

Ride 536 Report – 25 Feb 2018

Don't Sit On Your Ass Ride!

Hares: Flaming Janus, Cruelty to Virgins & My Precious

A healthy turnout of riders made their way to Teachers Estate Playground for a 10am start; the only setback was that the Scribe and Rough Sex were still in the back of a taxi in the MCE tunnel as 10am came and went. Blame it on a late night of binge-watching “Weeds” on Netflix and some over-indulging in Speyside Single Malt whiskey, but we had trouble motivating in the morning. I was feeling foggy-headed, as evidenced by the fact that I ran back to the apartment to retrieve my cycling gloves – only to leave them on a wall when loading the bikes into the taxi. As I rode through the lovely course that the Hares had set, I did so with only my sweaty hands – my gloves were back in the driveway all the while. Fortunately, they were still there when I returned home so all was not lost. For forgetting his gloves not once, but twice, let's give the Scribe a much-deserved BIMBO charge... *B-I-M-B-O, B-I-M-B-O, B-I-M-B-O and Bimbo was his Name-O!*

Rough Sex and I started the ride at around 10:30am, given some sparse directions by a local family with their children at the playground. We then spent the next 20 minutes scanning the roadside looking for any chalk markings. We even went through a few intersections thinking that the chalk marks might continue on the other side. We retraced our steps before seeing a hastily-scrawled “arrow” on the side of wall that led us up a grassy slope into a 1km route that hugged the side of a construction site. Not finding many tire treads or shoe imprints in the soft clay, we continued onwards, not knowing if we were on course or not. We finally ended up at the rear of an elderly woman's outdoor kitchen, but we couldn't confirm with her for sure if we were on track due to a language barrier. At that exact moment, I saw two middle-aged Caucasian men in tall, ON-ON socks and baseball caps making their way through the thicket on the opposite side of a canal. It was a stroke of fortune finding those running Hashers at that very moment. They were setting a trail and informed us that they spotted some chalk marks near the flyover straight ahead. Sure enough, we came across the markings and were back on track.

Our Hares crafted what I would consider to be a very fun ride – nothing too harsh nor technical; just plenty of PCN trails that led to the outstanding network of fire roads in the Upper Thompson/Tagore Lane region. The sky looked a bit cloudy from time to time, but hardly a drop of rain fell the entire day. The course was well-laid and we managed to find our way quite easily, despite not seeing another Bike Hasher the entire time. Rough Sex did well and managed to climb the steepest grade of hill with a smile on her face. Some of the course had some ‘running Hash’ terrain to it, as we walked and cycled through some forested areas before returning to the fire road. We did one extra loop of fire road by mistake before exiting at Tagore Lane Industrial Estate and making our way to the next leg of the ride. That extra loop proved to be a lucky thing, because the terrain was first-rate and on our second loop we spotted a family of wild boar eating something up ahead. As we approached, they scampered off but it was nevertheless a “Nat Geo Wild” moment.

After coming back to the Tagore Road vicinity, it was at an easy, flat grassy patch where I heard Rough Sex take a spill and turned around to see her on the ground, laughing. Apparently, her shoes were clipped in too tightly into the pedals, so add that to the list of to-do items before the next Hash. That was the first of two such spills that she took that day, although the second one was on a concrete sidewalk and entailed more pain than laughs. No doubt there were others that day, but let's give Rough Sex a Crash of the Day Award for taking two unnecessary spills: *Here's to COD, she's true blue, she's a bastard through and through, she's a piss-pot so they say, tried to go to heaven but she went the other way, drink it down, down, down, down, down...*

We came to the Circle check in the park and first went to the nearby bridge and tried veering off in different directions without any luck. We asked some foreign workers who were fishing if they had seen some cyclists, but something was lost in translation and we took their reply to be negative. We went back to the park and found the 'out' trail that led us up to the junction of Yishun Avenue 1 and 2. It was around that point that we found the last chalk mark we saw that day, and checking Google Maps, we set off towards Sembawang Road and 'Home.'

