

High heat and Murphy's Law define 2008 Terrible Two

The relationship between the Terrible Two double century and the weather is like a game of Russian roulette: Mother Nature spins the big cylinder of heating and cooling and we wait to see if we end up pulling the trigger on a loaded chamber on Saturday morning. This year—2008—it was hot in the days preceding the June 21 ride, but the forecasts for the weekend were all over the map: it would cool off by Saturday; no it wouldn't...

In the end, we missed that hoped-for cooling trend by one, fateful day. On Sunday, the highs in Sonoma county varied between low 90's and mid-70's. But on the day when it mattered, the hammer came down on a 45-caliber, hollow-point scorcher: it was hot, hotter, and hottest. Official highs on Saturday around the course: Cloverdale: 103°; Cazadero: 104°; Healdsburg: 105°. Without a doubt, it was one of the hottest, cruelest Terrible Twos ever.

Riders and workers arriving at the start in Sebastopol were treated to a spooky, pre-dawn light show, as hot, dry lightning flickered across the northern horizon (sparking hundreds of wildfires in the tinderbox back country). A relatively small field of 230 entrants left Analy High School at exactly 5:30 am, riding into one of the most beautiful sunrises we've ever seen, with wispy pink, cotton candy clouds backlit by a blushing red sun peeking out from behind Mt St Helena. (An old saying came to mind: "Red sky at morning: sailor take warning!") By the time the riders were grappling with the first big climb of the day—Trinity Grade at mile 25—it was already warm and heading toward hot.

As was the case in our last toasty year of 2006, it seemed the hottest, nastiest conditions were on the big Geysers climbs before lunch, contrary to our normal pattern, where the worst of the worst comes on Skaggs Springs after lunch. It was at least 105° on the Geysers and felt much hotter to the poor, sweltering riders, with not a breath of wind to ease the torture. Many participants called it a day at the 109-mile lunch stop and either slumped into sag wagons or joined a 145-mile bail-out ride heading down Dry Creek Valley to the finish. For those who continued, it didn't exactly get easier, but most agreed that the killing fields of Skaggs were not quite as awful as everyone had been expecting them to be. Bike thermometers were reading at least 106° on the first climbs out of lunch, but a thermometer at the first water stop on the hottest, most exposed summit on Skaggs never reached 100° all afternoon. A thin scrim of cloud wafted in from the ocean on a merciful little breeze, taking just a tiny edge off the challenge of those endless climbs. Yes, it was bad, but believe it or not, it could have been worse.

The story at the front of the pack was similar to that of recent years, but with a surprising twist. Santa Rosa's Brian Anderson did not manage to "do the Lance" and win his seventh TT in a row, finishing second, 12 minutes behind Bo Hebenstreit of Campbell. Bo finished second to Brian (by eight minutes) in 2004, so it's no surprise to see him do so well, but how he managed to pull it off is a little unusual. The time splits will record that he was in the lead at every checkpoint, all day long, but reading between the lines—or between the splits—tells a slightly more complicated story. He rolled into lunch alone at 11:24 and was in and out in under a minute. Brian arrived less than two minutes later with four others (Robert Choi, David Fischer, Giampaolo Pesce, AJ Shipley). Given Anderson's history of trailing early and pulling away late, it looked as if the predictable pattern was repeating itself.

Sure enough, Anderson dropped his companions on the steep walls of Skaggs and bridged up to Bo, both checking into Camp Gualala at 1:15. (Shipley was only four minutes back, but the other three had conceded 17 minutes to Anderson over that 28-mile section.) Then, on the infamous Rancheria Wall, Brian dropped Bo and looked to be on his way to win number seven. But somewhere after the rancheria, the fickle finger of fate came down on him like a hammer: he suffered the first of three flats that would delay him over the next 30 miles, each of which involved frustrating, time-gobbling complications. Bo went on by and never looked back. So “chapeau!” to Bo for a storming ride of 11:15 on one of the hardest days the Terrible Two has ever seen. But a tip of the same hat to Brian for hanging in there through a wicked run of bad luck, and for being cheerfully philosophical about it afterward.

The women’s field was extremely small this year and only eight of them finished the ride, including one stoking on the only tandem to finish. Leading the ranks were three friends from Fresno—Lori Cherry, Jeanine Spence, and Lisa Williams—who came in together at 14:16. Other notables were that one tandem of Mike Chester and Karen Koppenhaver at 16:55, Zach Kaplan as the sole ‘bent rider at 14:58, and Steve Smead on the only fixie at a very respectable 14:22. Respectable, hell...it’s a fixed-gear record!

