

# Following the 2010 Amgen Tour of California

5-26-10 by Ron Parker

For the fifth year I have followed the Amgen Tour of California. This year I drove north with my girlfriend, Yvonne, on the Saturday before the start of the race. We would be staying with my son, Sam, at his apartment in San Francisco. On Sunday we opted to take the day off and instead went to Muir Woods and Tomales Bay. We had a nice walk in the redwoods. The highlight of the day was the BBQ'd oysters in the diner hanging over the edge of the bay.



Muir Woods



Redwood Trees



Road to Tomales Bay



Tomales Bay

**Monday** the weather was forecasted to have a 60% chance of rain. Where was the nicer weather for moving the race from February to May? We drove to Sonoma and had lunch. It had started to sprinkle. We then drove up to the KOM (King of the Mountain) on Trinity Rd. We found a parking spot and only a few other people were around. The race was due in a couple of hours. The weather was very foggy, sprinkling and 52 degrees. Indeed much warmer than the 39 degrees from last year. It was a beautiful serene area but kept the TV coverage planes and helicopters grounded from the low altitude icing levels. People gathered as the race time approached. We found a spot at the end of a straight section of road within 200m of the KOM. This day there was a two person breakaway group with the RadioShack Team led peloton right behind them. As the riders approached it started raining in earnest. It was difficult to hold an umbrella over the camera and take pictures. The light was very dim and made photography difficult. There were about forty riders in the lead group and others in small groups straggling through. All the riders had on their rain gear which made identification hard. The gruppetto (the group of non-climbers that ride together at the end of the race) came through 8 minutes after the lead group. There was one struggling rider 7 minutes after that. We packed up and got ready to leave the area. We had a scare as the car's battery was dead. We had left an ice chest plugged in!! Fortunately after a few minutes of resting the engine turned over and we were away. The hot chocolate we had after reaching civilization tasted very good. We checked out the mission area of Sonoma and were headed back to S.F.



KOM on Trinity Rd.,



Cloudy and wet,



RadioShack leads,



Tom Boonen (Team Quickstep) cleans his glasses.

**Tuesday** it dawned sunny with a few clouds. We headed down to the beach and arrived just at the place where the RadioShack Team Bus parked. We hung out for awhile with the crowd as they passed out RadioShack t-shirts. We got some pictures of Levi, Chechu, Horner, McCartney and Brajkovic as they headed out and came back from the sign-in. Lance came out of the bus eventually and gave a TV interview by the end of the bus and then headed out to sign-in. We got some pictures of Mark Cavendish, Tom Boonen, George Hincapie and Andy Schleck as they headed down the corridor the fans made for the riders to travel to the start. Lance came back and we got pictures of him on his bike. Then there were the introductions and they were off. We headed south to catch the riders farther

down the route. When we got to Tunitas Creek, it was back to being cloudy. Parking was available about a ½ mile past the intersection but we continued to the second crossing of Skyline Road at Woodside. We found parking a few 100 yards past the intersection and walked back. It was sprinkling here again. We found a spot on a corner just past the KOM and waited. All of a sudden there was a huge influx of cyclists that crowded the intersection. Obviously they had watched the race at Tunitas Creek and then pedaled over to Woodside. The rain stopped and the breakaway group of 5 riders went through. Three minutes later the RadioShack led peleton came through. All the riders came through together and obviously the pace was going to increase when they got to the last climb of the day at Bonny Doon Rd. So for the second day we had rain in May.



The Start in San Francisco

Lance at the start

Second KOM in Woodside

Team RadioShack leads

**Wednesday** dawned clear with showers predicted for later in the day. We left San Francisco and headed toward Livermore. We went south to catch Miner's Rd. and found they were not allowing traffic up the road. We parked and found the feed zone was down the road 100 yards or so. We went to the end of the feed zone and found Elvio, Team RadioShack's soigneur, in an unmarked car. We sat down on a bank and had our Subway sandwich for lunch. The breakaway group came through but did not pick up food bags as their team cars were following close behind and they could pick up supplies from them. The riders came through and picked up their musettes (the feed bag) and were off. They dumped the water bottles on their bikes and we came up with three at our feet. One fellow said he didn't expect to have to run after bottles and musettes. But he did as he came up with several of both. It had started to sprinkle again and got heavier as we went back through Livermore. Then on to Modesto where we found parking a couple of blocks from the downtown area. There was a big crowd from 200 meters to go and behind the finish into the Lifestyle Village. We found a spot by the fence at the 200 meter sign and waited for the finish. It was sprinkling lightly here as well but quite warm. There were three riders dangling off the front of the peleton when they came through the first time. They made three laps of a circuit in downtown Modesto and were lined up for the finish with Cavendish on the wheel of a teammate. The riders went by in a flash and the stage was won by Francisco Chicchi of Liquigas. We then were back to the car and off to Visalia for the night. We found it was a two hour drive and glad to relax when we got there. We had dinner at a Mexican restaurant in downtown Visalia. We walked a couple of blocks to the start area and saw some of the early stage preparations.



