

# Brothers in familiar territory

*Bicycle Races* Stage 2 route courses across the hills, flats and highways Santa Cruz County duo knows by heart *2.11.09*

By ELLIOTT ALMOND  
San Jose Mercury News

The Amgen Tour of California brings its nine-stage rolling carnival to the South Bay next week, giving cycling fans plenty of options to catch a glimpse of Lance Armstrong and the sport's other stars as they tackle some of the state's most challenging byways.

The teams will traverse the cycling-rich roads of the Peninsula and Silicon Valley with Stage 2 ending Monday in Santa Cruz and Stage 3 beginning Tuesday in downtown San Jose.

"To see these roads utilized is awesome," said Bissell Pro's Ben Jacques-Maynes of Watsonville, who lobbied organizers for three years to include his college town of Santa Cruz.

The seaside town finally will be includ-

## IF YOU GO

TOUR OF CALIFORNIA, STAGE 2

**WHEN:** Monday, between noon and 2:30 p.m.

**WHERE:** Finish line at the corner of Cooper and Front streets in downtown Santa Cruz

**WHAT:** 115.9-mile pro cycling race is one of eight stages in the 750-mile Tour of California

**ON THE NET:** [www.tourofcalifornia.com](http://www.tourofcalifornia.com);  
[www.tourofcalifornia-santacruz.com](http://www.tourofcalifornia-santacruz.com)

ed in this year's event, which begins Saturday in Sacramento and travels 750 miles before ending in Escondido on Feb. 22. America's biggest cycling event features Armstrong, two-time defending

SEE TOUR ON B8



SHMUEL THALER/SENTINEL

Ben and Andy Jacques-Maynes head up Eureka Canyon Road on a training ride. The canyon is good training for Bonny Doon Road, which the brothers have ridden many times.

## TOUR

Continued from B7

champion Levi Leipheimer, three-time world champion Oscar Freire and 2008 Olympic gold medalist Fabian Cancellara. The field also includes disgraced cyclists Floyd Landis and Tyler Hamilton, who are coming off long suspensions for positive drug tests.

Local spectators have new panoramas to watch the cavalcade of colorful riders, particularly the ascent into Bonny Doon near the end of the 116-mile Stage 2 that starts in Sausalito.

"I've been thinking about this one for a while," Jacques-Maynes said.

Jim Gentes, the stage's local technical director, wanted the climb above UC Santa Cruz to give the stage the flavor of a mountain finish like the famous ones in the Alps.

"It is pretty tough to have a mountain finish next to a town," said Gentes, the man who founded Giro Helmet. "This is the closest thing to getting a climber to win a mountain stage."

The cyclists will summit Bonny Doon on Pine Flat Road at 2,135 feet [which should be an excellent viewing locale.]

Then comes a steep descent along Empire

Grade "and the fireworks will start up because it is so close to the finish line," Chuck Hodge, the tour's technical director, predicted. It has the chance to provide the tour's first attempt at a shakeup in the overall standings.

Those looking for race strategy might solicit cyclocross professional Justin Robinson of Bonny Doon, a man who claims to know "every pot hole and every gravel patch" of the roads because that's where he trains. Although the 3.4-mile climb into Bonny Doon isn't long enough for a serious breakaway, the twisting downhill could provide the perfect opportunity.

"Out of sight, out of mind, you could get away and hold something," Robinson said. "It's a great descent. But you've got to know it."

Jacques-Maynes also knows Empire Grade well. It's one reason he has targeted Stage 2 as the day to make his mark. With twin Andy Jacques-Maynes riding for Bissell Pro this year, Ben hopes they can parlay their knowledge of the area into an upset victory.

But with some of the sport's most experienced riders in the field, it won't be easy for the lesser established pros to dictate the pace, especially on the varied terrain along the Peninsula.

After crossing the Golden Gate Bridge and rolling through the winding streets of San Francisco, the cyclists will travel south along Highway 1 toward Santa Cruz. Race officials also included detours into the Santa Cruz Mountains on some of the local cycling community's favorite paths. The first climb starts on Tunitas Creek Road and ends at Skyline Boulevard before starting the descent to the coast on Highway 84.

"We want to throw a little challenge into riders," tour course director Eric Smith said. "We recognize Tunitas as one of the premier climbs around and virtually nobody lives up there."

Former Canadian champion Linda Jackson regularly rides these roads bordered by thick redwood forests.

"This is the reason I stayed here," she said of her decision to live in Pescadero.

"They're epic."

Although San Jose won't play host to a finish for the first time in the race's four-year history, the start affords fans a chance to intermingle with the riders before they take off at noon on their way to Modesto.

"They're still fresh and in a good mood," said Chuck Hodge, the tour's technical director. "It's like a pit row in an auto race at the starting line."

In other words, fans can score autographs and chat with the cyclists before they depart.

Or they can wait along the popular climb up Sierra Road, considered the most dramatic segment of the San Jose stage since the tour began in 2006. The ascent won't have the same impact as in the past because it comes near the start, too early for a serious breakaway.

## Donate Your Vehicle

BOATS RVs TRAILERS or REAL ESTATE



Tax Deduction • We Do DMV

Running or Not - Restrictions Apply

800 380-5257

Live Operators - 7 days! Free Pick Up

Providing safety information and assisting families in bringing kids home safely