

Sandpoint, ID, is a town I fell in love with back in 1999 on my coast to coast cycling trip. Both this year and last year my initial impressions were reaffirmed: the town is full of friendly people, breathtaking lakes and mountains, and great trails.

We held our fourth Women's PreRide with a Pro clinic, and it was our most successful to date. Due to the large turnout we split the group into a beginner group of 10-15 (led by Sara and Lisa) and a sport/expert group of 11 (led by yours truly). The course is a pretty long lap, so we collectively decided to just hit the trickier sections so that we could keep the clinic to about an hour. The first tricky section is a high-speed, rutted, silty, rocky, switch-backy descent. We talked about it, I demonstrated it, then each rider took a go at it. There were a few crashes, a few riders who had perfect form, and a few who decided walking was the better option. The other main section I wanted us to practice was a big, swooping rock. This rock is considerably more rideable than it looks, but it is quite intimidating at first. I was very excited that several women who had been unable to ride it before the clinic found a safe way down it this time! Apart from being such a successful clinic, I asked for a volunteer to help us with water bottle hand-ups the next day. Michelle quickly volunteered. The next day we were scheduled to meet so that I could give her our water bottles. She not only met me there, she brought the whole family to meet me! Her three children were so sweet and polite, all wanting to shake my hand and chat for a while. We gave Michelle a jersey as a thank-you for her help, and so that she would have Ford Cycling Team clothing to wear in the feed zone. Truly we could not have had a more appreciative recipient! Then, for our feeds, the kids and Jeff (their dad) stood as lookouts along the way, and hollered up to Michelle when we were coming. How great is that! Michelle and each kid had their own races to think about in the coming days, so we really appreciated their team effort.

My biggest goal on the cross country this year was to ride it smoother than last year. Last year I had been in second place for most of the race, only to fall apart by crashing multiple times and finishing in fifth. I met my goal and rode a perfectly smooth race. This meant I did have to scrub a little speed to ensure good lines in some sections, but it really paid off. I was in fifth for most of the race, and right near the end I almost got reeled in by Chrissy Redden. Fortunately I did not make any mistakes and was able to hold her off. Another podium finish for the Ford Cycling Team!

The next day's short track was even hotter than the cross country. During my warm up and while standing on the start line, I really doubted that I had the energy for this kind of effort. But on the first lap I noticed that I was feeling alright. I don't like those races where everyone just looks at each other waiting for an attack and therefore riding in a group that is much too large for the space we have to race in. So, I attacked. Hard. I jumped out in front and had a good

gap for about 3-4 laps, breaking up the race into a lead group of about 7. Then I got reeled in by that group, so I sat in for about 3-4 more laps. Then Allison Dunlap attacked and I started to fade. I dangled off the back of the group until 2 laps to go, when I could no longer hold on. So, I finished seventh. I missed out on the podium, but I got some good air time!

Overall, this was one of the most successful weekends of the season for the Ford Cycling Team. We led a wonderful clinic, did some great racing, and met a ton of wonderful people! Huge thanks to Round and Round for promoting our clinic so well.