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20 jan 05.

an interesting start to a new year: balmy days, bitter cold days, happy ones, sad ones, fleeting moments of utter bliss

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and complete frustration, ups and downs, i tell ya!Eits been one of those weird times where you run through just about every emotion possible, still unsure of what to make of it. if you've seen Garden State (the best movie i've ever seen, changed my life) its something like that, a changing of perspectives. if you didn't love it, i'm sorry, but you just don't get it and so maybe it wasn't for you to understand at this point in your life. watch the film, get the soundtrack. amazing stuff.

a little update from my little world: a few weeks ago, i watched helplessly as a car going 40 struck my one-year old pup summit, throwing her to the curb. bless her. it was traumatic for the both of us. silly as it sounds, i can only hope to exude the same strength and courage next time i hit a bump in the road. amazingly, beyond a few scrapes and bruises, she's a healthy girl and happier than ever.

near 70 degrees in colorado springs today, a great day to sit at a desk, right? NOPE. its ridiculous. and to think, 4 days ago i was freezing my tail off in between periods of blowing snow and sun at breckenridge. ah, the coveted trails around the inconspicuously named Chair 6, not frequented by weak at heart and not easily stumbled upon by tourists. that's what we like about it. no groomers there, just valleys with steep walls and trees and moguls and plenty of powder. (note to other skiers/boarders: please wear a helmet. my guess says in a few years, helmets will be mandatory at all resorts.) good times.

so today i sit indoors while the call of my little black bike stocked with brand new parts & a sweet new fork awaits and so does my puppy who has been spared another day. i say trails should be in good shape for the weekend.

HEY MOAB WILL: hollar if you're out there, i've lost your address...my mtbEgirls & i will be storming sedona next month & we need the scoop on the cool trails.

21.dec.04

'll be the first to say colorado springs is not short of some real-life rockin mtb chicks, not the pros or world champions, but the everyday amateur chicks with heart and soul that for the most part go unrecognized. these chicks have much passion for the sport and are out there doing their thing, figuring it out - not waiting around for the guys to show up or show them the way. these chicks have got it goin on and i can't hold back my bragging on them. credit is about due girls.

warm temps hung aroundEthe springs all weekend calling for much riding. saturday i met two fellow chickas to ride at palmer park - a pretty sweet network of trails in the middle of our city, known for more technical riding. trails were a bit sketchy and i took a good digger while gingerly climbing a snow-covered rooted step-up. *insert laughing: because crashing is funny like carrying a wobbly mattress, right Fred-D? julie rocked her juliana down edna mae like it was nobody's business. edna mae is a techy section best handled by full-suspension and unapologetic skills. she took all the drops with grace & style, not to be matched by any of the guys. so proud of her...go jules!

i groaned as a rolled out on skinny tires sunday, sketched out by two very bruised legs and some trail rash- but nothing a few hours of spinnin around colorado won't work out. a group of us girls us left downtown for a little detox, some of us keen on climbing, others not so much (ok, that's me). when asked about my 05 racing plans i imparted such "wisdom" (aka nonsense) about the "old me" and the "new me," 'bout my views on riding and competition, and waited patiently for the ride to meet the qualifications of "new me"-style riding... fun and only competitive in a fun way. so you get it, i'm all about having fun....if you can smile at your opponent or giggle your way through a ride, you're onto me. (so will i be laughing my way through the Leadville 100?? someone out there, please advise! lottery is pulled in january.)

so we worked our way up near the big scar from strip mining in the mountain and as we topped the climb in rolls a group of testosterone-charged guys sporting their team/club kits on a training ride (more appropriately, a training "race"), most of them too cool to say hi. jamie and i exchanged a mutual "let's go!" glance and headed out after them. we had a little fun, sucking wheels down the hill pedaling near our max, amped to be just holding on. good times, good times...

