

# Readings

NEWS TO PERUSE

## THANK YOU, SKID TOWN

by Charlie Kelly



Joe Breeze, Charlie Kelly and Billy Savage at the Repack start line

PHOTO: KEVEN KRUEGER

Billy Savage showed his film *Klunkerz* at the Fairfax Theater on March 28. The showing sold out three weeks in advance, so another was added, also sold out well in advance. Many of those in the film descended on Fairfax—not that it's any trouble for me, a ten-minute bike ride away, or the other members of the original "Repack" gang, Otis Guy, Joe Breeze, and Bob Burrowes. Gary Fisher was out of the country, so he

couldn't make it.

The Skid Town bike tinkerers from the Morrow Dirt Club were there, staying a couple of days, and they said they wanted to shred Repack with the locals. I had to find some time to put my truck in the shop, which keeps me from working, so I set it for Friday morning, the day of the showing, and planned to ride Repack with the Skid Town boyz.

I shared a few beers with them the

evening before the ride, but apparently they kept on sharing after I went home. When Friday morning rolled around, only one of them answered the call, Russ Mahon's son-in-law Keven Krueger. Billy Savage and I met Keven in town and threw our bikes in the back of his pickup, and we trucked over to Joe Breeze's house, conveniently located a mile from Repack.

It was a strange assortment of bikes.

Billy was riding a “klunkerized” Alan Bonds Excelsior special, a flawless example of the state of the art circa 1977. Joe was “in character,” riding his 1982 Breezer, dressed in jeans and a workshirt, and a baseball cap instead of a helmet. Keven was riding a bike of his own design, a one-speed hardtail with disc brakes. His headbadge, also his own design, is cast out of four ounces of pure silver. I’m a fan of modern equipment, so I was on my full-suspension Specialized, and I was the only member of our group wearing actual cycling clothing, including a helmet.

If your only purpose is to shred Repack, you might as well trudge up it instead of riding the easier road to the top. As we rode through Cascade

the ride went on I learned about what I was seeing.

Jacque didn’t care to accompany us up Repack, so when we reached the bottom, she peeled off and headed back toward Fairfax. Keven’s one-speed wasn’t up to any part of the climb, so we walked where some of us might have ridden up the less steep parts of the 14% grade. That gave Joe and me ample opportunity to show Keven every subtlety and nuance to the familiar stretch of road. We stopped on some turns and looked back downhill to show Keven what he would see when he came back the other way. We discussed the different road surfaces—blue, rough and covered with gravel where it’s serpentine, red and smooth where the surface is clay. We



Keven Krueger of Skid Town Bicycles with his custom bike

PHOTO: CHARLIE KELLY

Canyon toward the bottom of Repack, Jacque Phelan joined us for a level ride that passed so many different types of wildflowers that each new species merited examination and discussion. Along the way we saw blue and white irises, golden poppies, sticky monkey, blue-eyed grass, shooting stars, Indian warriors and Indian paintbrush, and a dozen or so others. Joe and Keven seemed well versed on the flowers and the non-blooming shrubbery, and as

pointed out the water-bar jumps, the off-camber turns, and showed Keven the line hugging the embankment. We showed him where the loose gravel on the road limited steering and braking, and where you could just let the brakes go even though you couldn’t see very far ahead.

By the time we got to the top, we had taken so long walking up that I had things to do, so I couldn’t hang around. We had a brief discussion, and then Keven took

off down the hill. Billy said he didn't care to ride in front of Joe or me, so we gave Keven about 45 seconds head start, then we rolled out. Joe checked his watch and mentioned that he wasn't planning on setting any records today, before clicking his stopwatch and starting down the course.

Just before we hit the first steep pitch, I realized I still had my sunglasses on, and because I want unimpeded vision, I slowed down for a few seconds to stow them, and Joe was already out of sight before I started picking up speed. No matter, I don't care to ride in front of Joe either.

It was a perfect day, the course was a little dry and slippery, but that's the way it will be until next fall, so that's what you ride on. I'm a big fan of modern cycling equipment. I like full

modern equipment kicks ass on 25-year old rigid frames.

On some of the wicked corners, I saw skidmarks that hadn't been there when we walked up. I knew Keven had left them, because Joe wouldn't have. The directions and lengths of the marks suggested that Keven might have been slightly out of control.

I got about fifty feet behind Joe, but I couldn't close the gap any more. If anything, the gap opened a little. Afterward, Joe told me that on "camera corner" he saw Keven's dust still hanging in the air, and realized he was close, then he had spotted Keven ahead and gone after him. Last couple hundred yards I'm right on Joe's tail, and then I saw Keven too. Joe passed him on the outside just as they rounded the

last big turn, missing him by two inches and scaring the shit out of Keven, who hadn't even realized anyone was close. I crossed the line a couple of seconds behind them, and Joe hadn't even realized that I was that close to him. High-fives and screaming laughter all around while we waited for a much more sedate Billy Savage.

Joe and I have lives and families and responsibilities that seem to require our attention all the time. We don't normally take a day off to do anything as frivolous as looking at wildflowers and riding Repack. If Skid Town wasn't there, I wouldn't have been either, and I would have missed one of the great mornings of my life, and one of my best runs down Repack.

Thank you, Skid Town.

*Charlie Kelly is a star of William "Billy" Savage's feature film Klunkers, about the early days of mountain biking in Marin County, California, and racing down the legendary Repack course on Mt. Tamalpais. Dirt Rag will be hosting a screening of Klunkers at the Kenda Bike Fest in July complete with visits from some of the movie's luminaries.*



PHOTOS: CHARLIE KELLY

*Billy Savage's highly-modified 1935 Schwinn Excelsior, built by Alan Bonds*

suspension, great brakes, and a Gravity Dropper seatpost that gets my saddle out of the way. I wasn't wearing any armor other than a regular helmet and cycling gloves, but I don't think I would have gone any faster if I had been. I was having a lot of fun and feeling like I had hit some turns and jumps perfectly, at least for an old rider like me, and halfway down, I spotted Joe ahead. Somehow I had gained back the hundred yards that I spotted him by taking off my shades. Since I have never in my life caught Joe on Repack, the only explanation is that



*Joe Breeze looks on in disbelief at the Skid Town Bicycles headbadge, made from 4oz. of solid sterling silver.*