



# Knees In T



By Charles

So, there I was, standing in a Solvang, California, motel room eight hours before the start of the 2002 Solvang Century, when I realized that I had not packed my riding shoes. Before digging everything out of the truck in a frenzied and likely futile search, a quick call to my wife back home confirmed that the SPD-equipped shoes were hanging right where they belong in the garage. Dang. A five or six hour round trip to retrieve the shoes would have gotten me back to the room in time for only a couple of hours sleep before the ride, at best. Not a good solution. If I was riding solo, it wouldn't be that big a deal, but I didn't want to disappoint the world class stoker that I would be riding with the next morning. How did I get into this fix?

Just after the first of the year, I had gotten a phone call from Burley Design Cooperative's Rob Templin, inviting me to ride the 2002 Solvang Century with him on a Burley tandem. One of my goals this year is to do five century rides, so doing the first century of the year in early March fit right into my plans. Of course, this great planning was going on right after the holidays, a time of the year when I am carefully fat-packing the finest in select cookies, cakes, candies and pies. So I had that going for me.

With well over sixty days to get ready before the ride, I began to gather all the info I could, and made a complete checklist of what I'd need. Keeping in mind the insightful words of RTR's Dan Sullivan about how he and his wife Ami prepare, "Despite temptation, we refuse to train", I did actually try and get in as much riding as possible before the event. With weather, magazine deadlines and all the other things going on in general, I didn't get as much training in as I would have liked. Rob, on the other hand, had just gotten back from a weeks-long bicycling epic in Tasmania, a typical cycling adventure vacation for him. Rob also rides to and from his job at Burley, has done loads of road racing and keeps his bike riding abilities at a level most of us can only dream of.

As I stood in the motel that night room pondering my fate, RTR's Eric Wilhelm helpfully pointed out that I didn't even have riding shoes listed on my 'complete' checklist, so it shouldn't be surprising that I didn't bring them! I did, however, have all the other things on my checklist. So I had that going for me.

Suddenly it occurred to me that Vince Calvillo and the crew from KHS Bicycles would be providing tech support for the ride, and surely they must have at least a pair of pedals with toe straps that I could mooch. Each year, KHS sends a volunteer tech support crew that works the entire Solvang event, unpaid. On the Friday before the ride they leave the KHS headquarters in Rancho Dominguez, California with a big truck full of supplies and set up shop at the ride headquarters. The crew will work wonders on any brand of bike to insure that riders can start the ride, then they set up work stations at each of the SAG stops on the ride routes to help keep the bikes rolling. KHS also displays all their cool new tandems and singles at the headquarters hotel, and I seemed to remember at least one of them having a pair of pedals that might work. Knowing that I had that going for me, I was then able to get a good night's sleep.

It was cold in the morning, with a reading of 35-degrees staring at us on the truck's outside temperature gauge as we left the motel, well before sunrise. Riders were already on the route despite the frigid cold including an Easy Racers Tour Easy with a full fairing. Tough stuff, some of these century riders.

We found a good parking spot, unloaded our gear, and I made a bee-line to the KHS tent to find Vince Calvillo. He already knew of my plight, having gotten a phone call from Rob Templin the night before. I had called Rob to see if he had an extra pair of shoes that might fit me, and it seemed that Rob had made a few calls as well. No luck on the shoes, but Vince was quick to supply a pair of pedals with toe clips and straps



# The Breeze



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from one of the KHS display bikes that I had noticed when we signed in at the ride headquarters the night before. Good to go.

Eric was anxious to hit the road, so he powered away on Tim Brummer's personal Lightning R-84, which Tim had made available to us for the ride. Eric had planned to ride his Haluzak Horizon, but decided to take advantage of Tim's generous offer. This carbon fiber wonder-bike weighs less than 20 pounds, and you'll read all about Eric's epic adventures on the ride in the next edition of RTR. Eric had wanted to leave promptly at 6:00 a.m., to make sure he had enough time to do the ride. He was off at 6:15 am, still plenty early, so he had that going for him.

We got the borrowed pedals tightened onto the captain's cranks, loaded up the rest of our gear, and rolled the away from the start at about 7:15 am. It was cold. Really cold. With the wind chill caused by our increasing speed, it was quickly getting cold enough to freeze the knees off a penguin. (Incidentally, Rob and I were aboard the Burley Rumba tandem that you will see reviewed on page 32 of this issue). All the planning and pacing strategy that I had considered for this ride went out the window because of the cold. The only thing that made any sense was to ride hard and generate some body heat. We needed some long, steep ascents to really make us work. Not to worry.

It was too cold early on the ride to really notice how the pedals were working. Everything seemed fine, even though my shoes were being turned more toe-out than I was used to because of the clips. Fortunately, the Merrill shoes that I was wearing were just shy of being full-on hiking boots and had a pretty rigid Vibram sole. This provided good support, but the odd foot angle, combined with the tendency of my right foot to hang over the side of the pedal, began serving notice at about 30 miles into the ride.

I hadn't tried to make any adjustments when I installed the pedals, nor had I raised the seatpost to compensate for the thicker soles of my shoes. By mid-ride, I was fearing that the end was near. My knees were hurting from having the seat too low, my right Achilles tendon was hurting from trying to hold my foot on the pedal. But, billions of miles have been pedaled with toe clips, and I had a world class stoker on the back of the Burley. So I had that going for me.

Rob and his friend Pete Penseyres have, among other tremendous riding feats, tandemed to the cross-continental speed record in 1979 that still stands today. How about ten days, twenty-one hours and forty-nine minutes? Their average speed was 11.41mph. If that average doesn't seem high to you, consider that in 1984 the two rode from San Francisco to Los Angeles on a tandem at an average speed of 20.22mph, making the trip in less than twenty hours! Then, as on this ride, Rob provided the services of a world class stoker, and it was going to be because of his abilities that we would finish this 102 mile ride. I had warned him early on that this would probably be his slowest century ever on a tandem, a prediction that was coming true. Consummately considerate, Rob never complained about my lack of abilities and motored dutifully onward.

By the last 20 miles of, I was a just about a gonner. My knees ached too much to hammer very hard, and my Achilles tendon burned too much to spin very fast. No worries, though. Ol' Rob just kept right on turning the pedals and sure enough, we eventually ground out the miles and made it to the end of the ride. I was toast, but Rob seemed to be ready to keep going and do another century. Rob's done plenty of double century rides in the past, but not this time around. I was thrilled to have finished, glad to have had someone as cheerful and gung-ho as Rob on the Rumba with me, but I was also glad it was over. Life is about learning, and something I learned is NEVER forget your shoes!