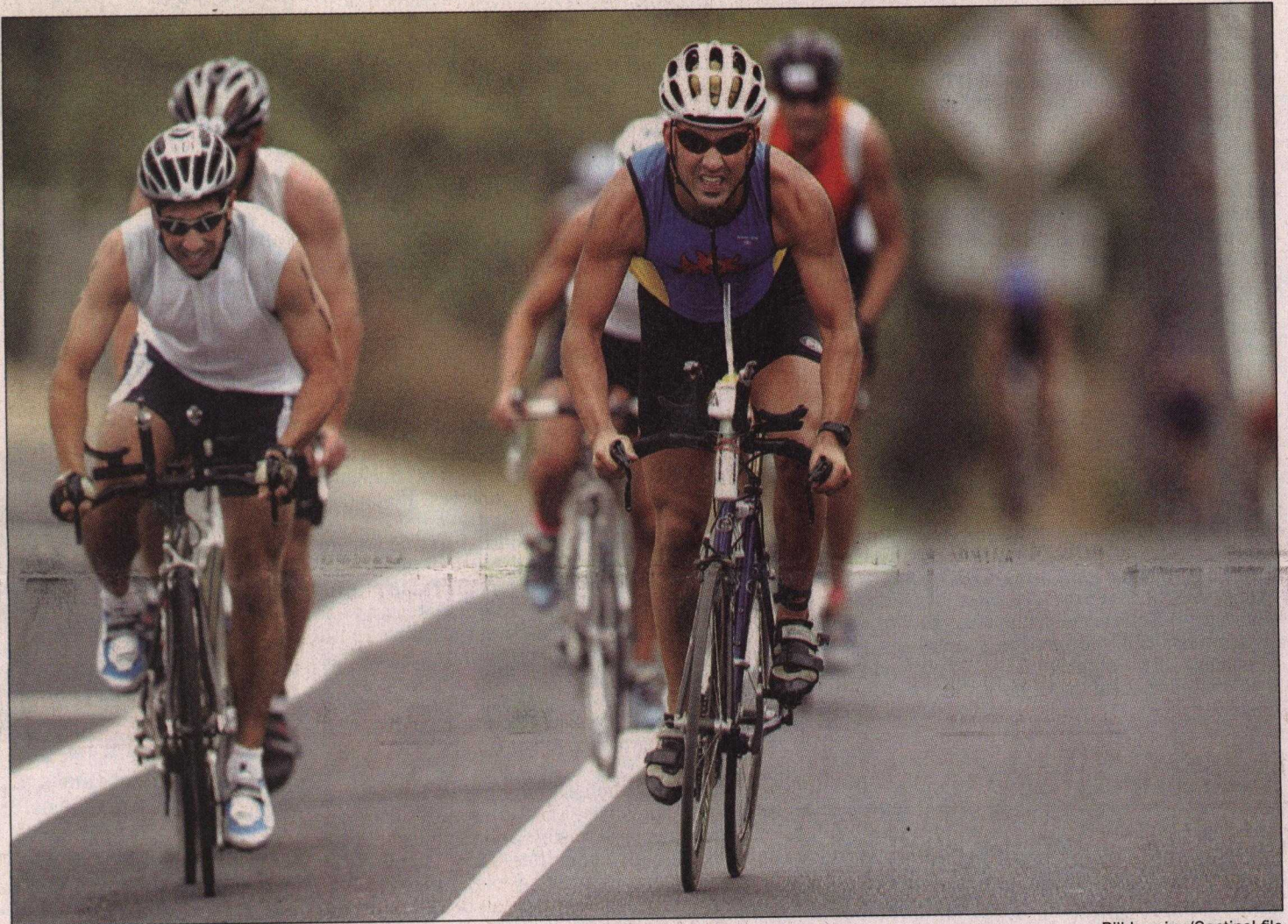


TOUR OF CALIFORNIA



Bill Lovejoy/Sentinel file

Tour of California contestants likely will be faced with the hills of Highway 1, as were these triathletes in the Big Kahuna last year, for at least part of the Sausalito to Santa Cruz leg on Feb. 16.

Connect the dots

✓ *Bycycle Races*

Tour of California 2009 stages

Feb. 14-22, approx. 800 miles

STAGE 1: Sacramento time trial

STAGE 2: Davis to Santa Rosa

STAGE 3: Sausalito to Santa Cruz

STAGE 4: San Jose to Modesto

STAGE 5: Merced to Clovis

STAGE 6: Visalia to Paso Robles

STAGE 7: Solvang time trial

STAGE 8: Santa Clarita to Pasadena

STAGE 9: Escondido to Rancho Bernardo

S.C. juggling route options

By **JULIE JAG**
SENTINEL STAFF WRITER

SANTA CRUZ — Matt Twisselman remembers attending the announcement for the route of the first Amgen Tour of California professional cycling race in 2006. Twisselman knew then he had to bring the race to his hometown of Santa Cruz. He just needed to figure out how to get it there.

