom carbon fiber Landshark with 107 points. Meanwhile our mixed tandem team of Emma and Jonathan Dixon also rode impressively on the steep slopes to an excellent second place.

On the team side, it was Squadra SF breaking the 400 point barrier, perhaps for the first time in Low-Key history. Sisters and Misters was also super-impressive in second, with the Brown Zone making a very strong third place showing. Coordinating team LGBRC made a very strong 4th place showing despite so many of its riders doing volunteer duty today.

Thanks to all the volunteers and riders and especially to Will and Lynn von Kaenel for making this such a historic Low-Key success story! And thanks also to the Open Space rangers and staff for their cooperation in allowing us to enjoy the great day on the mountain!