

Maddog Unleashed

The Mean Streets: Leaving a Bike Path For the Boulevard



Think to yourself that every day is your last; the hour to which you do not look forward will come as a welcome surprise. As for me, when you want a good laugh, you will find me, in a fine state, fat and sleek, a true hog of Epicurus' herd. —Horace, Odes

BY PATRICK O'GRADY

I emerged from my burrow one Sunday in early April and somebody else saw my expansive shadow. What exactly does this mean, winter-wise?

Sunday generally sees me enjoying a leisurely cyclocross bike ride with a Dogs at Large Velo teammate—the last one of us still racing, as far as I know—along the multipurpose path that runs from Fountain on the south to Palmer Lake on the north. We both work on Sundays, so we generally chop a short chunk out of the middle, rolling from Monument Valley Park into the Air Force Academy and back.

The real cyclists in these parts, meanwhile, join the Sunday road ride, a more muscular effort that starts at Acacia Park downtown and winds through the AFA, sometimes adding extra-credit, high-country mileage into Gleneagle and Black Forest.

We occasionally see one another. The Sunday road ride uses a short chunk of our bike path to dodge a traffic signal at Fillmore and Steel, and then our routes run alongside one another for a spell before diverging near Garden of the Gods.

They pretend not to notice us, as is to be expected when royalty encounters peasantry. For our part, we are vaguely embarrassed to not be on the “real” ride.

And then suddenly, last Sunday, we were.

On the Road Again. My teammate recently took some time off the bike after a knee injury flared up following some stoop labor around the house. Last Sunday, he decided it was time to saddle up again, but suggested a gentle road spin northward instead of the usual 'cross bike ride.

I had vague recollections of once owning a road bike, a mid-Nineties DBR ti'. And frankly, I was getting kind of bored with the same ol', same ol'. So after a quick trip to the garage for verification, inspection and inflation, I agreed to the change of venue.

But I'd forgotten about the other Sunday road ride. The real one. And our agreed-upon departure time saw us quickly absorbed by the thundering herd, which comprised a number of friends and acquaintances who hadn't seen me in a while, because they would sooner ride in baggy shorts than on the bike path.

Hey, There, Big Fella. One of them, a woman of the female persuasion, has been known to solicit appraisals on the square footage of her back yard, if you get my drift.

This is a question no man in his right mind will answer directly and honestly. It can only end badly, especially if you haven't been on a road bike for a while and have forgotten how to stay upright when someone tries shouldering you into the curb.

Reasoning that the best defense is attack, I reached into my little black musette bag of Jedi mind tricks. “Hey, M.,” I asked. “Do these bibs make my ass look big?”

To which she replied, “Jeez, Patrick, you're huge!”

I didn't try shouldering her into the curb. Hell, she rides the track. But I think I'd better spend a little less time grumbling in front of the monitor and start turning up for the real Sunday road ride before some enterprising developer erects a Costco on my south 40. and cyclists.

And maybe then we'll get the respect we think we deserve.