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BICYCLE LAW



ROLLING RESISTANCE

ISSUE #4 | SPRING 2022 | ADVENTURE IS OUT THERE!

THE HUFFMASTER HOPPER, SPOKELAND, RIDING EVERY SF 'HOOD, AND MORE ►



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Bicycle Law's lawyers practice law through Coopers LLP, which has lawyers licensed in California, Oregon, and Washington state, and can affiliate with local counsel on bicycle cases across the country to make sure cyclists benefit from cycling-focused lawyers.

Front cover and opposite page photos: Jeff Vander Strucken

"There is neither bad nor good but thinking makes it so," is a timely Shakespearean quote to the interesting times we live in. We can choose to view times as bad and attempt to withdraw from the world. Or we can recognize the potential, the good out there, and take up the adventurer's call.

Adventuring is this edition's theme. Adventuring out one's front door to explore the neighborhoods and history around us is one way to do this, as we learn from speaking with Peter Curley. Adventuring by testing one's limits against professional gravelleurs is another, as Zach Morvant provides us with a race report from the Huffmaster Hopper. Adventures in nonprofit: Spokeland's efforts to expand biking opportunities to be an adventuring force multiplier are explained to us by Binky Brown. Kyle Smith gives us information about video options for recording rides—to keep drivers honest as well as memorializing adventures. And the adventures in Northern California's hinterlands provided by the Grasshopper series are explained to us by Miguel Crawford and Bicycle Law's Messenger of Bike, James Grady.

Wherever your adventures take you, we expect them to be good—because your thinking will make them so.

*Hoping you keep the rubber side down,
Everyone at Bicycle Law*



ADVENTURE MILES: BREAKING AWAY AT THE HUFFMASTER HOPPER

By Zach Morvant

"So, what's the course like? What advice would you give me?"

My canister of coffee is slow to rev up my brain as my friend James pilots the car through the predawn darkness toward Maxwell, California. I'm thinking about how we're just a couple of new dads—James of a toddler, me of an infant—with full-time jobs, about to go test our legs against some of Northern California's fastest gravel racers.

Eventually my synapses assemble a coherent response to his question.

"For the first 40 miles, you'll want to sit in the pack and conserve as much energy as you can before you hit the first big climb," I say. "Then the race is going to blow apart." *Good job, brain*, I think. *Pretty smart advice*.

What I don't know is that in a few hours, I'll regret not following it.

The Huffmaster Hopper—the second event in the 2022 Grasshopper Adventure Series—is billed as "a gravel grinder a la Hopper style." It starts and ends in the town of Maxwell, Colusa County, one of many agricultural communities just off of Interstate 5.

The 90-mile "long route" traverses flat, mostly paved farm roads for the first 25 miles, punctuated with a few gravel stretches. The road then gradually rises until mile 40, where a roughly three-mile gravel ascent serves as the day's first big climb, followed by a fast, somewhat technical gravel descent. The back half of the course is a mix of paved and gravel roads, featuring the short but potentially decisive Huffmaster climb and descent (the family for which the course is named). The final 15 miles are a long, mostly flat stretch punctuated by small rollers and some washboard.

Back to the action: We're only 10 miles into this thing and the attacks have already been slashing through the nearly 50-strong pro group. Flying along 25 miles of flat farm road, mostly into a slight headwind, the gravel sectors are making even this talent-heavy field cagey.

We snake a left from a block of smooth pave and immediately start carving through a stretch of sharp stones. Crosswind and truck-worn gravel lines eventually slice the field into two distinct columns chattering along at 20 mph. I see John Baker, a race favorite, raise his hand to indicate a flat tire and pull off to the side. I hear the hiss of a deflating tire—crap, it's me, I'm flatting, but after a few seconds that seem like an eternity that will dash my hopes for any result—the leak seals. Don't think I've lost too much pressure. Thanks be for tubeless tire technology and good sealant. Must keep pedaling. Stay with the group.

A right turn and we are back on pavement. There's the briefest lull as the group snatches a collective breath—and one lone rider, a bigger fellow in a black kit, makes a move.

The breakaway comes together. Photo: Christopher Keiser p/b Sportful.





The work is hard but spirits are high. Photo: Christopher Keiser p/b Sportful.

I recognize this rider trying to break away. It's Mikal from the Away Message team, and he's a diesel.

