

I arrived in Calgary about an hour late and sans all my baggage, including my bike. Seems there was a "weight issue" on the plane, so they thoughtfully removed all my stuff for me. Then it was too late in the evening to get any decent food to eat, so Melanie and I ate a really gross meal compliments of a partially closed grocery store deli. This is not how to prepare for a World Cup!

Things got better on Friday when they delivered my bags early in the morning. Much relieved, we headed out to the Canada Olympic Park to register and ride the course. I have never seen a winter Olympic park before; those ski jumps are gigantic! I had no idea from the perspective on television just how huge they are.

Before riding I paid a visit to the nice folks at Shimano, because it seems that in all the airplane travel one of my brake rotors bent. A quick replacement and we were on our way to the course. It had rained the whole night before, and we were told the ground was super greasy, but the trails in Calgary drain so quickly that by the time we got out there it was truly the tackiest soil I've ever ridden on. There were a few roots, but they mostly ran perpendicular to the trail, so no worries on slipping off of them. Melanie and I stopped to check out the few tricky spots on the trail, but the course was so smooth and flowy that we mostly just cruised it.

Naturally, it rained all that afternoon and night again. Our race began at 11:00, and the first lap was super slick. We all had to run up and down the hills, and ride with one foot out for the corners. But by the second lap the soil soaked it all up and it was back to being sweet riding again. I had chosen to run a Bontrager Jones tire up front, and a Bontrager Revolt in the back, and I do think it was the perfect combo. Unfortunately for me all the travel caught up with me and I had lead for legs in the first half of the race. It was such a reversal of last weekend for me: I rode the descents like a dream, but couldn't climb fast at all. So, as things would have it, I finished close to the same although slightly better than last weekend: 17th place. Not too bad, but not too great either. It is always disappointing to fall short of your goal but it is also important to keep it all in perspective.

The good news is that now I have a few weeks to regroup and train like mad for the final push of the season. There are a lot of important events coming up, and I intend to be very ready. Scott Blanchard from Pyramid Coaching and I have a plan to get me back into peak form, and the remaining race courses should be much more comfortable terrain for me. I will also be able to drive to most of the upcoming races (in my Ford Focus of course!) which I prefer any day over the cramped conditions and questionable air inside a plane. So look for another, more positive, report from me in three weeks! Until then, anyone want to join me for some training up Snowbowl road?