Zwift is hard. Life is easy. I wish.

Another morning on Zwift. Got to get those rain bikes back in action, but perhaps I'm meant to really suffer, in a pointless sort of way. Because obviously there's a point to getting dressed up in layers of clothing that weight a few pounds dry, but probably 10 pounds more by the time you get back, and braving the wind and the rain just because you can. And yes, you get back from rides like that and celebrate the transition from wondering why you're an idiot out there in such conditions, to feeling like you did something a bit heroic and noble.

But this morning it would be the trainer. 2nd Zwift ride in three days, which gives me 3 rides in 3 years I think? Whatever I learned from that first ride, three years ago, was long ago lost. But this time, I feel like I'm getting the hang of something, that there's a learning curve and I'm actually learning.

What am I learning? That there's no taking-it-easy on Zwift. Your heart rate gets up and stays up. Even on the descents, you're still pedaling because... everybody else is, and they're getting away. You can't tuck into a more-aero position and fly past them, they furiously pedaling, churning air in an inefficient manner, while you show them how it's done. Nope. Descending in Zwift doesn't work that way.

And yet, descending is your only opportunity to climb off the bike for a quick adjustment, or grab a bottle, let the dog out (or in), because at any other time, you're going to be dropped off the back. At least, when descending, your bike's in auto-pilot, maybe capable of 80% of the speed of someone really trying to hammer. That's a lot better than zero.

Even though today's course (through New York) featured less obvious climbing, it was still pretty brutal at times. Partly because you're already pretty wasted by the time you hit the climb, since drafting isn't nearly as easy on Zwift as it is in real life. And yes, there's this odd thing that makes you feel a bit funny drafting behind someone you don't know. Which is also why it's more difficult, because they aren't riding as if they're in a group; their speed can be erratic, and erratic speed makes drafting not-so-fun.

And when do you stop? You set your goals for a given distance or time, but it's not like a "real" bike ride, where you have a defined end point (getting back home, or to a car or something). You can stop anywhere, anytime, you wish. Does that encourage you to ride further, or less? Today, it was on the "further" category. The Zwift-suggested route was 20 miles, but since that's quite a bit shorter than the usual Tuesday/Thursday-morning ride, that seemed like cheating. So I kept going, refining technique a bit on my "bonus" miles, while thinking about an obvious time to stop. 28 miles seemed reasonable. Why? Why not continue just 2.4 miles further, to duplicate the actual mileage Kevin and I ride on Tuesday & Thursday mornings? Believe it or not, my thinking was that, in the rain, we probably would have skipped the West LaHonda section, because we'd be riding slowly and running out of time.

What's the future for Zwift and I? Bigger than I'd initially thought. You can definitely get in a very hard workout if motivated, and it appears I am motivated. Mastering Zwift will also help me sell more smart trainers (I'm learning a lot about set up). And, it will increase my appreciation of being out in the real world. Got to tell you, when I removed the bike from the trainer, put its rear wheel back on, and rode to work... my bike has never felt more lively! (Oh, I did shower first... you finish a Zwift ride massively soaked since it's impossible to duplicate the drying effect of your speed plus real air).

But yes, I'm looking forward to getting the rain bikes back in action!