Nearly three years of lobbying later, Twisselman has his wish. He announced Wednesday

On the Net

For maps of the possible routes through Santa Cruz during Stage 3 of the 2009 Tour of California, visit: www.santacruzlive.com/blogs/outside.

that Stage 3 of the 2009 Tour of California will finish in Santa Cruz on Feb. 16. And yet, Twisselman's still trying to figure out how to get it here.

Twisselman said he learned

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Watsonville's Ben Jacques-Maynes has competed in the three previous Tour of California cycling races and will help design the Stage 3 race route.

Anthony L. Solis/
contributed photo

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‘There are six or seven different scenarios that we can go to [within each stage]. We’ve laid them all out. It’s a matter of what fits in logistically.’

AEG SPOKESMAN MICHAEL ROTH

Tour

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Wednesday that Stage 3 of the nine-stage, approximately 800-mile race scheduled to run Feb. 14-22 would start in Sausalito and finish in Santa Cruz. The path it takes to get there is still up in the air.

“Now the work starts,” said Twisselman, the chairman of the local organizing committee for the race, after making the announcement.

Two groups handling the organization and marketing of the tour, AEG and Medalist Sports, will pick the route between the stage start and finish. They will also dictate the type of race finish — climbs, sprints, circuits, etc. — they would like to feature in the stage. After that, the course of the 10 miles leading into Santa Cruz is mostly up to local planners.

Right now, those planners seem set on two objectives: running a circuit through downtown Santa Cruz and finishing at the Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk.

“That’s my first choice,” said Ben Jacques-Maynes, a pro cyclist from Watsonville who has competed in all three previous tours and who has helped advise Twisselman’s committee on feasible race routes. “It highlights what’s cool about the city. It gets them to the heart of the matter without excluding downtown.”

Jacques-Maynes, a UC Santa Cruz graduate, has been riding in the Santa Cruz Mountains for most of his life. He knows the county’s back roads well and knows which of those roads would make for an interesting race route and which are out of the question. And, he’s not shy about expressing his preference for the Tour of California route leading into Santa Cruz, one that has been simmering in his imagination for years.

The route Jacques-Maynes said he would pick to showcase the county’s best cycling routes would begin with riders racing the approximately 75 miles south from Sausalito along Highway 1. At Bonny Doon Road, between Santa Cruz and Davenport, the racers would turn left and begin the punishing 6-mile climb up to Smith Grade Road — a climb even steeper than the one up Mount Hamilton near San Jose that has been cursed by riders in previous tours. Next they would follow Smith Grade to Empire Grade, where a rapid

and winding descent would take them past the western outskirts of UCSC. The peloton would then dash down Bay Street, turn left at Mission Street and follow that to Walnut Avenue. After passing Santa Cruz High, the riders would turn onto Center Street, make a loop around Beach Hill, then finish with a sprint on Beach Street past the Giant Dipper.

“To put that on a map for the public in general and international cyclists, I think it will be a great experience,” Jacques-Maynes said.

Jacques-Maynes’ route, which measures 91.6 miles, was one of two submitted by Twisselman’s committee in its proposal to host a stage finish. The other proposed route would be flatter and would include diverting from Highway 1 at Swift Street and following West Cliff Drive to Bay Street. From Bay, the racers would rejoin with Mission Street and follow the same path past Santa Cruz High and toward the Boardwalk as the route favored by Jacques-Maynes. That route has been measured at 89.2 miles.

The proposal also suggested such detours as veering from Highway 1 onto Swanton Road near Davenport for part of the course and ending the stage in front of City Hall on Cedar Street.

Twisselman emphasized, however, that the proposed options are just that — options.

“We don’t know the specifics, only the overall route,” he said. “It could go into the mountains too. It could finish at Pacific [Avenue] or the Boardwalk, we don’t know.”

The final Tour of California routes for all the stages aren’t expected to be announced until the fall.

“There are six or seven different scenarios that we can go to [within each stage],” said AEG spokesman Michael Roth. “We’ve laid them all out. It’s a matter of what fits in logistically.”

Whatever the route, it will undoubtedly take the races past sights and spectators that are uniquely Santa Cruz.

“It’s something Santa Cruz has never seen before,” said City Councilwoman Lynn Robinson. “It’s going to highlight that aspect of who we are. I think it’s a great thing.”