Sidewinder puts a twist into Tahoe cycling



Brenda Stewart makes her way through a turn on Sidewinder. Photos/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

Be wary when a friend says it’s a tiny hill.

At least that’s how I remember Brenda describing the ascent up to the Corral Trailhead. The 2.2-mile uphill slog on a poorly paved road from the lower parking lot would have been a lot less painful had we not already ridden several miles to get to this point.

Oh, but the reward, well that was worth having to swallow my pride to push the bike a short ways. This is as vehicles, including shuttles from South Shore Bikes, passed us. While I did take the shuttle back to my vehicle at Spooner when I did the Flume Trail years ago, the shuttle to Corral almost seems

like cheating.

Our destination was Sidewinder – formally known as Sierra Sidewinder.



Shocks – or a whole new bike – would make some Tahoe trails more pleasurable.

The banked turns had me wishing it hadn't been three years since I took a mountain biking lesson at Northstar. I was trying to remember what I had been taught – but didn't necessarily learn – about how the bike is supposed to lean one way and I'm supposed to do something else.

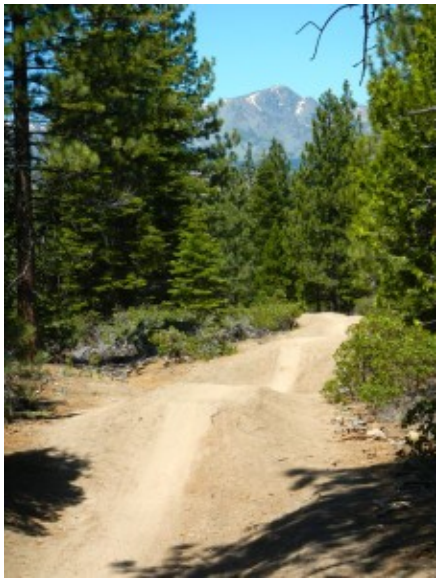
I was just happy this was a weekday with few people on the trail. My brakes were getting a lot of action. So were my facial muscles – switching between smiling and serious concentration.

Many mountain bike trails have the green-blue-black designations like ski runs. Sidewinder is 1.25 miles of blue terrain.

It's mostly about banked switchbacks. But there was one spot where Brenda and I both walked down a granite slab.

From there we did a gentle ride over the tabletops on Lower Corral. This is 1½ miles of green. I've seen video of people doing some spectacular riding on all sections of Corral. I don't aspire to do that, but it will be fun to get more confident riding this trail.

(Upper Corral Trail is 1 mile and is a black diamond.)



Mount Tallac from Lower Corral Trail.

The U.S. Forest Service – whose property these trails are on – and TAMBA – the area's preeminent mountain biking group – deserve all the props they get for having created a network of trails that just about anyone could get down.

I'm not a serious mountain biker by any means. In fact, my Trek is more than 20 years old. It doesn't have any suspension. This either makes me so incredibly hardcore, super cheap, plain stupid or someone whose mountain biking escapades might just be evolving to the point where she needs to do some shopping for new wheels.

It was at the end of Lower Corral where my whole body was shaking and I started thinking having front or rear shocks, or both, would have been welcome. All I was thankful for was that

I already had a massage booked for later in the week.

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Getting there:

From South Lake Tahoe, take Highway 50 west toward Meyers.

Turn left on Elks Club Drive.

Turn right on Pioneer Trail.

Turn left on Oneidas Street.

There is a lower parking lot. If the gates are open, there is parking farther up at the entrance to the trailhead.