

Sean Kelly Hits the Spice Roads

What does a former pro cycling racer do with his free time? Ride his bike of course. by Patricia Weismantal





Sean Kelly raced professionally for 18 years and amassed a plethora of records from 1977 through to his last race in 1994. Now retired for almost 20 years Kelly rides 40-60 miles a day and is still intimately involved in the sport. Every summer he commentates for EuroSport on the Tour de France and he established the An Post Sean Kelly team to give young Irish cyclists a base from which to compete.

He also shares his love of cycling with those who like to go at a slower pace and more than 5,000 people ride annually in August with him in Waterford, Ireland. The chance for a more intimate ride with the "Hardman of Cycling" will be possible next February in Thailand. Cycling 860 kilometres from Bangkok to Phuket will be Kelly's first time to Asia and he is looking forward to riding under very different conditions than his European experiences.

Those continental experiences include being the winner of the Tour of Spain, four-time green-jersey champion in the Tour de France and countless Classics, including his infamous 1992 Milan-Sanremo win. In his recently released autobiography *Hunger*, Kelly details his risk-taking descent of the Poggio as he chased Italian rider Moreno Argentin down a looping, twisting road with

dangerous switchbacks. He catches Argentin, who had a 15 second lead at the summit, just before the final kilometre then blasted past him in the final sprint.

"When the race comes down to the sharp end, when everyone is prepared to bare their teeth, it is the one who is prepared to bite that will win," he writes.

What motivated Kelly's hunger is revealed in his book, where he delves into his early years growing up on a farm in Ireland, the influence his brother Joe had on his cycling career and his drive and tenacity to capture 193 professional wins.

A man of few words when he competed, Kelly has learned to open up as his hours of non-stop television commentary attest to. This skill will benefit those lucky enough to cycle with Kelly in Thailand. Telling his tales of racing against Eddie Merckx, Greg LeMond, Laurent Fignon, Bernard Hinault and Miguel Indurain will no doubt be a topic of discussion during this holiday, where Kelly is doing what he loves, cycling.

For more information on the Sean Kelly Tour, please contact SpiceRoads Cycle Tours at www.spiceroads.com

"Hunger", by Sean Kelly, is published by Peloton Publishing and is available in hardback.