I'm only a handful of wheels behind the front. Nobody is doing anything. Should I? So many doubts. I haven't felt very strong since becoming a father last summer. There's so much firepower in this field. There's still such a long way to go. But the timing seems right. There aren't really any big teams to organize a chase. Maybe I should just do it.

I surf my way up to the tip of the field and kick off into space, pedaling furiously after Mikal.

I catch him and we quickly settle into a good tempo, trading one-minute pulls. Mikal's mighty, but he's also much bigger than me, so I'm able to hide in his draft while he spews watts. It's not long before we notice two riders bridging up to join us.

"They're coming up hard," Mikal spits. "Be ready."

We turn our effort down a bit on the off chance these two guys want to blow past us. Luckily, they don't—and now we have a four-man breakaway.

Someone more clever than me once described being in a breakaway as trying to move a couch with a group of strangers, meaning it rarely happens smoothly. Being the type of sucker who loves riding in a breakaway, I know this to often be true.

But this is one of those rare breakaways. Our new friends for the next unknown interval, Brian and RJ, feed our shared engine with strong, supple efforts.

I look back. The field is in sight on this cursed five-mile straightaway, but they don't appear to be gaining. We just have to keep working.

The miles start to tick by. Maybe 15 miles into this audacious move, a white sedan driven by Brian (Veloworthy) and Allen (Skratch) pulls alongside us, telling us we have a three-minute gap, that the chase effort is sitting up. I'm always skeptical of receiving time gaps while on course—you can never be sure of the accuracy of the information, even from a trusted source—but the news nevertheless swells me with confidence. *We can do this*, I think. *This is going to work*.

I envision us 60 miles from now, ragged and salty, me and my breakmates struggling to beat each other across the line in a zombie-shamble of a sprint. We congratulate each other. Take our spots on the podium. Answer questions from people with cameras about what a big upset this was... I snap out of it. These are ridiculous thoughts; I roll them up and pack them away into my brain's jersey pockets. Delicious mental junk food that's weighing me down. I need to focus on the effort.

Mile 40, the decisive climb begins. We pedal on, knowing we are now dead men. The leaders are closing and closing fast, with big scary names you see in Velonews articles and on Strava leaderboards, a lot of them conspicuously starting with W—Wertz, Wiebe, Wild. Maybe if my last name was Worvant, I'd have more watts.

Halfway up the climb, our bold breakaway is officially caught. The leaders float past me like I am standing still. What I have left to give is not enough. A chase group forms and I somehow find another gear, digging hard to keep up. Maybe this isn't over, I think—but after hammering the ensuing descent and losing contact after the first feed zone, I come to begrudgingly admit that, yes, it is.

At least, one phase is over: my quest for a top 10. Unburdening myself of that expectation, I feel lighter. My new goal is simply to ride as hard as my body will allow, to take in the scenery, to look for friendly faces along the journey.

It's suddenly a whole new day. Even if it's only been a couple hours.

The back half of the course is beautiful: mostly undulating gravel roads with nary a car to be seen. Wildflowers are blooming and large swaths of the hills are still green from the winter rains. The weather is pleasant, low winds and a temperature straddling the meridian of 60°F that's neither warm nor cool to me.

It's a great day to be on a bike.

I surf wheels and put in some work with a couple of different determined chase groups before dropping off and linking up with another lone rider, Nico (Alto Velo), for the last 15 or so miles. He's a reliable wheel and a perfect partner to share the load with 'til the end, where we have a cheeky sprint to the finish line. It's not the sprint I'd imagined so many miles ago, but it's a perfect end to my race—and a perfect prelude to the burritos, beers, and live folk band that follow, as riders in various states of repose lay scattered around a park in the sun, sharing their own epic days with each other.

Some scenery from the Huffmaster Hopper. Photo: Christopher Keiser p/b Sportful.



WHAT TO KNOW IF YOU GO



There are two choices of route available, with the same start and finish. The long route is roughly 89 miles and 4,800 feet of climbing, while the short route is roughly 54 miles and 3,000 feet of climbing.

The Huffmaster Hopper doesn't necessarily happen every year.