Overall, the vicious conditions took their toll, and an above-average ration of crashes added to the lowest number of riders finishing since 1995, when the event was a much smaller affair than it is now. Out of 230 starters, 140 finished, with only 124 making it in by our traditional 10:00 pm “I did it!” cut-off. That’s a rate of 54%, which represents the highest attrition rate since 1992, another one of the TT’s legendary hot years.

As for those crashes, it seemed as if Murphy’s mischief-making imps were working overtime this year. There were the usual too-fast stacks on the technical descents off the backside of Trinity, the backside of the Geysers, and the backside of Las Lomas, but the most bizarre crash was a freak incident on Yulupa Avenue in Santa Rosa at about mile 12 where a pit bull jumped out of a spectator’s car and charged full tilt into the middle of the passing peloton, taking out several riders and destroying at least one bike. Fortunately, in that case, our sag driver right on the spot is a retired CHP officer who handled things correctly, and the dog’s owner took full responsibility for the damages, including replacing the broken bike.

It was that kind of day, with bad luck and bad weather making life difficult for just about everyone. The Terrible Two is always challenging, with its many miles and steep climbs and dicey descents, but when the third joker is pulled out of the deck—bake-oven heat—that’s when the Terrible Two becomes truly terrible. We salute everyone who attempted the 2008 TT. Even if you only made it halfway on this blistering day, you still pulled off an epic ride. And if you finished, you join the ranks of those who have conquered the beast when the beast was being as bad as it can be.

We also salute the hundreds of cheerful, enthusiastic volunteers who made this brutal day a little less brutal with the wonderful support provided, from dawn to deepest dark. Dozens of weary but grateful riders took the time to tell us what we already know: that this is the best supported event they ever do. On behalf of all those riders, thanks to each and every one of the extended SRCC family who made this ride possible.

230	Official Starters
230 bikes, 232 riders...2 tandems	
140	Official Finishes
124 (54%)	by 10:00 " <i>I Did It</i> " cut-off

The Terrible Two 2008 Official Results

Place	Name	Age	Home	Time
1	Bo Hebenstreit	40	Campbell	11:15
2	Brian Anderson	38	Santa Rosa	11:27
3	AJ Shipley	31	Wake Forest NC	11:39
4	Giampaolo Pesce	43	Santa Rosa	11:51
5	Robert Choi	47	Santa Rosa	12:01
	David Fischer	46	Santa Barbara	
7	Fred Berghout	39	Menlo Park	12:21
	Barley Forsman	37	Gilroy	
	Douglas Mckenzie	49	Santa Rosa	
	Tao Bernardi	42	Dublin	
11	Matt Chaney	27	Fairfax	12:33
12	Max Hogan	47	Camarillo	12:43
	Graham Pollock	41	Folsom	
14	Tony Lee	49	Petaluma	12:47
15	Gerry Cody	30	Los Angeles	12:52
	Jim Frink	45	Folsom	
17	Glenn Mattsson	52	Santa Rosa	13:01
18	Wayne Riley	48	Sacramento	13:07
19	Michael Arreguin	44	Sacramento	13:09
20	Jasper Halekas	32	Oakland	13:13
21	Jeremy Bardell	33	Santa Rosa	13:25
	Bill Pratt	41	Berkeley	
23	Nick Goldstein	43	Santa Rosa	13:28
24	Joe Fleck	47	Brentwood	13:29
25	Jeff Mitchell	34	Santa Rosa	13:32
26	Leland Gee	54	Santa Rosa	13:33
	Matthew Wilson	20	Santa Rosa	
28	Tim Doda	52	Roseville	13:46
29	Jon Bonwick	39	Larkspur	13:48
	Scott Mceldowney	44	Windsor	
31	Gabriel Cheese	26	Monte Rio	13:56
32	Robert Buntrock	44	Discovery Bay	13:57
	Hooshang Mehranpour	49	Granite Bay	
34	Russ Fairles	41	Berkeley	14:01
35	Bob Fisher	52	Spokane WA	14:02
	Michael Ogul	52	Kensington	
37	Armin Staprans	50	Portola Valley	14:05
	Joshua Talley	36	Santa Monica	
39	John Axtell	48	Minden NV	14:09
40	Ray Hittenmiller	50	Monte Rio	14:12
	Luke Wallis	55	San Jose	