14.dec.04

i'll be honest, i'm over it this holiday season. let's start '05 already. a little bitter, i admit. shopping is wasted time indoors that could be spent outside. christmas music is over-played and frankly, a reminder of how difficult it is to be alone at the holiday...and the list goes on. but i have found one thing this season that brings it to life in a new way - it's the living out of something that says "its not about me." this season is for giving, not so much in the literal gift-exchange tradition sense as much as giving out of your own heart.

mountain biking, especially at the competitive level is a very "me-centered" sport/passion/lifestyle/whatever role it plays in your life. honestly, we ride (selfishly) because we love what it does for our bodies, minds and souls and rarely take into account out how it can benefit someone else. i mean, we're talking bikes here, right?ok, you think i'm on a tangent... that's ok, i would too, but bear with me.

on a ride a few weeks ago, i was reminded that, no, it's not all about me. i am often guilty of planning rides around this question: "what kind of workout will i get?" and not for the quality time it allows me to invest in the lives of my riding partners. but then it dawned on me; i can freely give someone else a part of my life that i cherish most! so i took my girlfriend jodie, who's fresh out of the UK, to ride in Ute Valley Park. (ok, partly for the sheer hilarity of hearing words like "bollocks" and "bloody hell" from her on her "flash" bike, but also because it forced me into some fresh air that was much needed.) it opened up a new dimension of mountain biking to me. i took corners and techy sections through jodie's eyes - for her own self-preservation - and to help her cover new ground in the area of mtb skills. let me tell ya, it can be a truly rewarding experience to slow down & enjoy beauty and empowerment of teaching someone to savor the joys and pains of cycling. and so i pass the challenge on to you, to share something that's precious to you. don't spend a dime; spend something much more valuable than money on the someone you love - your time, your energy, and a little piece of something you adore.

7.dec.04

greetings mtb friends in warmer climates. oh how I wish to trade places with you! it is cold cold cold in little ol colorado springs these days, the darkness of winter (that's yet to even begin) has set in and I am already dreaming of mtb road trips to balmy trail locales. this is the time of year when I think about heading anywhere with a promising forecast and I'm likely to hit the road at any given moment, we're a bit between seasons here - the ski hills are working up their bases and in the meantime all of Colorado heads to the only 2 or 3 ski trails that are open for first tracks of the season. not me, I'll wait as long as I have to till the mountains are prime. and when the crowds and lift lines grow old and the trails are tracked, I'll take to the backcountry- ok, so life in Colorado isn't SO bad. and diversity is good. I've been a bit off the radar lately since life dealt me a few tough blows this fall and I admit it's a daily struggle to stay strong, but just like riding, I'm happy knowing that after the steep out-of-the saddle climb, I'm gonna ride one hell of a downhill on the other-side and i'm not gonna look back. only a little more snow to melt away and I'll be in the saddle again. see ya on the trail chicks.

