

## Sucking Off Triathletes

A sunny, still, Sunday morning presented a good opportunity to do my favorite Boulder County "flat" ride: up Hwy 36 to Nelson Rd., East on Nelson to 63rd, south on 63rd to Jay Road, Jay Road back to the highway; finishing with a one mile climb into my house in the foothills.

As I approached the Greenbriar Inn at Left Hand I was greeted by a phalanx of volunteers, a few sheriff vehicles and bunch of road cones. My normally placid route had been transformed by 1800 competitors in the Boulder Peak Triathlon. After being cheerfully informed that my route was also theirs, I gamely rode on the far right of the bike lane while the solid disk wheeled, barely-clad triathletes blew past me on the way to Nelson Road. After all, this was my regular route -- not theirs -- and I actually live on it and pay County property taxes to support the excellent maintenance of those roads and bike lanes. How many of the competitors could say that?

After turning onto the downhill slide known as Nelson Road, I noticed that riders were still passing me, but not in a blur anymore. Pretty soon I was surprised to find that I had managed to catch one of them, a woman with four digit numbers plastered on her back and written on her appendages. I stayed a respectful 3 to 5 bikelengths behind her, just enough to get some benefit from her slipstream. She kept glancing back to find that I was able to stay there. A recumbent rider creates less wind resistance than a woman on a wedgie, and wind resistance is very important at the speed we were traveling (around 25 mph). Had I wanted to benefit fully, I would have sucked right up on her wheel, like you see done during the Tour de France. Because a triathlon is a time trial rather than a team race, competitors are not allowed to draft. But surely she didn't believe that a guy on a touring recumbent was competing. Eventually a couple of race volunteers on a motorcycle pulled up alongside with the startling news that I was drafting someone in the race. I shouted back that I wasn't in the race (no numbers on me, riding a bike with a 20" front wheel -- duh!!). That didn't seem to satisfy them, so I shouted that I was sure the rider in front of me was being highly motivated by the experience of pacing an asthmatic altcocker on a recumbent. They rode off and left me be.

All good things eventually end. Mine came when we turned uphill onto 63rd Street, where she promptly stood on the pedals and dropped me for good. But as I navigated the rolling hills, hammering the downside to survive the upside, I started gaining on a tall middle-aged male competitor (I saw some gray hair protruding from the back of his helmet). Soon I pulled up behind him and found that he couldn't drop me, either. I also realized that few were passing me anymore, but that was probably because the people behind me were among the worst of the 1800 entrants.

The best part of all this was being applauded and encouraged by the spectators along the route. I acknowledged my admirers but turned down the water bottles they offered. I waited until I arrived at Amante Coffee on Northernmost Broadway, where I sipped on the iced version and watched the end of the Tour de France stage. Poor Lance had been stopped a couple of times through no fault of his own, ruining his chance to win. I

would have been honored to have him blow past me during the Boulder Peak Triathlon, and would also have enjoyed watching him blow past all those Dave Scott wannabees I had just finished riding with.

So the next time you see a recumbent tooling along, say a few nice words as you go past, like "Nice day, isn't it?" or "Thanks for pulling over for me." Otherwise, you might see that recumbent filling your view every time you look behind.