

Yesterday I rode - virtually of course - through London. I was on my smart trainer and linked up to a virtual cycling world that replicates a variety of courses around the world. "No going out". I'm listening Boris. I chose London yesterday so that I could remember times spent there and enjoy the familiarity of Big Ben, Parliament, Tower Bridge and Admiralty Arch. I particularly remembered running the London Marathon and the immense crowds everywhere, cheering us all on. I can still feel the feeling that I got when I ran across Tower Bridge; that will never, ever leave me and while up until recently it was simply a fond memory it has now become a solid rock to hold onto into the maelstrom we are now in.

There is no doubt things have changed, and changed for ever. Will we ever have the chance to run through such crowds again, or will people remain forever reluctant to gather closely? I can recall many, many times when I have finished a race and happily hugged a complete stranger. It seemed reasonable; we were victors in whatever our personal battle might have been and we were happy to share the experience. My whole team would usually huddle around for a group photo, still covered in the mud sweat and tears of our efforts. The thought of it now makes me shudder, and I don't know if I'll get back to what I used to think of as normal.

In my main sport of triathlon the start is usually a mass start, with wave after wave of competitors standing together and then launching into their race. Will that come back? What about spectators - will they be allowed or willing to be so close to each other and to the competitors?

We don't currently know how things are going to be after this virus is beaten. It's without doubt that some things have already changed for ever, and it's easy to do what I did yesterday on my bike and wallow in a bit of nostalgia, worrying about the loss of things that we found so precious. But history tells us that society gets over this kind of crisis. As a small child of about 7 or 8 years old I went through a typhoid epidemic that was spread across the UK and Europe. I didn't really understand it, and I can only imagine what my mum must have had to deal with and how worried she must have been. My Dad was too gung-ho to have worried about anything, so he would have been fine I'm sure. I don't remember much about it but there was no lockdown then, and we had a month's camping holiday planned so off we went. Straight into the eye of the storm - France, then Italy, then Switzerland! My first words of French were "Eau Potable", which indicated that the water on the campsite was drinkable. So most of the issues of the typhoid epidemic passed me by, but one thing remains to this day. Wash your hands. Back then we had a separate toilet and making the effort to go into the bathroom after visiting the toilet was far too much trouble for a busy 7 year old. That all changed after the typhoid era.

As a society, and as a community, we will get over this, and some amazing things are likely to come out of it. New ways of working, new economic models, and most importantly a reset of our priorities. After the public outpouring of support for the NHS and other key workers it is impossible to think that once this is done we won't radically refinance and transform the NHS and all the associated services. For all of us that have stared down the barrel, we will come out the other side determined to mobilise the forces for good that we have witnessed. Who could have thought that half a million people would sign up in 24 hours to help "their" community? Who would have recognised the very concept of "their community"? We certainly do now.

We will race again. It might look a bit different, and I might or might not hug you after the finish, but we will race again.