

Stagecoach Century Ride Report

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By: Pete Masiel

I went and raced the Stagecoach Century this morning, after deciding on it yesterday. I entered the Team Time Trial event; this is a 4 Persons or Tandems Team Time Trial race against the clock. There is no drafting outside of your team. I enter the 4 person Team Time Trial as a team of one. So I was actually racing against the 4 person teams; the tandem also raced as a one bike team.

So there I am standing at the start line; the race director starts off the first 4 person team, then a minute later, the next team. My start time was at 5 minutes after the initial start time. As I stand there, some of the other 4 person Teams ask me, "Are you racing as a team"? I smile and say yes... I AM A TEAM OF ONE (reminded me of those Army commercials).

5,4,3,2,1... Off I go! I stand on my pedals hard to quickly build speed, so I can settle into the Aero Bars with rhythm. I realize that my Rudy Project Time Trial helmet visor is up; so in one fast motion, I close it and I'm right back in the aero position. I'm feeling good, but slightly sluggish... I start to wonder, "Am I going out to fast"? I look at my Polar 600 power system and I'm pushing 475 watts; that check ok. My Heart Rate (HR) is raising fast; that's ok, I'm just excited. Watts now 300, HR at 78% cursing in my 56X11 gears and moving at 25mph. I see the first small grade; stand up, I tell myself, instead of up shifting. Can't push my big gears on this climb, I up-shift and up-shift some more.

I see my first victims getting closer; I feel like a shark smelling blood, excited! Still standing I now go into a series of up and downs working my hams, than my quads (back and forth between both I go). It's only a matter of minutes and I'm on the verge to make the first shark attack on the 4 person team in front of me, I smile as I remember a scene from JAWS. Less than 10 miles into the race and have already caught and passed two 4 person teams! Hell YEAH. Wait! There is a team on my wheel, hell they caught back up to me! The terrain is perfect for my style of riding! I descend smoothly and as the grade goes almost flat, but still slightly downhill, I go into the aero position and push the 56X11 gear, as if I was a locomotive or the bullet train. I monitor at my stats and I'm pedaling between 85-100 turns per minute or 35 to 40mph on a negative one percent slope. Crap! I can see their shadow behind me, now I feel like the hunted! Here comes a little roller climb; I AM going to hit this one hard and climb it as fast as I can. I shift and stand; I pedal hard. I can hear my hear beating hard. I'm at 87% max heart rate! I don't want to push my limits just yet... Oh well, to bad, I'm doing it anyway. I hold this pace for about five minutes before I look back... WOO HOO they're gone! I dropped them!

The next 4 person team is a little harder to catch, but as I climb one of the long grades (at about the mile 35 mark), I see them. Looks like their struggling... THEY ARE! I catch them at the top of the climb and I hit it hard on the way down! I take the corners like a freight train on rails. I look down, 37, 38, 40 + miles per hour!

I get to the stop sign and the route goes to the right for 1/4 mile or so, before it turns left and starts to climb up. Dam it, here comes that 4 person team. As they pass me, I have to let them go, as we climb the hill; since I can only draft off my own team members, oh wait.. I'm a team of one. About a mile up, I see the lead racers, it the tandem with Alex and Deya on it. Several minutes later, I see the lead 4 person team coming down the hill also.

I keep the 4 person team just far ahead of me to prevent me from drafting off them. I'm about 150-200 feet back. As we get close to the top and turn around spot; I push the pace and get pretty close to them. Hey... They're stopping to refuel! I open the lid to my water bottle and pour in my small package of Vitalyte into it; I arrive at the turn-around spot, which is also a SAG stop, get in between the team and I fill up my bottle with water, before heading back down the hill. I'm in and out in about 2 minutes and down the hill I go. The 4person team is still at the sag stop! Now's my chance to put some time on them!

I get to the bottom where I need to make my turns and now I'm heading back toward the hill climbs; I see Steve and David and we wave to each other. As I'm climbing I eat some saltine crackers, GU and continue to drink! Oh hell, I only filled up one water bottle! What was I thinking! I'm down to half a bottle; I better stop at the top of the hill at the SAG stop and fill my bottle. There's still about 38 miles to go; I can't do it on half a bottle. The temperature is just too high; my polar is reading 85 degrees! I pull into the SAG stop, which by the way is on a downhill for me; Wendy and I have this thing that we don't stop at sags, especially on down hills. I have no choice; the next one is on a downhill and in the dirt. So I stop and fill my other bottle; what a bonehead I am. So this SAG is full of riders and bikes just dropped everywhere; I lose yet another couple of minutes before I'm back on the road. As I continue to ride down, I see Rick coming up the hill and I wave to him and he yells words of encouragement toward me. And still no sight on the 4 person team that was behind me. I'm thinking they're too far back to catch me now, but I can't let up on my hunt. There's still a 4 person team left ahead of me and the tandem, with Alex and Deya.

I've been cruising at about 24 to 27 mph for a while now. I'm making good time. I look at the clock; it's just before 11:00am. If I hold this pace, I can make it in before 12:00 noon. Here comes the last hill climb, I know that I'll lose time on it. I can't worry about that right now. Just climb it easy and make up the time on the down hills and flats. I'm at the top of the climb as I ride by the last SAG stop I hear Carl call my name as Mike Berry snaps a picture. I'm home free; soon I'll be at the finish line, time is now a little tight; but I am optimistic, I CAN DO IT. I start to work myself mentally, talking to myself and encouraging myself.

Things are looking good; I can see the finish off in the distance. I start to relax a little; I know it's going to be close, but I should still make it in less than 5 hours.

WAIT!!! The road bends and climbs slightly uphill, NOOOO! I find myself going from 24mph down to the teens! What? Why? I don't remember this part!!! I tell myself to calm down. Breathe! Get back in the game; but it's done its damage! HELL NO, I'm not going to let this get the best of me, no not at the end like this! I put my head down and get back in the game! I came in at 5 hours and 17 minutes from the time the clock started; since I started 5 minutes after, which gives me a finish time of 5hrs and 12 minutes.

The Tandem (Alex and Deya) came in first place followed by a 4 person team then yours truly, ME. I was the first individual rider to finish, but 3rd team to arrive.

I was originally bummed that I finished the Century 3rd place overall with a time of 5hrs 12minutes. But when I arrived home, as I was about to take my bike off my Raxter Bike Rack and noticed that the rear brake was close to the rim on one side. I lifted the rear section of the bike and spun the wheel, only to realize that it made 3 or 4 turns before stopping. I instantly recalled that in the morning before the event that I had opened and closed the skewers to make sure they were tight. Well the bike was still strapped into the rack and it must have pulled it over just enough to make it slightly rub on the rim. I set the bike on the pavement and opened the skewer and it shifted and centered the rim the way it should be. So... not only was it rubbing on the brake, but it was also not tracking straight.

It goes to show, that it doesn't matter how much wrenching experience I may have or how great of a ride I might be (in others or my eyes). I can still make mistakes and the best part of it, is that I know that I will more than likely do it again sometime in the future. So I just sit here and laugh about it and accept myself for my mistakes. I can only wish that you learn from my mistake. ~ Pete