

A Tale of Two

■ *Maui and Southern Oregon Offer Unique C*

By Rob Templin

Within a two week time span this September, an Oregon racer had the chance to experience two very unique and challenging hillclimb events: the Mt. Ashland Hillclimb, a Northwest favorite that includes a unique mountain bike versus roadie format; and Maui's "Cycle to the Sun," a 10,000 foot "jaunt" from sea level to the top of Mt. Haleakala. Rob Templin of Eugene, Oregon, a local masters competitor and partner of the Burley Design Cooperative, competed in both in September.

Dear Oregon Cycling Readers,

Hurricane Iniki reeked havoc throughout Hawaii just days before the Cycle to the Sun was to happen. It was a not-so-subtle reminder of what Mother Nature can dish out. It also helped to put in perspective the 10,000-foot climb up Haleakala. Other than Iniki, the weather here has been great and the scenery spectacular—wish you were here.

Rob

I really did attempt to sit down and put together a formal race report of Maui's "Cycle to the sun '92." But in this kind of lush, tropical, laid-back setting it was, well, difficult to get serious. But then, there was the \$10,000 prize list....

Jim Allen of Petaluma, California proved that his recent road win at the Masters National in Spokane, Washington, was no fluke. The 41 year-old veteran clocked the fastest time overall, finishing in 2 hours, 48 minutes, 12 seconds.

Forest Treadwell, the Senior Men's winner with a time of 3:00:28, provided a bit of a 'Northwest Connection,' as he had spent much of his summer racing in the Washington area — even though the 23 year-old calls Lahaina, Maui "home."

Defending women's champion and course record holder (3:13:45) Vivian Soderhom-Difatte successfully defended her title with a 3:26:40 clocking. Most of the top riders' times were anywhere from 5 to 10 minutes slower than usual because of the windy conditions — which made for stunningly clear vistas (of little consolation to the racers)!

The only other rider to go under three hours besides Allen was this "post card" journalist. However, in trying to avoid several weaving riders near the summit top, I was forced over the centerline and was disqualified. A controversy arose over the appropriateness of the penalty in light of the circumstances and a lack of due process.

This was only one of many negative aspects of the day's racing as more than a few riders (including one of the European entrants) complained of the heavy-handed and rude officiating from the chief referee. In my case, it cost me more than a few "coconuts."

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Flying into Kahului airport on Maui's north shore, I caught my first glimpse of the "race course:" 10,000 foot Haleakala. If I had any doubts about the race promoter's claim that the world's steepest paved road resides on its massive shoulders, they were partially answered when I went to pick up my rental car. I had to sign a waiver that said if I drove to the top of Mt. Haleakala I would only use low gears to descend - they were worried about brake failure!

The race used a time trial format with riders leaving at 30 second intervals from the coastal town of Paia. From there it was a 38-mile uphill journey with little opportunity to rest or enjoy the spectacular scenery - including the finishing miles among the thin air of the desolate Haleakala National Park.

On a more positive note, all the racers heaped praise on the promoter Leonard "Bully" Kapahulehua for what was termed a "first class" promotion - one well worth returning to. Bully gave credit for the race's success to the "many volunteers staffing the aid stations, the local police that helped with traffic control, the National Park Service and several key sponsors" (such as the Maui Sun Hotel that provided gourmet pre- and post-race dinners as part of the race entry). Eventually Bully would like to see his event tied in with other major hillclimb events across the country (including the Mt. Ashland Hillclimb that I report on next).





Photo By Ray Mains

Jim Allen, 41, on his way to crossing the finish line first at "Cycle to the Sun 92." This was the first time he had ever competed in the grueling 38-mile uphill race.

11th Annual Jean Chinn/ Mt. Ashland Hillclimb

Dana Bandy has been promoting this favorite for a number of years. But it's only recently that it has begun to attract national interest for its intriguing mountain-biker-versus-roadie format: Both groups start and finish at the same location - its only the route and the "weapons" that differ.

The weather, like last year, was ideal for record setting performances: little wind and a clear, crisp morning that had a bit of a Northwest "fall" feeling to it.

Unlike last year, though, the "dirtmen" and "dirt women" faced a 16.5 mile course described by one local mountain biker as "very fast." The lack of recent rainfall provided the off-road specialists with a well graded surface that they collectively hoped would give them an opportunity to avenge their loss the previous year to the roadies. In fact, the dirt fire road to the 7,000-foot summit was smooth enough, some competitors noted, even for a road bike.

And that's just the strategy that pro-NORBA rider Kyle Brutschy used, as he outfoxed both roadies and mountain bikes alike. He found "no problem" powering up the hill on a standard Kestrel road bike - cross tires being the only component that he conceded to the off-road conditions. His 1:22:40 clocking (11.97 mph

average) was not only good enough for the overall win, but it established an overall course record as well. It was a performance that left top mountain bikers like Chris Kovash (second overall in 1:27:27) and Eric Schehen (third overall in 1:29:56) shaking their heads in amazement.

Without the team "freight train" that local Ashland rider Eric Schehen employed last year on his way to a road - and overall - victory, this year's road group found themselves almost four minutes off the '91 pace by the time the actual climbing started. And while the roadies made a concerted effort to make up the deficit

on the final eight miles of climbing, they all fell short. [Rob Templin had the best time, finishing in 1:31:47, 16.34 mph.]

Last year the mountain bikers promised revenge. They fulfilled that promise this year with stunningly fast times. Next year, the roadies are not only going to need a very fast freight train to "derail" the dirt crew, but maybe a little help from Mother Nature - in the form of rain - as well.

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