

# 2011 Tour de California route called toughest yet

By John Schumacher, Sacramento Bee

The consensus among riders ready to test the sixth annual Tour de California: This is the toughest course in the event's history.

The addition of two mountaintop finishes – one on Sierra Road in San Jose in Stage 4 and the other a climb up Mount Baldy to end Stage 7 – has caught cyclists' attention.

"This is the hardest condition for the Amgen Tour of California in the six years," said Levi Leipheimer, a three-time winner who has ridden in all five Amgen races.

"When I rode (Mount Baldy), I thought, 'Wow, this is worthy of the Tour de France.' This edition is definitely a mini-Tour de France. I don't think we could ask for anything more."

The eight-day stage race covers nearly 800 miles. But it's the climbs that have toughened up this year's event.

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