

Last year my World Championships experience was overwhelming. This year I went feeling much more relaxed after having a year of experience under my belt. It made a huge difference for me to be able to enjoy my time there rather than feeling so nervous.

My travels to Les Gets, France, went smoothly. There were a bunch of us all on the same flights on the way over, which makes that kind of long distance traveling so much better. The only hitch came up upon arrival when my bicycle and spare wheels did not arrive with me. Well, no worries, last year the airlines lost my clothing bag for 5 days, and although I would much rather be without clothes (those are easily borrowed) than without my bike, I was still confident it would arrive the next day.

Gretchen Reeves, Jay Henry, and I were sharing an apartment in Les Gets. When we got there we realized that this place was way better than we could have hoped for: it had a clothes washer and dryer and a dishwasher (all highly unusual luxuries when traveling in Europe), it was situated literally on the cross country course, and it had a balcony with views of the cross country, downhill, and four cross courses.

We had arrived on Tuesday, and Wednesday my bicycle still hadn't arrived. Gretchen let me use her bike to spin on, which was nice to get the legs moving but it is always an awkward feeling to ride a bike that is not set up for you. Regardless, I had a nice spin down to Morzine and around the other nearby towns. This region, the Haute Savoie, is breathtaking. The mountains are huge and glaciated, and the roads were built for riding. The Tour de France went through this region a couple years ago, and it was fun to imagine being in that peloton as I cruised around. There are ski runs on many of the mountain sides, with single track dropping off of them and down towards the roads. Endless hours of pedaling are available.

Thursday, still no bicycle. They delivered my spare wheels, but were still claiming that they had no record of my bicycle. I borrowed Gretchen's bike for another spin, but began working on plan B in case my bike had simply disappeared. I found that Kona had Tracy Moseley's hard tail available and it fit me pretty well. I decided that if my bike hadn't arrived by the morning, I'd take a lap of the course on the Kona.

Friday, still no bicycle. I took a lap on the Kona, which was great to finally get to ride a mountain bike, but frustrating because every bike handles differently and I consequently walked most of the technical stuff out of fear of crashing. Tracy's bike is chopped out downhill style, so I nearly popped wheelies up the steep climbs. But it was relieving to have finally seen the course. I think riding her

bike was akin to washing your car in order to make it rain, because later that day my beautiful K2 arrived! What a relief!

The weather had been beautiful all week, and Saturday was no exception. Apparently the course was drier on Saturday than it had been all week, which was great for me because I got to ride it for real for the first time and was able to easily ride some of the sections that had been sketchy in the days prior. It was a great confidence boost. The course had relatively long climbs for a World Cup course, with a mix of grassy climbing and single track soil climbing. The descents were all really short and sketchy, with steep drop-ins and tough corners. The only long-ish descent was built like a four cross course, with gigantic burms and jumps that could send you flying. I went to sleep that night feeling confident that although my preparation that week had been really off since I hadn't had my bike to ride, the course was fun and well-suited for me.

I awoke the next morning to a whole lot of rain. Not downpour style rain, more like a constant, steady, thick drizzle. We knew this meant the course was going to be a whole new story. All those sketchy descents were likely going to be unrideable, and many of the climbs might be also. The USA team had fortunately brought trainers for us to warm up on underneath the tent, but things got a little chaotic for me and my warmup was cut short. This year I was staged in about row 4 of 7, much better than last year's last row staging. Even though the start seemed wide open, we all got messed up and ran into each other as the climb was super slick. I put a foot down twice and found myself pretty far towards the back within the first two minutes. But I did a good job of moving forward in the next climbing sections. Like we had predicted though, the descents were unrideable and many of the climbs were too slick to clean also. I felt like I was riding my bike well, moving forward most of the time, but as soon as I got into the running sections I just struggled. My knees and ankles were aching by lap three, and I started picking my way through the running sections instead of cutting loose and really running. I think this is where I lost most of my time. I finished the race 29th, six places better than last year, but far short of what I feel I am capable of finishing.

Although my bike arrived home with me, my travels home were not nearly so smooth as my travels there. The fatigue of not being able to put together more than 4 consecutive hours of sleep all week had fully caught up with me, and I started coming down with something midway over the Atlantic. I nearly didn't get on my connecting flight from Chicago out of fear of having a medical emergency while on the plane. But I made it home and am looking forward to getting as much sleep as I can before heading out to Mammoth for the National Championships!