

Maddog Unleashed

He Shoulda Stood in Bed, But a Drowsy Dog Discovers Hibernation Is Unbearable

*The woods are lovely, dark and deep
But I have promises to keep,
And miles to go before I sleep,
And miles to go before I sleep.*

—Robert Frost, Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening



BY PATRICK O'GRADY

Happy New Year! I hope Santa Claus, Chanukah Harry or whichever mythological gift-giver your particular sect wheedles baksheesh from during the holidays was as openhanded as a congressional lobbyist with a bill in committee, and that your customers bought bicycles and accessories as though gasoline were being sold in corked bottles right next to the 1996 Chateau Lafite Rothschild Pauillac.

For the Festival of Zappadan, I received a new digital camera for taking crisp, 8-megapixel pictures at all the bike races I'm not going to. But what I really wanted was a road trip. Our beloved cat, Chairman Meow, died unexpectedly just before Halloween, and after digging the grave in the back yard I felt like lighting out for somewhere, anywhere.

Instead, we went straight to the Humane Society, where we adopted a 3-month-old kitten, dubbed Mia Sopaipilla, who instantly came down with feline upper-respiratory complex, requiring isolation, medication and a watchful if slightly blood-shot eye from yours truly, who was starting to feel a tad fenced in.

My new role as Lawrence Nightingale prevented me from attending the Crankbrothers US Gran Prix of Cyclocross finale in Oregon, a storm-tossed affair that made the Norse end-times tale of Ragnarok look like a "Baywatch" episode.

I considered driving to cyclocross nationals in Kansas City once Mia was up and about. But then I remembered what December can be like in Kansas—far less corny than Kansas in August, and only slightly colder than the dark side of the moon.

To Sleep, Perchance to Dream. And then the cold finally came to me, with snow sucking its wheel. I longed to hibernate like a bear: Eat a ton, call it a night and wake up in spring, rested, refreshed and 30 percent lighter, too.

Hibernation would spare me any number of seasonal annoyances, I thought. Holding doors open for cats who relish the concept of "outside," but not the reality. Sweating on the trainer or freezing behind the snow shovel. Fruitless searches for cycling news that does not include the phrase "tested positive."

If I had been snoozing in November, I'd have missed Andrey Kashechkin's cynical attempt to beat a blood-doping rap by arguing not that he was innocent, but rather that drug testing violates his human rights. I'd also have slept through Alexandre Vinokourov's Nixonian retirement speech, delivered in December after a slap on the wrist for the same offense. Frankly, I wish we still had ol' Vino' to kick around, because I was just getting warmed up, and I expect that WADA was eager to put the boots to him, too.

Up And At 'Em, Sleepyhead. But you snooze, you lose, as the saying goes, and nobody is going to pay me to sleep on the job. So, what's on the menu now that we've pulled another year from the celestial freezer and set it out to thaw?

Well, I have a couple new bikes on the way, and I hope to get a few rides in on them before the propeller-heads, skunk-workers and geek-boys render their componentry obsolete. Then there's that road trip I never took. Maybe I'll do another training camp in Arizona.

And finally, there's one race on the calendar that I won't be ignoring—the race for the White House. I propose we all strive to keep at least one eye open during that contest. There's no point in turning the rascals out if you're just going to jump into bed with some new ones.