Mines Road, South of Livermore had the Feed Zone,

Elvio from RadioShack holds up the musette

Finish in Modesto,

Tony Martin leads out Cavendish with J. J. Haedo on his wheel

**Thursday** dawned bright and clear. We drove to downtown Visalia in time to see the riders start with three neutral laps of the downtown area. They were now starting 15 minutes earlier because of the loss of live TV coverage at the end of stage 3. So we were now on to Bakersfield. Lance had crashed out of the race just outside of Visalia!! We found a parking spot at Bakersfield College where the race was to finish. We walked through the Lifestyle Festival. We found a nice uphill section of race course but were told it was a downhill section. The uphill section was at the

other end. So back past the finish line to the other end and behind other people at the corner at the top of the hill. So we waited for the riders. It was quite warm in Bakersfield and we ended up sunburned. On this day there was a breakaway group of six riders. The first trip up China Grade hill they were a minute ahead of the peleton. The second trip up the peleton was on their heels and soon caught. The last time up the climb was lead out by Columbia with Horner 4th and Levi 9th when then turned the corner for home. Peter Sagan, a 20 year old rider from Liquigas won the stage, Rogers was 2nd, Zabriskie 3rd, Horner 4th and Levi 7th. We headed home for the night.



Start line in Visalia.

The riders roll out on 3 parade laps before the competition begins



Zabriskie, Lance, Levi, Cancellara (Red in back), Cavendish (Green in front), George Hincapie and Michael Rogers



The peloton on the first time up China Grade Rd. in Bakersfield



Peter Sagan (Team Liquigas) wins the sprint from 3rd position on the climb of China Grade Rd.

**Friday** we had a graduation to attend for Yvonne's daughter. We drove to Carson and stayed overnight there.

**Saturday** dawned bright and clear. We drove into downtown L.A. and parked. We found a spot at the top of the hill at Temple and Grand. It was strange to see downtown L.A. quiet as all the streets were blocked off. We stood in the middle of the street behind a barrier with a single lane of traffic behind us going into the underground parking of Dorothy Chandler Pavilion. I shot 5k of pictures here as the riders passed twice on two laps of the TT (Time Trial) course. We met a photographer that was shooting some amazing photos with a 400mm lens. He is Ken Conley and posts photos on his website (KWC.org) and for steephill.tv. The Time Trial was won by Tony Martin of Columbia with Michael Rogers of Columbia 2nd and taking a 9 second lead over Dave Zabriskie and 25 seconds lead over Levi Leipheimer. As we were walking back to the car we saw a RadioShack party with Chris Brewer in a café under the Dorothy Chandler Theater. So we were back home for the night.



Empty Streets in Downtown L.A.



Michael Rogers (Team HTC-Columbia), overall GC winner, corners at Temple and Grand.

**Sunday** was clear but quite windy. We drove up Mulholland and parked by the KOM at Malibu Family Wines. It was quite cluttered here for my tastes and we found a spot where Mulholland split from Encinal Canyon road. The peleton came through this area four times. On the first lap they were all together with Garmin-Transitions leading out for Dave Zabriskie who was in second place in GC(General Classification). On the 2nd lap a breakaway was getting started by Poppovych from Team Radioshack. On the 3rd lap George Hincapie was in a six person breakaway with Poppovych. The last time through Ryder Hesjedal(Garmin-Transitions) put in an attack with Chris Horner(Team RadioShack) on his wheel. There were a couple of people running by the riders in our area but not too crazy. Then it was over!! Ryder Hesjedal won the stage with George Hincapie(Team BMC) 2nd and Horner 4th. Michael Rogers(Team HTC-Columbia) won the overall with Zabriskie 2nd and Levi Leipheimer 3rd . Horner made 4th overall. Yaroslav Poppovych got the most aggressive jersey for the day. Garmin Transitions won the overall Team title with RadioShack 2nd ;3 seconds back.



Garmin-Transitions leads the peleton on the first lap with Turtle Rock behind.



Ryder Hesjedal(Garmin-Transitions) attacks with Chris Horner(Team RadioShack) on his wheel.