

THIS is why I'm excited about getting up early tomorrow morning!



OK, you tell me. Is this the coolest winner's trophy or what? Can you come up with anything that better captures the spirit of the "Classics" part of the bike racing season? At some point today I realized... tomorrow morning, the professional cycling season really gets underway. Two early classics, back-to-back, with Omloop Het Nieuwsblad (how's that for an odd name?) taking place tomorrow morning, and the race for the trophy above the very next day.

These are really tough races. Wind, rain, snow... the weather in Belgium this time of year is likely why the locals drink so much. The year's weather is actually pretty nice; mid-40s, no rain. What will make these races interesting then? Junk climbs. Tons of them. These courses are peppered with short, steep climbs that require 110% effort to get over with the leaders. These are not races that can be won by sucking wheels.

Add in the fact that this is the first real Euro race of the season, with everyone wanting to show what they're made of, and of course we, the fans, want to see what shape guys like Sagan and Gilbert might be in. The guys who aren't stars are going to be trying to ride their way into a spot on their team's Paris Roubaix squad, while the older vets will be looking to not get dropped when things get tough.

Finally, it's been a long time since the Tour de France, but with racing starting up again, it seems not so far away. So tonight, for the first time in a long while, I'm excited about getting up and watching a bike race!