



# CHRONICLES OF AN ADVENTURE, TRIP, AND BIKE RACE IN CHINA

## – PART II

by Adam Farabaugh

This is the second part of a sort of short book that I will post into blog posts for easier sharing. It is not a quick read so a PDF download is also available. Upon completion, I will post it in its entirety. Also, check out the site that this is listed on for peer-to-peer, locally guided cycling trips. A good friend of mine and I have just launched it and are trying to make it a big deal. Thanks for reading and your support!

*October 13, 2014*

*Race Day # 2 - Yichun*

The second day of racing here in China gave us a flat course with some false flat rollers on an out and back straight road. Some not too exciting racing, especially since there seems to be an endless amount of awesome roads around.

The racing was super active from the get go so the boring course became a bit more exciting. We had the leaders jersey but had no intention of defending it since it was only day two into twelve. Being mostly flat, the speed was super high, but it was easy to sit in which made a break getting away difficult. In the final laps yesterday, a Dutch composite team with a bunch of solid Continental riders, bridged two guys to our break which gave them a total of three in the lead group. This slotted them into the lead of the team competition which also put them into pretty much the best positioned team in the race right now as everyone below 12<sup>th</sup> is a minute down. They were super aggressive along with seemingly every other team. Eventually a group of three got away with none of the guys from the breakaway the day before in it. They weren't going far with the speed of the field, which was perfect for us as we didn't even have to chase as the sprinters teams kept it close for a bunch kick. We stayed out of trouble and sat in pretty easily.

One of the added benefits to this race is that there are two other American teams, Champion Systems-Stan's NoTubes and CCB from New England, which all know each other fairly well so whether it's at dinner, the hotel, the back of the race, or in the breakaway, we're always chatting and having a good time. It makes for a far off exotic race even more fun since we're all experiencing the craziness together. And then add that to our team of five nationalities that gets along great; it makes for one of the best race atmospheres I've ever had at a race.

The race came all back together and proceeded to get super dicey going into the finish. We would get together to try and set up our sprinters but with the sketchiness we continued to lose each other. I got shuffled back and finally found daylight with about a k to go but from kind of far back. I attacked hard and immediately got a good gap. It's super hard to train for efforts like this because it's such a short violent effort that you're never motivated to hurt yourself enough for during training. I was in my biggest gear trying to get as arrow as possible with my head down but I started to die as the road started to false-flat back up at about 200 meters to go. That along with the bit of downhill prior made for a fast run in for the field and lead-out trains which caught me at 150 meters to go. Close but not today. Our team placed well with two in the top ten, and two in 10<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup>, which shows we are all strong but need to get together more and turn that into a win.

One of the day's spectacles was on our transfer to the next hotel. With a longer transfer and seemingly no rest areas or anything along the highway, the whole caravan of 60 to 80 vehicles pulled to a stop and probably 150+ people jumped out to water the grass on the side of the road. Can't say that that happens too much anywhere else in the world. And to add to the hilarity of the situation, the hotel ended up being like five minutes further down the road. Great planning.

*October 14, 2014*

*Race Day # 3 - Xihyu Xiannv Lake*

The third day of racing finally brought something different to the table than a circuit; a twisty-turny, up and down, narrow, 30k road to the finish at a temple or monastery on this incredible lake, although it was shrouded in smog. First though before the finish stretch we had to do twelve laps of a flat, one U-turn, boring but fast course.

Everyone wanted to be in the breakaway yet again which met the nothing actually got established. We, and I to a bit of an excessive degree, followed a lot of moves but it was kind of a fruitless effort except that you couldn't afford to miss any big moves. A small move of four got a gap and then one of the guys in the top ten bridged across making it a very dangerous break. The leader jersey's team didn't want to let it go and blew up their entire team, along with the leader himself chasing hard. The break got close which instigated chase groups which allowed me to eventually get across with three other guys. I thought we were gone since the field chased so hard and more teams were represented but unfortunately it didn't last.

