

What makes a great rain ride, and why you'd want one



Only one other rider out on the road this morning; the man in black! Think you can see why I'm not a huge fan of wearing all-black clothing on a bike. How many people go to bed hoping to wake up to really hard rain for their bike ride? Not many I'm guessing. Most see it as a good excuse to ride a trainer, or maybe go out later in the afternoon when the forecast shows a break in the weather. But my son and I? We live for such crazy days. Days when there's almost nobody out on the road, at least nobody that doesn't have a really good reason to be there. Days when it's not about riding fast, it's about simply riding. Period. Riding because you can. Riding because your bike is an extension of yourself, and life is about pushing back against walls right? Limitations are things that others can't do, but you're not others.

And maybe that's it. It's about finding something that you can excel at. The easiest thing is to pick up a copy of OSQ (Obscure Sports Quarterly) and look for a sport where you might be a big fish in a small pond. Never mind the reality; that perhaps you become a bit player in a sport nobody cares about. But cycling is no longer a section in OSQ; cycling has arrived. It's big, and getting bigger. So how do you make your mark in cycling? How do you push limits further than others? How do you make your name?

By doing things so stupid that others wouldn't bother to try. It doesn't start out that way; cycling is a significant part of your life, and you simply want to do more of it. Why let weather stand in your way? You go out on rides when the weather's iffy, and sometimes get caught in the rain, making a mess of your bike and leaving you with a feeling that it just wasn't that much fun out there. Maybe should have stayed home. Exactly the wrong way to look at life! You've identified a challenge. Should you run away from it? Heck no. Embrace it! Tell the dark clouds overhead to bring it on, 'cuz you're ready for it.

That's about the best description I've come up so far for the state of mind that finds me out there in what most would consider to be miserable conditions. Preparation is key; you need a bike that's reliable in messy conditions (and trust me, disc brakes make a HUGE difference, not just in stopping power but also control & traction), and the right apparel. You give up on trying to keep your legs dry; the key is to keep the engine running at a consistent speed. Don't go too fast and risk running out of gas and getting cold, nor so slow that you don't generate enough heat to stay warm. There's a certain amount of skill in doing that. I'd say it's safe to say Kevin and I have that skill.

But today wasn't quite perfect. Sure, it was raining pretty hard a few times, and a good breeze blowing on Skyline. But it eased off just a bit towards the end, and a few hours later, stopped raining altogether. A perfect rain ride finishes hard (as in downpour), and it stays raining throughout the day, so you're deluged with people saying "You rode TODAY???!!!!" That would make it the perfect ride. :-) --Mike--