



In Bounds

by Jack MacKenzie CGCS

The runoff
created a wet
slick across the
asphalt ahead.
No options, I
ride through on

my first bike of the season; wet splatters of snow melt thrown up onto my face and then my back. Now zebra stripped for I have no fenders, my nose is suddenly assaulted by the remnants of road-kill skunk. Spring is in the air.

Mile one into my trek, after a long winter of only elliptical and crunch exercising I am reminded of why I don't care for the first bicycle adventures of the year: my butt is getting sore! Nothing that a couple of weeks of out-door workouts won't toughen up. Typically about twenty miles, this ride would be an easy break in of only twelve. Like most stirrings of spring...ramping up should be gradual as there is plenty of time ahead to take advantage of the lengthening days.

Well into mile two I hit the highway. Although I hug the shoulder there are still the knuckleheads who brush by as close as they dare...little do they know the intimate proximity actually eases my ride as they pull me along in their wake.

Solo, I pedal on. The only 'bike' accouterment I wear is a pair of padded shorts; otherwise I am shielded in a wind shirt, leather gloves and hiking boots. I travel prepared and dress with anticipation

of the changing elements. My ride, a *Specialized* cross-over bike ten years and many miles old, serves me well. Wide and tough tires laugh at the glass and rough road underfoot. The four-mile is a long and gradual up-hill slog.

Ponds are opening up, geese squawking as they stake claim to their property. Smells of the country; manure, wet grass, dirt, it is exciting to be back outside. Look out, dogs ahead come running out daring me to stop and sample their tenacity. I laugh and peddle hard for they are a bit fat from their winter respite. The last of the asphalt for a while I take a quick stock of how fortunate I am; lucky to be where I am and when I am in time.

Dodging right the dirt track looms ahead. The next two are miles of rolling rural country road complete with washboard ruts, sporadic puddles to be forged and soft spots as the ground gives up it's frost make me work hard. Agates, little gems from the earth, pass beneath me as I press on in high gear, making full opportunity of my work out.

A smile on my face I cruise over the spot of my first and only fall. Although a hard hat still does not adorn my skull, I am ever mindful of the pitfalls of over confidence. Watching ahead I seek out latent encounters and plan accordingly. Looking behind I follow my progress and am mindful of other challenges that threaten my rear. Again I stick to the conservative shoulder and eliminate potential harm. (continued on page 8)

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(continued from page 7)

Once again on the macadam I push harder, my butt muscles screaming from the unexpected abuse and bump of the never soft enough seat. Up ahead, a killer hill two hundred yards long...low gear all the way; almost as if standing still I pedal hard not wanting to walk. Cleared, but seemingly not soon enough, the reward of a long and gradual decline is a treat. Catching my breath, wiping my brow and blowing snot from my nose I pick up speed once again and enter the final three.

Thoughts of a hot tub tantalize me as I grind on; a 'self-kudos' for taking the initiative and completing an arduous task, whose reward may or may not be evident. Hacking hard I know I am being productive. On my short trip I took stock of my day, recent weeks and the winter past. Not without it's

ups and downs, smooth times and rough, threats and pleasant surprises... life continues.

Just one more big bend and I am in the home stretch. Slowing down, but not stopping, I gradually cool off. Pulling into my driveway, right foot over the seat, I one leg it down the sidewalk and to the garage. Not too long and not too short, a nice little loop, just right except for the chafing and bruising I am sure to have by morning tomorrow somewhere upon my butt.

Out and back each ride emulates my life. The preparation, challenges, small and large victories and the moments I merely coast along. Finishing with the familiarity of home and the realization that once again "I made it" safe and sound.