The Grasshopper Adventure Series tends to refresh or rotate its offerings to varying degrees (often depending on permits, road closures, the effects of winter weather, or wildfires). Check the website (www.grasshopperadventureseries.com) or Instagram (@grasshopperadventureseries) for the latest details.

WHAT BIKE TO RIDE

Given the mix of road and gravel, folks are often split on which rig to bring—which is a typical Grasshopper “feature,” not a bug. (Note: your humble author chose a gravel bike with 35mm Gravel King SK tires.)

Miguel recommends a 38-40mm tire, either slick or semi-slick with slight knobs. I saw all kinds of bikes brought out, which is emblematic of the Hopper “run what ya brung” spirit. Some folks had mountain bikes. Many of the race leaders appeared to run gravel bikes with 30-35mm tires or road bikes with 25-32mm tires.

A general rule of thumb I've found: if you want to just chill and enjoy the adventure, bring whatever bike you're most comfortable on, planning to be prepared for the more technical bits of terrain. (Miguel will often have helpful videos about these on his Instagram.) If your goal is to be competitive and battle for a result, I've noticed the faster people tend to be what many would consider “underbiked” (which is highly subjective these days), opting for lighter and narrower setups. The choice is yours—and one which people love talking about before, during, and after the event.

Happy shredding. Hope to see you out there!

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Photo: Christopher Keiser p/b Sportful.

COMMUNITY PROFILE: SPOKELAND

By Kyle Smith

Spokeland began in 2011 as a group of likeminded cyclists in Oakland hosting workshops to fix, build, and work on bicycles. Without a permanent home, Spokeland members would meet in communal spaces to share knowledge and tools.

Program Director Binky Brown was a volunteer in the nascent days of Spokeland, seeing the organization's limitations and its potential. Spokeland had energy and enthusiasm for bikes but was not a welcoming place for new riders. In a space that was overwhelmingly young, white, and male, Brown realized that for Spokeland to truly serve the people of Oakland, it needed to reflect the people of Oakland.

Since 2014, Spokeland has inhabited a BART-accessible shop at 818 37th Street in Oakland. It operates with the mission to "connect people to bicycle knowledge with an emphasis on community" and "increase the representation of diverse bike riders with mechanical knowledge." Spokeland serves as a community bike shop and DIY workspace, while training a new generation of riders in bike mechanics.

Bike shops can be an intimidating place for those new to riding, but Spokeland operates with the principle that there is no such thing as a stupid question, only an opportunity to learn. "Our goal is that the people in Spokeland are as representative and diverse as the people of Oakland," said Brown. "We want someone with any type of body to be able to walk in and see themselves reflected." By making the organization reflective of the community, Spokeland promotes equitable access to education and mobility through bikes.

For those looking to get a bike, Spokeland offers shopping by appointment, providing an informative and individualized bike-buying experience. The shop's inventory comes from donated bikes that are tuned and serviced by volunteer mechanics. For those looking to learn about bike mechanics, the Mechanic Mentor Program offers a six-month, hands-on training program that moves at each mentee's pace.

Visit www.spokeland.org to donate, volunteer, or apply for the Mechanic Mentor Program.



Spokeland serves as a community bike shop and DIY workspace.



BIKE EVERY 'HOOD WITH PETER CURLEY

By Miles B. Cooper

Sometimes adventure lies right outside your front door. A little over a year ago, San Francisco cyclist and history enthusiast Peter Curley started what he calls his #BikeEveryHood project. Using Google's 119 neighborhood designations for the city, he has completed riding every road in 41 of the 119 neighborhoods as of this writing. Peter, who grew up in rural Ireland, spent his childhood biking and playing around ruins. This translated to a deep-seated interest in bikes and history. Peter says, "Riding, walking, exploring—it is all just about stimulation. If you took away the visual, the experiential component, it would not be the same."

A Strava heatmap shows Peter's current progress.



Peter with his son Senan.

That experiential component has continued during Peter's 27 years as a San Francisco resident. "It's an amazing city," Peter states. "When I first started here, I would go walking every day during lunch with a friend, exploring the streets and alleyways." That this interest would become two-wheeled seemed preordained. Peter rode 200-mile rides known as double centuries and eventually stumbled upon randonneuring, an eccentric bicyclist subculture. Randonneurs ride 200 kilometers or more, without support, passing through checkpoints, completing the ride within a specified time. The mothership event is Paris-Brest-Paris, a 1,200-kilometer event held every four years, which Peter completed in 2019.

