

What's the perfect temp for riding? Hint: It wasn't today's.

35 degrees up on Skyline this morning. Not that the four of us (Kevin, Eric, Todd and I) weren't dressed appropriately for it, but I'm ready for something warmer. Not just to help my breathing issues, but there's a world of difference in how your bike handles at 70 degrees+ vs 40. It's not the frame, but the road & tires that feel so much different on a warmer day, because your tires feel more firmly planted on the road when it's warmer. They don't chatter in the corners and rough pavement as much, and they recover in a far less scary fashion when you hit a wet spot.

There's also the issue that your body isn't as flexible when cold, and when you hit bumps in corners, your response isn't as fluid which, at high speeds, can literally cause you to crash where you otherwise wouldn't have. The solution is obvious- ride slower. But that's not as fun as riding fast, and after a lot of climbing you feel like you've earned a fun descent.

What's perfect weather for cycling? From a comfort standpoint, probably low-70s. You won't get chilled on the descents, and the climbs won't cook you. But your bike? It probably comes into its own in the mid-80s, when the roads are stickier, your tires more supple, close to zero chance of water, and no chance of speed wobble caused by your body shaking from cold.

There's something to be said for crisp cold days, with a bit of wind that gives it a real bite. It wakes you up in a hurry and the views are spectacular. There's also some street cred that goes along with temp readings in the 30s. But like all "good" things, it gets old after a while, and I'm ready for a bit less street-cred, even at the expense of air that's less than crystal-clear. I'm looking forward to the first Tuesday/Thursday ride without leg warmers (likely a couple months away) and being able to push my bike hard in the corners and have it ask for more.

In the meantime, I'll continue to take up my position at the rear on the main climbs and later on hear the stories from my son about what went on at the front. I'll exploit whatever weaknesses I can find in others in an attempt to prove there's more to life than climbing fast, but in my heart I know... there isn't. I love climbing, and I really miss climbing fast. I haven't written off the future yet; I still think I can improve significantly and be a force again when the road pitches upward. Just have to lose a few pounds and maybe, finally, take care of my cold-weather breathing issues.

Yes, I look forward to warmer days ahead!