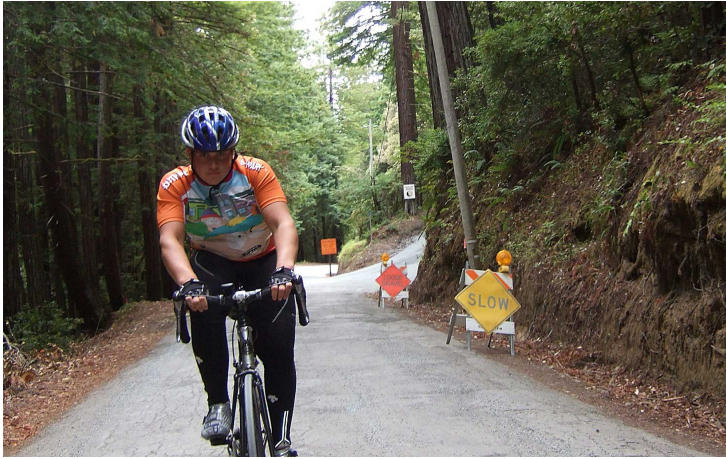


This is how both Kevin and I have felt the past few rides...



Turning back the clock to July 20, 2008. Not quite the same look, but maybe a similar feeling. The past few rides have been tough. Really tough. A lot tougher than they should be. Hard to say exactly what's going on; Kevin did score his all-time PR on Tunitas just a few weeks ago. What's happened since? Did the earth's gravity dramatically increase? Or is there just a bit of a worn-out, beaten-down, I-need-a-break thing going on?

That photo, from July 20, 2008, shows a really big Kevin with a really big heart. He loved to climb but really wasn't built for it. He still looks a lot more like a classics type of guy than a climber, but climbing is his thing. Me too, but I was never that heavy. I did get up to 180-something for a while, and that was pretty awful. My racing weight had been between 133-154, and has now settled in around 160 or so. I can definitely tell the difference even a few pounds makes, so when I look at that photo of Kevin from 2008, and compare him to today, no wonder he's a whole lot faster.

But lately, the wonder is why it feels like we're as slow as he was then, with no good reason. It almost feels like there's some sort of ultra-low-grade flu that has no specific symptoms but just zaps strength. I'm thinking it's likely stress; things remain not just busy at the shop but the percentage of "high maintenance" situations seems to be increasing, which wears you down. And vacations; seems like everyone on staff is going on a vacation now or soon and who am I to complain about that, since my wife and I leave on October 27th? But even that vacation has been a pretty stressful experience from a planning standpoint; I think we're on the 4th of 5th revision of dates and flight itinerary, and have had to move many of the "on the ground" pieces of the puzzle around as well.

Or maybe it's just that I've been doing a really poor job of maintaining the almost-daily diary, which has been slipping to weekly. This is my place to think and thrash ideas around, and when you get behind on that, there's this weird thing where, the further and further you get behind, the tougher it is to get back on track. What's one more day of dereliction to duty?

But. Could be that we're just one massively-tough ride away from a full reset, bringing us back to normal. That's what I'm thinking.