

Grueling ascent up Kingsbury challenges cyclists



Cyclists weave their way up Kingsbury Grade on May 12. Photo Copyright 2017 Carolyn E. Wright

By Kathryn Reed

A yellow jersey may have figuratively brought Katie Hall warmth, but she was literally shivering after riding for more than three hours to win stage two of the Amgen Tour of California.

“It was definitely cold at the start. There were some flurries,” Ruth Winder, who earned the best young rider jersey, said at the press conference after the May 12 race.



Katie Hall, left, and Anna van der Breggen fight for the lead.
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It was 37 degrees when the 17 teams left Heavenly Mountain Resort's California Lodge at about 10:30am, and 46 when they came back after the 67-mile grueling course. Heavenly had about an inch of fresh snow on the top of the mountain.



A Colavita-Bianchi rider pulls away from the crowd. Photo Copyright 2017 Carolyn E. Wright

Hall, who rides for United Healthcare, finished first. On her heels was Anna van der Breggen. Van der Breggen, who rides for Boels-Dolmans, was second in both stages. Kristabel Doebel-Hickok with Cylance Pro Cycling was third.



The 8-mile climb up Kingsbury separates the cyclists. Photo Copyright 2017 Carolyn E. Wright

The overall standings have Hall in first with a time of 6:13.54, van der Breggen second at 6:13.54, and Megan Guarnier (Day 1's top finisher) in third at 6:14.23.



The peloton as it comes down Pioneer Trail at the start of the race on May 12. Photo Copyright 2017 Carolyn E. Wright

After Hall and van der Breggen made the turn off Pioneer Trail onto Ski Run Boulevard it seemed like minutes before a group of 11 came through the intersection. Guarnier was in that bunch of riders.



A pack of cyclists endures the pain together. Photo Copyright 2017 Carolyn E. Wright

Friday presented a new route for the tour; one with the most elevation gain for either the women or men. From the ski resort they went to Meyers, over Luther Pass (7,740 feet), through Diamond Valley and the Carson Valley, and then up and over Kingsbury Grade (7,375 feet). Going up Kingsbury is an 8-mile climb with a 2,700-foot elevation gain.

This part of the course was built for Hall.



Skylar Schneider, left, and Allison Arensman of the U.S. National Team grind their way up Kingsbury Grade. Photo Copyright 2017 Carolyn E. Wright

“For me, the longer hills are better,” she said. “I thought I would probably get second because I didn’t think I could shake Anna and I’m not much of a sprinter.”

She rightfully earned the Queen of the Mountain jersey, and van der Breggen the sprint jersey.

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Shawn Peterson of Gardnerville encourages the women to ignore their leg pain. Photo Copyright 2017 Carolyn E. Wright

It was a sprint to the finish between the two of them.

In the valley, Lindsay Myers with the Tibco-Silicon Valley Bank crashed, but is reportedly fine.



One by one the women push to the top of the hill. Photo Copyright 2017 Carolyn E. Wright

In the morning the peloton was greeted by about 200 excited students from Bijou Community School who lined the course at the corner of Ski Run Boulevard and Pioneer Trail.



Bijou elementary student ring cowbells and shout support for

the cyclists. Photo Copyright 2017 Carolyn E. Wright

Melissa Bornstein has brought her second-graders out the last three years. This year there were five second-grade classes, two first-grade and two fifth-grade.



Marie Soleil Blais struggles up the long climb. Photo Copyright 2017 Carolyn E. Wright

“It gives the kids an awareness of what fit women can do,” Bornstein told *Lake Tahoe News*. It is also a chance to see a high caliber event in their hometown. Some of the youngster were there both days.

“I like seeing the bikers. It’s very interesting and very cool,” Natahly Rodriguez, 10, told *Lake Tahoe News*.



Caitlin LaRouche has enough energy to smile near the top of Kingsbury Grade. Photo Copyright 2017 Carolyn E. Wright

For race officials, they were not worried to wake up to wet roads on Friday. And for the racers – just another day at the office.

“They are absolutely not concerned about rain or water on the roads, or even our crappy roads,” Mike Frye, events manager for the Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority, told *Lake Tahoe News*. He added how most of the roads in California are filled with imperfections, as is the case in Europe where the majority of the road bike races are contested.



The expanse of Carson Valley unfolds below the riders. Photo Copyright 2017 Carolyn E. Wright

Before the start of stage two some well-known South Shore cyclists offered *Lake Tahoe News* their perspective of the route:

. *"The wind in the Carson Valley will be a factor. Luther-Kingsbury is a great loop and not overly challenging, but wind can make a ride much more difficult. The key is not to get dropped from the pack. You don't want to ride solo into a Carson Valley headwind."* **–Nancy Harrison**

. *"It's obvious to me that the hardest part of stage 2 is the Kingsbury climb. There are a couple of sections with less percentage grade and if the teams were scouting the route, there could be multiple attacks from the middle section to the top."*– **Curtis Fong**

. “I think the climb up Kingsbury will be the hardest. Already one day in, the women will tackle Luther, the highest elevation yet, I believe.

Kingsbury at 6 percent grade is after all of the Carson Valley mileage. And we don’t know how the wind will play into the entire route. This will be a very strategic stage I think!”– **Carol Chaplin**



Sofia Arreola Navarro concentrates on making it to the top of Daggett Summit. Photo Copyright 2017 Carolyn E. Wright

The next two days will be much different than riding at Lake Tahoe; climbing won’t be an issue, nor should near freezing temperatures. (**Day 1** was the loop around the lake.) The women will start in Elk Grove and go to Sacramento, with Day 4 all in the state capital where the 256.6-mile course concludes.