

Rode inside today... that's a first

I've got to admit, I really wanted to be outside today, in that howling wind and driving rain. I can't exactly define the appeal, but it's very real and very strong. The fact that almost nobody else would be out there adds to it.

But today I listened to the voices of reason. Be sensible. Stay inside. Go for a trainer ride on Zwift Island because, after all, that's what we sell to our customers on days like this.

So I had two sessions on Zwift Island today. The first, early in the day, was relatively short and ended prematurely. I took my time and set up the full "man cave" experience, running Zwift on my laptop and using Chromecast to display it on my projection TV at home. You lose a little bit of smoothness doing it this way, but the delay which people warn you about is virtually non-existent. The plan was to make it all the way to the top of the highest point on Watopia (Zwift Island). I was well on my way until... my two free months of Zwift, care of Strava Premium membership, were expiring. Today. In 10km. And the climb was 11km. So, 41 minutes in, and I time out before the finish of the climb. Frustrating!!!

I decided I'd do things differently a bit later, using one of the shop's demo accounts and just use the laptop, leaving the big TV as just that, a big TV, so my wife could still watch her shows (one show mainly; Madam Secretary). I was going to do the whole enchilada. 30 miles, 2 hours on Zwift Island.

Oh my was that tough! Much tougher than I thought it would be. That long climb up to the radio tower? I should have been able to do 250 watts or so, but instead I was well under 200. The problem? You can't really stand on a trainer, at least not very well. And when I climb, I stand. Seated, I just don't get the power. And then I discovered something interesting. If I sit up while in the saddle (basically riding no-hands), available power went up. Significantly. I may have learned something important about my breathing. I had thought I stand on climbs to slow down my cadence, which slows down breathing a bit. What's more likely is that I stand because I'm simply able to breathe better. Who knew? Without time on a trainer, I might never have figured this out.

Even knowing all that, I'm still not convinced the trainer metrics show an amount of "suffering" (measured in watts and heart rate) that measures up to what I felt. One thing's for sure. That second, two-hour session, was very, very hard. There is no question that it was a suitable substitute for an actual ride on the road.