Place	Name	Age	Home	Time
42	Mark Abrahams		Berkeley	14:16
	Braulio Nunez	33	Fresno	
	Jeanine Spence	44	Fresno	
	John Culligan	45	Salinas	
	Lisa Williams	41	Fresno	
	Lori Cherry	50	Fresno	
	Ron Laverty	40	Medford OR	
49	Tim Page	40	Sebastopol	14:20
	Garth Powell	46	Santa Rosa	
51	Steve Smead	44	Lincoln	14:22
52	Elizabeth Tenuto	28	El Dorado Hills	14:27
53	Mark Homrighausen	54	Berkeley	14:29
54	Mike Gaylor	61	Sebastopol	14:40
55	Karta Atehortua	32	Palo Alto	14:42
56	Gustavo Hernandez	47	Davis	14:43
	Laurence Kluck	60	Eureka	
	Lee Kane	37	Mill Valley	
59	Charles Chen	38	Irvine	14:45
	Ron Williams	54	Mission Viejo	
61	John Hossack	44	Charlottesville VA	14:46
62	Reid Swanson	39	San Ramon	14:47
63	Greg Durbin	51	Santa Rosa	14:50
64	Kenneth Prager	47	Granite Bay	14:52
65	Diego Durrell	37	Folsom	14:55
	Bob Wagner	44	Fairfax	
	Michael Raasch	44	Santa Rosa	
	Susan Lowry	40	Sacramento	
69	Zach Kaplan	39	Alameda	14:58
70	Christopher O'Keefe	42	Mountain View	15:01
71	Michael Bailey	50	Salt Lake City UT	15:06
	Bryce Simon	54	Chico	
	Chris House	44	Redwood City	
	Eric House	46	Corvallis	
75	Ernesto Montenero	43	Oakland	15:09
	Steve Saeedi	46	Fremont	
77	Ryan Cordes	27	Santa Rosa	15:14
	Dan Magaw	51	Lincoln	
	Ken Marsh	52	Los Angeles	
	Marty Holloway	44	Sacramento	
81	Scott Lewis	44	Park City UT	15:15
82	Timothy Houck	59	Pleasanton	15:18
83	Mark Cutone	48	Albany	15:31
84	Keith Beato	45	Alameda	15:32
	Jack Klebanoff	58	Walnut Creek	
86	Bob Pacenta	60	Albany	15:33
87	Janine Rood	49	Chico	15:34
88	Chris Wilson	41	Santa Rosa	15:35
89	Robert Puckett	63	Santa Rosa	15:45
	Bob Snyder	54	Westlake Village	
91	Michael Bayer	41	Cupertino	15:47

Place	Name	Age	Home	Time
92	Randall Coleman	45	Sacramento	15:48
	Paul Farley	64	Lakeport	
94	Masoud Esnaashari	0	Folsom	15:54
	Arthur Raybold	49	Reno NV	
	John Holmgren	55	Oakland	
	Kevin Keady	45	Folsom	
	Tim Mason	47	Davis	
	Tom Milton	55	Fairfield	
100	Bill Ellis	49	Novato	15:55
101	Richard Burger	52	Petaluma	15:59
	Brian Scott	49	San Rafael	
103	Ken Cabeen	45	Sebastopol	16:03
	Joe Gorin	57	Santa Rosa	
	Rico Mundy	37	Angwin	
106	Billy Richmond	42	Gilroy	16:04
107	Jimmy Miller	53	Healdsburg	16:08
	Mark Birnbaum			
109	Ken Johnson	56	Sacramento	16:10
110	Osman Isvan	56	Aptos	16:14
	Jason Schlunt	30	Aptos	
112	Christopher Hanson	53	Redondo Beach	16:16
113	Cameron Lim	40	San Jose	16:17
	Paul Stimson	56	Santa Rosa	
	Tertius Thakar	47	San Francisco	
116	Eric Horning	52	Livermore	16:21
	Daniel Walters	47	Santa Rosa	
118	Rick Jacobson	50	Reseda	16:22
	John Witkowicki	58	Petaluma	
	Ken Mckenna	51	Novato	
121	Alain Giaimo	43	Newhall	16:23
	Don Graham	57	Santa Rosa	
	Jose Raposo	53	Valencia	
124	Philip Auriemma	41	Fremont	16:24
125	Jeffrey Urnes	53	Hayward	16:32
126	Robert Okano	43	San Jose	16:36
127	Roy Benton	59	Angwin	16:39
128	Bill Brockley	44	Santa Rosa	16:42
	P David Desautels	49	Fort Bragg	
130	Jim Miles	58	San Diego	16:47
131	David Vandershaf	61	Carmichael	16:48
132	Michelle West	36	Santa Monica	16:49
133	Curt Nichols	52	El Dorado Hills	16:51
134	Mike Chester / Karen Koppenhaver	53/48	Oceanside	16:55
	Anthony Martinez	48	Cherry Valley	
136	Albert Kong	50	El Dorado Hills	17:04
137	David Slaton	61	Irvine	17:09
138	Michael Aberg	43	Palo Alto	17:14
139	Jack Joseph	53	Oakland	17:24
140	Martin Seaney	57	Davis	17:44