



## Tips for Cat's Hill Criterium

Cat's Hill is a great local challenging criterium with a long history that includes a short steep hill of 22%! It's a great spectator race so expect to see lots of people on the hill. Invite your friends and family, because this is a great race to hang out at and spend some time in downtown Los Gatos.

This steep hill creates some particular issues and considerations for success in this race.

### ***Equipment***

Make certain your bike is in great running order. Check these areas in particular:

- Everything is tight, especially your handlebars, stem, seat post, saddle, pedals, and cranks.
- Your chain and cassette should be new or nearly new. These will see a lot of torque on "the hill!" Make certain your cleats are in excellent condition and that you will not pull out of these while pulling up violently.
- Your shifting should be precisely adjusted. Pay particular attention to the front derailleur because you'll be making this shift every lap.
- Your tires need to be in excellent condition
- Recommended gearing is 53/39 and 12-25.

### ***The athlete***

Make certain you get in a really good warm-up. This race is fast and short and typically goes hard from the gun. Because of the hill, this race has a particular rhythm. Be aware of this rhythm and if you get out of sync do everything you can to be back into the flow. You don't want to need to rest when everyone wants to go hard. Mentally, be prepared for an intense, tactical race. Although the hill will eliminate the weaker riders, there are other areas on the course that can make or break your race.

### ***The course itself***

The pavement on the lower sections is concrete and there are places where there is a gap in the center of the street that can swallow wheels. Be aware of the sections where you may cross over the centerline of the road, especially into and out of turn one and especially turn two.

The left hand turn three is where the hill begins. Try to be near the front of the field, stay as far right as you can on the entrance, and shift into the gear you will use on the hill before braking, plus carry as much speed and momentum as you can. They have repaved the hill in the last couple of years so the surface is much better than before. However, there is a substantial crown to the road and I feel it's best to try and stay in the center to the right as you go up the hill. The far left feels like you're in a "ditch" with a curb on the left and the slopping crown to your right. This also means your line into the hill is slightly off-camber when you go to the far left.

Remember to keep your head up! It's typical for riders to miss shifts, bump into one another, and come out of their pedals and/or change lines abruptly on the hill. You want to do everything in



your power to have a “clean” line on the hill and anticipate any trouble that may happen in front of you!

Once over the top it's very important to get back up to speed, on a wheel, and into the typically strung out pack as soon as possible. In my experience, the physically hardest part of the course is the part after the hill and around the park before the descent to the finish. This is when your body is paying the price for the anaerobic effort you just did on the hill. It's key that you get back into the group as far forward as possible in the pack before you start this descent, as this is the only place to recover on the course (the descent before the last turn). This is also where the strong riders put the hurt to everyone else!

If you get gapped and have to chase down the hill you've now gotten out of rhythm with the pack and the repeated anaerobic effort of the hill will put you further and further into the red!

On the last lap be prepared to go all out from the hill ALL THE WAY TO THE FINISH.

The last turn is taken at top speed and typically the order at the finish line is how you go through this fast right hand turn. Maybe 1 or 2 places MIGHT be changed, but not typical. So get as far to the front before the last turn – preferably first!

Good luck, be strong, and race well!

Coach Dan