



Race Report #2

Edited by Laura Charmed

Team Swift meets Fred Rodriguez

Fred Rodriguez invited Team Swift Regional Squad for a ride in his hometown area of Berkeley Hills. We drove down early to loaded up on a good diner meal for fuel and met Fred at the Royal Coffee Shop where many Berkeley area rides start. After a short greeting we took off heading straight into the hills for a four hours. After 2 ½ hours the boys could hardly contain themselves without a little competition. I told Fred they were dying to have a sprint with him. He mentioned a sign 2-4 miles up the road. I gave the go ahead to the Team and they immediately went into lead out formation to set up our sprinter Duke. The boys did a great job keeping the pace high and when the sign finally appeared the final lead out man jumped with Fred on his wheel and Duke firmly implanted on Freddy's. (See the reports for details).

Fred is hands down a great guy. He spent a lot of time talking to each of the juniors and gave them each some valuable tips. Having a current top professional cyclist share his insight and knowledge with national caliber juniors is not only inspirational; but imparts pieces of knowledge that can make the difference of a young rider making the jump to a future in cycling. After the ride we had a coffee and sat around a table to ask questions. Fred is one of the top American Cyclists and he is also extremely friendly and down to earth guy. I would like to thank Fred for spending a day to ride with Team Swift. For more information on Team Swift see www.teamswift.org and for an update on Freddy's new team for 2003 see <http://www.cyclingnews.com/news/?id=2003/jan03/jan14news3>

Duke Schimmer:

There I was sitting on the wheel of one of the fastest men in the world. It all seemed like a surreal experience, I couldn't believe that I was about to go head to head with Fast Freddy Rodriguez. I seemed like a tour stage, all that was missing was a few thousand people cheering on the road side and a few other sprinters jockeying for the position that I was in. Because I didn't really know where the sprint was I was waiting for him to jump first so I could sit on as long as I could then make my best attempt to come around him. With the sprint line in sight and my team giving me after a stellar lead-out I heard the changing of gears and saw Fred get out of the saddle to start the sprint. Following suit I

jumped to stay on his wheel. Then came the task of coming off his wheel and attempting to pass. As I pulled out of the slip stream I stuck my head down and went for it with a hard jump. I watched as our wheels drew even all the way to the line. So now I can go home and tell everybody on the local group ride that I almost beat Fast Freddy. After our dash to the line I got a chance to talk to the great man and found him to be one of the nicest and down to earth pros I have ever had the pleasure to ride with. Thanks Freddy for going easy on me and letting me almost beat you.

Nathan Miller:

Winter training is well underway, school has hit like a wildfire causing my life to go up in a puff of smoke, and once again I am looking forward to weekends and the start of racing. I did one race early this year, the San Bruno Hill Climb and placed 3rd in the Pro 1, 2 category. That race is always hard, because it suits me so well, but I don't ever want to be in shape that early. So, I am always disappointed with the way that I feel and just have to remind myself that I shouldn't be in racing shape yet.

A good reminder of this was our ride with Freddy. At first he was a little shy, but soon he became very talkative and willingly shared his winter training plans with us, his goals for the season, and how he made the transition from an elite rider to a pro. He always trained with a goal in mind and knew that it would pay off, even if he didn't feel super fast during the winter. He told us that he hurt his season two years ago by going too hard to impress the coaches very early in the year, because they always want to "see the goods". Last year he didn't screw around on the bike though and did things the way that they needed to be done. They hadn't seen him in flying shape yet and so his coaches all said, "Rodriguez isn't ready, Rodriguez isn't ready", all the way up to a week before Milan-San Remo, but look what happened (he got 2nd). So, that has been my inspiration since then. I am the same as his coaches and want some assurance that I am improving and will be in the best shape of my life for next season. That isn't possible though. I have to just believe in my abilities and my training and know that when the time does come, I will be able.

Rich Weir:

Riding with Freddy:

After the Christmas holiday's and then still another week came the anticipated day we were lucky enough to get a chance to ride with Freddy Rodriguez. After meeting him in Bezerkley and taking a few pictures we headed out for our ride. It was a perfect day for a group ride. Sunny and really warm –gotta love California in the winter. I got to talk to Freddy while riding and found what a cool guy he really is. He told us a little bit about himself and what life is like for a successful euro-pro. He also left us with advice for training and racing. This I am sure will be most valuable this coming season. Just getting to talk to Freddy made the day worth it. But the most fun I had was sprinting or climbing against the mighty 2 time USPRO champion. Although, in the end I was no match for him. I did manage to beat him to a city limit sign, but that was all the glory I could manage. (My coach gives me 25 cents for these sprints. I've got a grand total of 50 cents in the bank.) Fred then proceeded to beat everyone on the last climb with probably

very little effort. I was really impressed that he came out to ride with us. It was the most fun I had had all year. Thanks Freddy!

Brady Harter:

Riding with Freddy was a really a great time. The route that we took was pretty challenging but manageable because we were riding mellow. The four hour ride was filled with a lot of great stories that Freddy would tell about big races like Milan-San Remo and the Tour. The stories really motivated and inspired me to get to that level. I was pleasantly surprised about how entertaining Freddy was. He was talking and laughing it was really cool to see because most of the other pros that I have met are pretty quiet and boring but not Freddy. That was really cool. I really enjoyed this experience and I hope that we get to ride with Freddy again sometime soon and I would like to wish Freddy good luck with his new team and season.

Alan Eriksson:

It was a nice Saturday afternoon and I was out in Oakland riding with Freddy Rodriguez. He is one of the best sprinters in the world. We were riding at nice easy pace for the whole ride, until they decided to set up a sprint, so we could try to lead Duke out. Everyone (except for Duke) was sent to the front to set a hard pace. I got out in the front and did my pull, but we were still too far from the line so I was sent back out in front to pull again. I was pulling as hard as could when all of a sudden here comes Duke and Freddy flying past everyone with their heads down in a full out sprint. The only thing I could do was to pull off and watch. It was pretty cool too watch Duke sprint against him, it made me realize how fast of a sprinter Duke is, I think he almost beat Freddy. My plan was to wait until the hills and try to out-climb Freddy, but I was feeling sort of sick so I realized that wasn't going to happen. It was cool to meet a pro as good as Freddy and to ride with him; He is one of the coolest guys I have met.

Steven Cozza:

The ride with Freddie was awesome. It was not only a sweet route but a great learning experience as well. During the ride I got a chance to ask Freddie questions on everything I wanted to know about cycling. I was most curious to know how it was for him when he was a Junior and what kind of things went through his head when he was my age. He told me that if you know you can make it then go for it but if you are not sure and have doubt go to school and see what you have after. I learned that only a few make it pro and to not take the risk of giving everything up for the sport unless you know you absolutely know you are good enough. I am going to take that risk. Freddie was an awesome guy and I hope I get the chance to ride with him again maybe when I am a pro. I wish him lots of good luck during his 2003 season and I hope he out sprints Mario Cipollini. I know he can do it. Thanks again Freddie.