Lots of mileage and experience with randonneuring's rulebound riding led Peter to developing the #BikeEveryHood project. His rule is simple but consequential: he must leave from the front door and return to the front door of his family's Nob Hill residence. For Treasure Island, a part of San Francisco which remains bikelocked from the city because bicycles are forbidden on the Bay Bridge's western span, that meant biking all the way around the bay via the Golden Gate Bridge, San Rafael Bridge, and eastern span of the Bay Bridge. And then back again once done, over 106 miles at the end of the day. Along with the door-to-door rule is a



Peter firmly believes in the importance of a good hydration stop.

healthy guideline: Peter, who has an affinity for dive bars, knows that a neighborhood with a good dive bar requires a hydration stop. He has watched with sadness as San Francisco's fractal inequality has shuttered longtime dive bars that can no longer afford San Francisco's rents or risks.

Originally, Peter simply took pictures along a particular route. As time went on, he used historical images to add color to his narrative. He now prefers to do the historical work beforehand so that uploading his ride to Strava is easier. A favorite historical resource for Peter's research when riding the west part of the City is The Western Neighborhoods Project and its folksy weekly podcast (www.outsidelands.org/podcast). Between that and the treasure trove of historic San Francisco images on Open History SF (www.opensfhistory.org), recreational historians have access to tremendous San Francisco resources.

Unfortunately, there's no eastern neighborhoods equivalent. On Peter's most recent Irish Hill ride (www.strava.com/activities/6680201697), he drew on a variety of resources. The Irish Hill area along the southeastern waterfront was a rough-and-tumble working-class neighborhood with upwards of 25 bars. If images from Gangs of New York flicker through the

brain, one would not be far off. The namesake Irish Hill itself was 90 feet tall. Taken over time to fill in what is now Mission Bay, all that remains is a small serpentine mound behind a chain link fence adjacent to the city's bustling Pier 70 revitalization project. Not one of the original 25 bars remains, limiting Peter's dive bar options on that ride. San Francisco's boom and bust cycles continue, constantly changing the city. Just as all the world constantly changes around us. Another reason why that adventure outside our front door should start today. Grab a bike or strap on some shoes, get outside, and absorb your surroundings!

And how does Peter recommend beginning that adventure? In the most Zen way. "Start by starting out," Peter says.

To watch Peter Curley's progress, you can follow him on Strava at www.strava.com/athletes/161455 or keep up with his project on Instagram: [#bikeeveryhood](https://www.instagram.com/bikeeveryhood).





SAFETY: HOW DASH CAMERAS CAN HELP CASES

By Kyle Smith

On June 2, 2010, Detroit Tigers pitcher Armando Galarraga was one batter away from throwing a perfect game and achieving one of baseball's most coveted accolades. On the next pitch, the batter bounced a grounder to first base. It was easily fielded and tossed to Galarraga as he raced to cover the bag, reaching the base a full stride ahead of the runner. He had thrown a perfect game. Only he hadn't.

Umpire Jim Joyce called the runner safe at first. As the instant replay looped on the jumbotron, the stadium full of fans began to lose its collective mind. What was obvious to anyone watching the instant replay—the runner was clearly out—was not clear to an umpire making a split-second decision based on limited information.

Humans make mistakes, but the camera doesn't lie. This phenomenon is true in sports as in litigation, and with the prevalence of smartphones, dashcams, and doorbell cameras there has never been more video evidence available in auto v. bike collision cases. Like a perfect game stolen through a bad call, victims of bicycle collisions can often be erroneously blamed for the mistakes of a distracted driver. Fortunately, California courts, unlike the MLB in 2010, do allow for instant replay. A dash camera can turn a vehicle strike into a homerun of a case.

Go to the instant replay

Dash cameras have been legal in California since 2011 with some restrictions. The dashcam must not obscure a driver's view, be placed in front of an airbag, or record passengers without consent—not an issue for any bike I've personally seen, but good to know.

For cyclists, a dash camera—perhaps I should say handlebar camera—can provide video of evidence of a driver's bad behavior and be turned over to police in the event of a collision or act of intentional harassment and violence. California courts allow dashcam footage to be admitted in court, but strong footage may be just the evidence needed to settle a case without litigation.

