

I set off for Flagstaff Arizona one week before racing in Durango. Dara was kind enough to let me hang out at her place for a few days. The idea was to acclimate to the dry weather and the altitude. Most beneficial was the 10 hours of sleep each night plus the nap I took each day. Dara and I would wake up from napping just laughing at the fact that we were sleeping so much.

Dara was a gracious host. She showed me around Flagstaff and took me on some great rides. Most importantly, she showed me around the kitchen and taught me how to cook. My fiancée was very excited about the idea of me coming back to Boston with the ability to cook more than a grilled cheese sandwich.

On Tuesday, Dara and I set off for Durango. The car ride was amazing. We drove by Monument National Park among other great sites. For the entire ride I was pointing and asking "what's this, what's that". Dara must not have been too aggravated as she didn't drive off without me after stopping for gas.

On Wednesday Dara and I pre rode the course. To our delight, we found that the course was lengthened by 4-5 miles. I feel that the 4-5 miles were all up hill. Remember when you were a kid and had to walk up hill to school both ways, it was like that! I, however, fared better than Dara who had some navigational difficulties and got lost somewhere along the way. Luckily she left bread crumbs and found her way back to a two way section where we met up. Then we cruised downhill to the finish.

On Thursday Dara and I parted paths and I went to stay with my good friends Andy and Jason who came all the way from Boston to Durango to watch me race. We had a great time and by Saturday morning I was ready to race. I lined up and got a great start. Then the climbing started and went on and on and on and on. I got into a good rhythm up at the top of the mountain when disaster struck. My chain had wrapped itself around all sorts of things and I found myself at the side of the trail pleading with it and doing a lot of yanking. I resumed progress after the chain was repositioned. Coming through the start finish to the second lap, I wasn't sure I was going to be able to climb the mountain again. I went through the feed zone, looked at Andy and Jason, and pushed on. I climbed as hard as I could and then ripped the downhill. At 30 miles an hour my rear wheel started making the most hideous noise and the back of my bike started vibrating. I had taken the bike to the shop and supposedly the problem was fixed. I guess it wasn't. At that point, I didn't care. It was a race to the finish. I came in 22nd place. Not quite as good as I had hoped but I put in a good fight.

Sunday it was time for the Short Track. I was fired up and ready to go after a good warm up. I had a good start off the line and went to work. I think I was pulling 1/2 the field for part of the race but I didn't care and systematically dropped everyone behind me. Dara didn't get a great start but came on strong in the end and Lisa had a great race.

We finished 8th, 10th and 11th in a blaze of Ford Orange. Not a bad way to end the series.

I finished 11th overall in the short track series. One place out of the top ten, but I was pretty happy with that. I also finished 15th overall in the cross country series. 8 places better than my 23rd of last year. I am fired up to keep improving for 2005!

Time to get ready for the National Race at Mammoth and then my wedding a few days later.

Until then

Happy trails

SARA