

It just might not be my year... time to let go of being Forrest Gump?



The picture may be fuzzy but not the memory. Turning 61 today put me in a reflective mood. I put replays of Tour de France stages on the shop TV, recalling stages I'd seen in person... in this case, Ventoux from this past year, the stage where Froome, Porte and Mollema ran into the back of a suddenly-stopped official's motorcycle, wrecking Froome's bike (causing him to run up the mountain on foot, something never seen before at the Tour de France).

The end of Forest Gump? I've been there so many times, but it might be coming to an end. Since 2000, I've been to the Alps or Pyrenees for every TdF except one (the year Sastre won, and did that really count?). I was there, at the exact spot, where Lance gave "the look" to Ulrich. I was just 50 meters away from the carnage on Ventoux. I watched C-beams glitter in the dark near the Tannhäuser Gate. OK, maybe not the last.

This year it likely comes to an end, like tears in the rain. The demands of brick & mortar retail, as well as the finances, likely won't allow me to go. Some of the biggest suppliers in the industry have gone out of their way to undercut the local bike shop by charging us higher prices than other venues, venues that provide little in the way of support for cycling in general and the customer in particular. Any idea of taking it easier as I, er, mature (if 61 is considered mature) has gone out the window. But that's just background; it could have been anything that derailed my ridiculous obsession with seeing bike racing in France first-hand.

I haven't completely given up. I've drawn up contingency plans, a shorter trip (just 8 days instead of the usual 13). It would likely be solo, as my son, who's traveled with me the past 7 trips, has a summer school class he needs to take. It hardly seems worthwhile though, doing something less-than-optimal and wondering if I'd be doing it just because it was an obsession, not something enjoyable.

If you've ever thought about seeing the TdF in person, and if you're in any way compulsive or establish routines that become rituals, don't. It's unbelievable how easily you could get sucked in. The atmosphere is incredible. The roads amazing. The people friendly. And the sport itself, the spectacle, well that just blows away any notion of what's humanly possible on a bike. Doped or not.

Turning 61 today, I figured maybe I would have an easier time giving up on the "Tour. More maturity, less obsession, time to move on. An earlier Plan B involved me heading to the Giro d'Italia in place of the Tour de France. The idea being, something different, something happening at a less-busy time for the shop. Even if that could have worked out, this winter convinced me the last thing I wanted to do was head to the mountains in Italy in May, while there's still a really good chance for extremely-cold & nasty weather. Another way of saying I'm done with winter, and I hoped that writing about it might help. Didn't work out that way!

(Back on [Oct 31 2013](#), I included something in a blog piece regarding my "Forrest Gump" nature- "Ah, the ?Where's Waldo? thing. That's because I was there. I was at each of Lance's Tour de France rides starting from 2000-on. I was at the first USPS training camp that Lance attended. In 2007 I was outside the hotel in Pau moments before Vinokourav was busted for blood doping and his team sent packing. I was there for Lance's ?comeback? TdFs, where many of us had this sense that Lance was trying to prove to

people that he could win, clean. I was in France August 25th of last year, when it all came tumbling down. I was in Austin Texas, at Lance's bike shop, the day his sponsors pulled out. I'm either Waldo or Forest Gump.)