Dashcam footage may also be what an attorney needs to dismiss or turn down a case altogether. The camera, once again, does not lie; it shows

everything. If a California cyclist treats a stop sign as a yield sign (cue the "Idaho Stop" rant), the police, opposing counsel, or jury are going to see that. Even if a cyclist is not at fault, their use of colorful invective directed at a liable-yet-likable driver may cause a jury to turn against them. Being blameless in a collision looks great to a jury—verbally assaulting someone's grandmother immediately after, not so much.

Even if the camera wasn't on at the time of the collision, it is a good idea for a cyclist to start recording the interaction with the driver. California requires notification, so simply letting the driver know they're being filmed is sufficient. Whether or not it shows the actual collision, a video at the scene can strengthen a case. It shows where the involved vehicles came to rest as well as any skid marks on the pavement, information that could be crucial to the accident reconstruction later.

Choosing a camera

For the law-abiding bike commuter or cyclist riding around cars, a camera is a great idea. Nothing is free, but dashcams have never been more accessible.

If money is no object, Cycliq makes a set of front and rear cameras. With a price tag north of \$600, this may deter budget-conscious riders. The Cycliq cameras double as lights, which makes for an all-in-one solution for cyclists looking to see and be seen when out on the town.

For cyclists not looking to break the bank, a smartphone can quickly be turned into a dashcam using free, readily available apps. Dashcam for Your Bike is one such option. Designed by Pittsburgh cyclist and developer Armin Samii, this app dims the phone's screen to minimize battery usage.

Remember: any camera is better than no camera, so use what is available.

Don't throw away a perfect game

Armando Galarraga knows he threw the perfect game. The 17,000+ fans in the stands knew he threw a perfect game. By now, even Jim Joyce admits it was a perfect game. But you won't find Galarraga's name in the MLB record books. Being right in a bicycle collision case doesn't mean much if you can't get the settlement or verdict to back it up, and a dashcam may mean the difference between the perfect case and a defense verdict.

SPONSORSHIP SPOTLIGHT: THE GRASSHOPPER ADVENTURE SERIES

By James Grady

In the world of Adventure Cycling, one name stands alone: Grasshopper. For the last 26 years, The Grasshopper Adventure Series has challenged, broken, and rebuilt Northern California cyclists. What is a “Grasshopper”? According to Miguel “Mig” Crawford, founder and ringmaster, they are “fun, often very long and hard, magical mystery tours through the diverse, challenging and eclectic hills of Sonoma County and beyond.” Any given event sees World Tour pros and weekend warriors line up shoulder to shoulder to test their mettle against deep dives into lesser-traveled parts of Northern California.

The team at Bicycle Law—no strangers to the thrill of a Hopper—see in the Series not just an opportunity to support the events, but to support the vibrant and fast-growing attendant community. “With the explosion in popularity of gravel cycling in the last couple of years, the already robust Grasshopper following has seen tremendous growth,” says Miles Cooper, Bicycle Law Partner and adventure cycling veteran. “Miguel has built a foundation that has already and will see an outsized impact on not only the local community but the cycling world at large.”

The Grasshoppers’ reach is felt beyond the events, too: whether by design or happenstance, Grasshoppers bring awareness, tourism, and money to smaller Northern California towns and communities that have been particularly hard hit in recent years by economic turmoil, wildfires, and the COVID-19 pandemic. Supporting the communities that support the events has been critical to the success of the Series. Events often feature a local cause that receives a portion of the entry fees. Crawford’s events make people suffer, but in doing so, help those who are suffering.

Whether one is looking for a nice day out on the bike or a soul-searching, character-defining ride, the Grasshopper Adventure Series has something for everyone. Look for a Bicycle Law jersey after the ride... we’ll be happy to share a drink and swap stories of the day’s adventure.

To learn more, go to www.grasshopperadventureseries.com or follow @grasshopperadventureseries on Instagram.



UPCOMING EVENTS

May 15: Sherwood Adventure (Grasshopper Adventure Series)

May 18: Ride of Silence

May 20: Bike to Wherever Day

May 21: NorCal League Championships

June 4: Lost & Found Gravel Festival

June 5: Humboldt Hopper (Grasshopper Adventure Series)



Photo: Ross Sneddon, Unsplash.