Let us give thanks and praise to the Hares for doing a stand-up job of creating a rich riding experience that immersed us in this scenic green artery of Upper Thomson. The ride was well-laid and their wonderful efforts allowed even late-comers like us to reap the rewards. Let's give them a note: *Here's to the Hares, they're true blue, they are bastards through and through. They are piss-pots so they say, tried to go to heaven but they went the other way! Drink it down, down, down, down, down...*

As we arrived at the junction of Upper Thomson Road and Tagore Drive, I asked Rough Sex if she wanted to go for iced coffee at Starbucks, to which she replied, "Wasting time, wasting money..." Dropping that idea, I then suggested that we cycle back to West Coast, thinking that it would take an hour. I dipped into a petrol station for a coconut juice as Rough Sex never left her saddle. She had grown tired after a few hours in the hot sun and I knew better than to provoke her when she spoke in rapid-fire Japanese. She was quick to remind me when our ride home had exceeded the hour mark. Her ass was well-cushioned by the new saddle courtesy of Too Easy, but her neck had become sore from a long outing.

At this point, the fun experience of off-road cycling met the harsh reality of city riding in Singapore – and I was reminded of how much riskier it is to cycle on the roads than through off-road trails. Upper Thomson Road is now 4 lanes across in each direction, and packed with speeding trucks and cars on a Sunday afternoon. Under the hot sun, we were fatigued and fighting for room on the side of the road. Periodically, the freeway off-ramps caused traffic to veer left and I tried to negotiate my way in the middle of a 4-lane road as traffic drove past mercilessly on either side of me. Suddenly, a car crossed 3 or 4 lanes less than 10 feet in front of me – never slowing from its speed of 70km per hour. Some drivers opted to quickly cross my path rather than wait for me to carry on so that they could reach their exit. On another occasion, a car drove by me with only a foot of clearance when I was in the left lane. Had I checked my watch or looked over my shoulder at that moment, I might well have been hit. I could almost feel the disdain of the drivers who felt like I had no right to share the road with them, and they were not compelled at all to slow or give way to a cyclist. This is compounded by a system in which accidents that are caused by driver error do not receive fully legal or financial

repercussions for those who 'show remorse.' Sadly, the concept that *life is cheap* is something of an embedded mindset. We had ridden nearly 450km on rural highways throughout Scotland without having as many close calls as one Sunday in Singapore.

It was with a sense of relief when we finally crossed Bukit Timah Road and continued onto Farrer Road, but that optimism was short-lived. As we reached Holland Road, I waited on a small island at the pedestrian crossing for Rough Sex. As she was cycling down the slip road towards me, a driver issued a loud honk just metres behind her. As the heavy-set driver looked up he could see a tall, frustrated cyclist holding up his middle finger in a symbol of defiance. For the next two minutes, he and I exchanged pleasantries – or make that obscenities – but fortunately he had the sense to stay in his car and we avoided a Joe Pesci moment. One thing is for sure – I further cemented his hatred for cyclists while for me, he personified bad drivers, and an impatient one at that.

Cycling home, I was depressed at how much of an anti-cycling vibe I witnessed and how some drivers (like the one I just met) convey that your safety is not as important as them doing their shopping at Orchard whilst drinking an iced lemon tea. After 4.5 hours of mostly continual riding since our 10:30 start, we had finally reached West Coast - exhausted mentally and physically - but thankful to be in one piece.

There is no easy solution to balancing the rights of car-owners and cyclists, but some steps we can take to improve our safety are:

- Wear your 1.5 Metres cycling shirts or put the bumper-sticker on your car
- Always wear your helmet and use lights in early morning or evening
- Engage with cycling federations or the LTA to improve dangerous roads and post signage stating to slow for cyclists. I have just written to the LTA regarding the precarious situation at Lornie Road Flyover
- Report dangerous or reckless drivers (in the case of a taxi driver or trucking company, for example)
- Follow road regulations when on your bicycle

To return to the essence of this report, which is to showcase all things Bike Hash-related, let us turn our attention to the next ride, which will be led by our own Lucky Leprechaun, Ditch! Join us for Ride 537 on March 11th as Ditch, Old Worn Stump & Friends take us on a journey in which we will go on a quest for the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow (Editor's note: despite rainbows actually being circular.....). Check the website for the ride location closer to the event date. It promises to be another great outing in the tradition of the Singapore Bike Hash, and we look forward to seeing you there!

Until the next ride, on on!

Scribed by: Knobby Boy Scout

SBH Ride 536

The Don't Sit on Your Ass Ride! of 25 Feb. 2018.

Legend

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