

Maddog Unleashed

**Is it Spring Yet?
How About Now?
Are We There Yet?**



My mental health depended on the physical exhaustion of the bicycle. —Jim Harrison, Returning to Earth

BY PATRICK O'GRADY

Ah, 'tis spring, kind of, and the potholes are in bloom. Add a diving board and a lifeguard to some of these whoppers and you have a swimming pool in every neighborhood for when the weather finally warms up.

This is the time of year when cabin fever really has a cyclist by the chamois with a downhill pull. We peek out of our upholstered burrows like a peloton of Punxsutawney Phils, hoping to see some cheery sunshine, but not our winter-fat shadows, as if those could possibly be ignored. What meets the eye is mostly a plenitude of potholes with a side of sand.

One of my riding buddies hasn't been on a bike in two months. Another has been riding the rollers for two and three hours at a stretch, watching old Tour de France tapes (you know, from that bygone era when you could be pretty sure that the guy standing atop the podium in Paris actually won).

Me, I've been trying to preserve the shallow foundation of fitness I laid down during my too-short Arizona training camp in February, slipping out for a quick ride or run whenever I can tear myself away from work, drink or bitching about the weather.

And as a consequence, I'm happy to report that my resting heart rate is down to four figures and I weigh precisely as much as Levi Leipheimer—assuming Levi is on Jupiter and wearing a lead skinsuit.

What's In A Name? There should be a special name for this no-man's land between snow and sunshine that isn't quite winter but falls short of spring. Winting? Sprinter?

Work on it and get back to me. We'll split the MacArthur Foundation genius grant, and I'll spend my half on a beachfront villa someplace where ice is found only under that tiny umbrella shading your drink.

Actually, a trip to the beach may indeed be in my future, as the bosses and I are negotiating the terms of a junket to the Sea Otter Classic. But my heart really isn't in it.

For starters, a trip to Monterey in mid-April can feel more like being under water instead of near it. And I get the distinct impression that I would be expected to do a job of work at the Otter, and we all know how I feel about that sort of nonsense.

BRAIN will be publishing dailies a la Interbike, and *Velonews* is a man short since Kip Mikler went over the wall.

With bike races and industry developments in dire need of reportage, it's unlikely that frazzled editors would be content to see me shambling about, pen and pad in the hand not clutching a beer, driving advertisers and subscribers witless with pointless observations about this, that and the other.

Been There, Done That. And in any case, I'm not certain I'd bring an unjaded eye to Laguna Seca. The mental well I draw my pointless observations from smells funny, perhaps because pro racing has been using it as a urinal. And not even a dog wants to drink from a toilet if there's fresher water to be had.

It's possible that a road trip to the "Celebration of Sport" might reveal the diamonds in the dung. But frankly, I'd rather be riding my bike.

And the thing about taking road trips to marquee events on a publisher's dime is I mostly don't get to do that (see "job of work," above).

So maybe I'll just hang out here, picking at my psychic scabs, dodging shadows and logging miles. Call in sick. Play hooky. Spend my tax refund on a new bike.

Hey, that'd be something different—doing something for the industry instead of to it. I don't know about you, but I feel warmer already.