It was all together going into the narrow and twisty final thirty k but everyone wanted to be at the front which made it a bit sketchy yet again.

The roads and area were super cool (we drove the same road back to the hotel so I was able to sight-see...) with a well paved road snaking through lush green forests along a picturesque lake in the mountains. The only drawback was that if it was clear, it would have been magnificent but the perpetual smog and humidity clouds the view to what would be an incredible area.

A number of breaks would go, get a couple of seconds and come back. We were in every one of these and eventually with maybe eight k to go, myself and two others got a sizeable gap. We rolled through smoothly but needed to go harder as we got brought back a few k later. I quickly jumped back into the front of the field to lead-out our sprinter. We were a bit disorganized and only myself and our sprinter were together. I got him to the front and then with about a k to go I went to the front with him on my wheel and dropped him off at about 150 meters to go. We needed one more guy for him to be on as the guys from behind had momentum going into the shallow kicker into the finish. We finished fifth. Good but disappointing when we had so many good opportunities. And to add to the bite, the Dutch team who we are pretty much head to head with went 1, 2. We have some work to do.

The transfer today was long, about three hours, but it was through magnificent scenic mountains that were high and steep. To get a large road through them they had an endless amount of tunnels, some over five kilometers long. China may be a developing country but

they've definitely put a lot of infrastructure in place. Although they close the highway for us, the traffic in the other direction as well as side and other roads seems slim compared to what you would expect. Maybe it's just from being used to packed highways in the states, not even around large cities but in general. The highways seem more to move goods as we would pass a lot of overly loaded trucks with everything and who knows what on them.

Off of what some of the infrastructure is like, the one time I turned on the TV in the hotel, they had an interview on the one English Channel with two economists debating China's economic direction. Either an "investment based economy" or a "consumption based economy", the latter being the US in that our GDP is driven by how much we buy compared to what added value to GDP an investment in say infrastructure derives. The one was saying that China was overly investing in infrastructure and that it couldn't be utilized efficient enough and quick enough to positively impact the economy. It makes sense because now they, the government more or less, is funding all these projects which also is putting a lot, and I mean a lot, of people to work. This puts money directly into the economy as these workers then go buy houses/apartments, food, goods, etc. further propping up the economy. It's their way of subsidizing the economy as well as providing or actually not providing welfare to these masses of people who otherwise would have no jobs and zero income. But what happens in five or ten years when all of these projects are finished, not that they'll stop building but they can't keep up this pace. Obviously they have a lot of manufacturing and production of goods and they have and are building up a lot of "economic zones" where foreign companies can come in and set up shop putting Chinese people to work. The problem is that they can't grow all these other areas, higher tech manufacturing and the like, fast enough, especially when so much is focused toward infrastructure right now. Of course you need the infrastructure before you have the rest but why not grow things in scale and more at the same time instead of building so many roads and high-rises that won't be used fully for years. And maybe they are to a higher degree and I just don't know about it.

The other economist's viewpoint was to raise interest rates as now all these projects are essentially being loaned money for free, or maybe even given in some cases, but they have no incentive to have a quick turn-around into a functioning investment to make money nor do they have the incentive to build the highest quality project to generate the greatest return. Raising the interest rate more ensures that the projects with the best returns are partaken. The other economist viewed it as though they should follow what the US did 100 years ago in that the economy was increasingly looked at as "good" if it was growing and with a lot of consumption. There was more to it but I must have been washing my jersey in the sink while half listening.

Traveling around the US gives you a lot of insight into the varying economies and ways of life in different areas. When you go half-way around the world, especially not really knowing

what to expect, seeing how their economy works and what they are doing to propel it is super interesting. And even more so when some of what you studied in school consisted of exactly what is happening before your eyes. Whether it's something more technical or just reading about a certain area and what it's like, making that connection of what you have imagined in your head to seeing it in person is one of the real benefits to always traveling and seeing the world.