

Big Basin gains attention

Popular area trails and roads featured in Bicycling magazine

By KAREN KEFAUVER

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Natasha Perry has logged thousands of miles on her bicycle, so she recognizes when she is riding in a special place.

The Santa Cruz resident and competitive cyclist typically works

out five times a week, alternating between mountain biking, road biking and trail running. Sometimes her bike rides can add up to 100 miles a week.

A UC Santa Cruz graduate, Perry, 42, has covered a lot of turf during her years of training for road racing and cyclocross. One of many

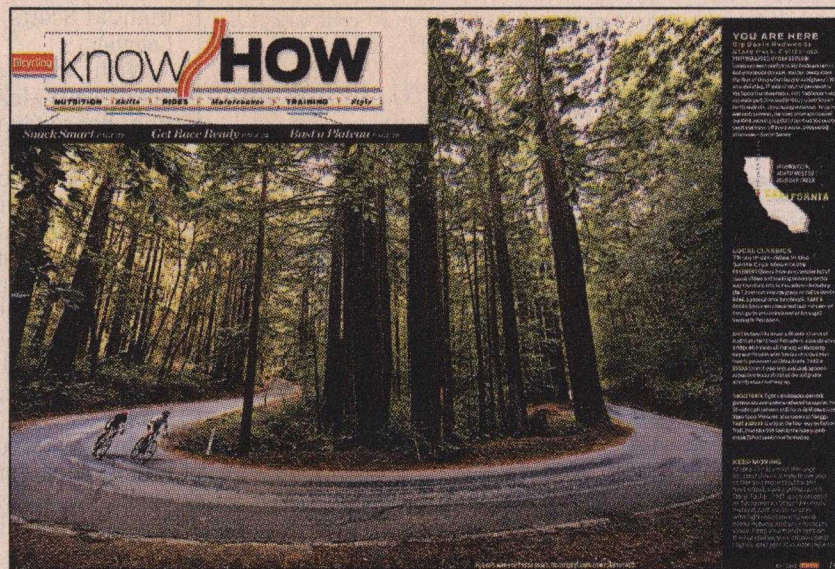
roads that Perry enjoys riding is Highway 236 as it winds through Big Basin Redwoods State Park in the Santa Cruz Mountains.

"It has some challenging climbs and good, fun descents," she said. "That, combined with the scenery,

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A two-page spread in this month's issue of Bicycling magazine highlights cycling in Santa Cruz County, including Big Basin.

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makes it a very cool little place."

Perry said she is not surprised that Bicycling magazine featured riding in Big Basin in a two-page photo spread in the July issue. Billed as the world's largest cycling magazine and now in its 51st year, Bicycling put Santa Cruz squarely in the national spotlight by naming it a great place to ride.

What stands out most to Perry and in the Bicycling magazine photo are Big Basin's enormous trees, which are part of the largest continuous stand of ancient coast redwoods south of San Francisco. The park, established in 1902, is California's oldest State Park and consists of over 18,000 acres of old growth and recovering redwood forest.

"As you descend into Big Basin Park, you have incredible views and the trees are beautiful," said Perry, who likes to include Highway 236 in a rigorous five-hour ride that starts up Granite Creek Road, heads up Mount Charlie, proceeds to Bear Creek Road, links to Highway 236 and then "more options after that."

The prominent coverage of Big Basin appears in Bicycling's Know/How section and spans two full pages. Including a color photo taken by Dan Barham and text written by Evelyn Spence, the piece showcases the area's natural beauty and its appeal for cyclists.

"You can swoop down the likes of this perfect hairpin turn on Highway 236, an undulating, 17-mile stretch of pavement," wrote Spence, a freelance writer based in Seattle who used to live in San Francisco.

"Santa Cruz is a world-class cycling destination and world-class for its natural beauty and recreation opportunities," said Spence. "This photo captures what it's like to ride there. People have heard about these mountain climbs and coastal riding, so that combination helped us choose [to write about it]."

Bicycling Executive Editor Leah Flickinger made the decision to feature Big Basin in the magazine. Based in Emmaus, Pen., Flickinger said that although she had not ridden in Santa Cruz, she looked at the photo and felt inspired.

"It just looks like a beautiful place where a large proportion of our readers would want to

ride," she noted.

In addition to Big Basin Park, the magazine article also names three "must-rides" in the Santa Cruz Mountains. That list includes Old La Honda Road for riders looking to challenge themselves with the road's average of 7.3-percent grade; Butano Fire Road for those who want a scenic 10-mile stretch of trail and El Corte de Madera Creek Open Space Preserve, better known as Skeggs, for those who love singletrack mountain biking.

While the location of these road and mountain bike trails in the Santa Cruz Mountains will come as news to some readers of Bicycling magazine, it's not the first time Santa Cruz has been featured in a national publication.

In March, Velo Magazine (formerly VeloNews), the national go-to bike publication for racing news and information, named Santa Cruz as one of its "Dream Destinations" in its annual "Ultimate Ride Guide." The article highlighted cycling in Santa Cruz, alongside Mallorca, Spain; Whistler, British Columbia and other notable spots. That article was written by Neal Rogers, a former Santa Cruz resident and current editor of Velo Magazine.

To local cyclists like Perry, accolades for Santa Cruz County cycling are welcome, but not surprising.

"The Santa Cruz County area, including the entire Santa Cruz Mountains and all the epic and famous roads and climbs there, are among the most famous and most used roads for road cycling," wrote Jim Langley, a Santa Cruz resident, bike racer and former technical editor at Bicycling Magazine, in an email. "Top road cyclists from Greg LeMond to Jonathan Boyer to even Lance Armstrong have traveled here to train and ride on our idyllic, lightly traveled roads with the wonderfully tough and scenic climbs."

The recent coverage in Bicycling and Velo Magazine coupled with the international bike race Amgen Tour of California's return to Santa Cruz County this spring, leave little room for doubt: Santa Cruz County is home to world-class cycling, a talented cycling community and a thriving bicycling industry.

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