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12.jul.04

ever stopped to realize the drama & busyness that surrounds you and it's power to disconnect you with what makes you passionate and with the things that make you come alive? the daily-ness of life can be overwhelming and if you're not careful, can straight up rob you. and that's the beauty of mountain biking: it allows you to explore the "art of being". see, if your mind is caught up in extraneous things, particularly as you descend over technical trail, you could die. it's that simple. on the other hand, riding allows you to just "be", to put all else aside and just ride. so while I thirst for the sweetest singletrack and the most soul-shaking mtb experience, there's another quest I'm on- and in that spirit, my Summer of Epics rolls on- in more ways than one. okay, coming back to reality- I summit & I spent the weekend in vail, home to the '94 and '01 World Mountain Bike Championships. friends, there's a reason people trek to vail from all over the world. if you know me, you already know that I'll go on & on about the dirt in vail. if you don't, go ahead, laugh at how silly I get over DIRT! I don't know many other chicks who do. seriously, vail's dirt is sweet & I have visions of riders traveling the world in search of this flavor of gourmet dirt, uncovering it in a remote rainforest and hauling it onto the trails themselves. (funny, right? like when my dad used to tell us moguls were machine-made.) riding vail in the summer is as good or better than the best powder day on the mountain. no lift lines. no spendy lift ticket. just deep, soft, loamy dirt. from the hard-pack switchbacks that crisscross the mountain, to the wooded, rooted drop-ins- I'll stop there because to truly understand, you've got to ride it for yourself. Ejust promise me you'll ride up the mountain, and not the lift. btw,don't read too much into reviews on mtbr; there are plenty of squabbling "locals" who don't want you uncovering their best trail. can you blame them? on to Breckenridge- well, it seems as though they haven't yet caught the vision of the whole-mtn, year-round experience, at least not corporately. on a three hour ride yesterday, I didn't see a single rider. however, a multi-million dollar freeride park is still forthcoming on the mountain in 04.hmmmm. E one more tangent before closing this journal entry comes from a recent observation shared with someone during a ride. with the birth of the freeride revolution and gravity fever, are xc riders a dying breed? where are the young up-and-coming riders? I live in a town that's home to the Olympic Training Center, Carmichael Training Systems, RockShox& plenty of world-class mountain bikers & it's clear that there's been a shift in disciplines. props to our young friends who continue to reinvent an ever-changing sport. Eperhaps it's a call to challenge our sisters and the little chicks out there to go outside & pedal? see ya in Snowmass.

23 may 2004 E What do you do when your mtb trail drops about 50 feet straight down? Ok, maybe not straight down, but over a 2-pitch rock wall/crevasse thing-y. Well, when in Frutia, tie your bike off and hoist it down (close your eyes as your pretty custom paint job clanks down the rock).



Then hold onto the rope anchored to the top and lower yourself, try to avoid banging your way down in the likes of your bike. É Hey, who knew cycling shoes (minus the sticky rubber of climbing shoes) had dual purpose? Second purpose being rock-climbing and repelling. É And there you have it chicks, the famed Edge Loop of Fruita, Colorado – home to the Fruita Fat Tire Festival which comes around every May in a neighboring town to Moab. Call it an 'mtb playground' if you will, because, well- that's just what it is. É Edge Loo pis not for the faint of heart. No, no- if that's more you, stick to the lower trails off Road 18 like Zippity Do Da, Prime Cut and Chutes and Ladders. É Another notch in the bedpost for 'Epic-palooza', the so-called Summer of Epic Rides, part of my lofty non-racing 2004 mtb goals (the other goals being: ride the singlespeed, cruiser commute, and celebrate a great ride a cold one). É Edge Loop starts on super fun singletrack that dodges the red flowering cactus and traces the edges of the monumental 'Book Cliffs' that line the north side of cute little Fruita. Don't be deceived by the start; avoid overextending yourself here because you'll need your juices. The trail hooks up with the fire road soon so be prepared for a freakin lot of climbing over the next 13 miles. After passing the pet cemetery lurking near the top (note: you're not there yet!), lower your saddle and slide your butt to the back to avoid munching it in the loose rock below you. This downhill is seriously steep. I came up on my friend Angela rolling off the side of the trail with her shiny new Blur. Don't forget to laugh out loud as you cruise down the tree-lined section of banking trail. É The sweet descent leads you to the waterfall repel that makes this ride such the rock star of Western Colorado. Beware, you are not through climbing. You'll meander the creek bed for a good remainder of the ride then go up and down, up and down over the edges of the Book Cliffs. É Perhaps the most hardcore epic I've ever lived, this one is worth your time, at least for the proverbial check in the block. Allow just enough time between visits to forget the excessive climbing this ride bears. Not to worry; the euphoria this ride brings will surely outlast its suffering. Enjoy the ride chicks.É

20 March 2004

The Art of Riding an Epic and Other Life Lessons.

No doubt, it is an art form. But the real skills lie in day 2 and day 3 following the death march ride you did the day before. Here's a story from my latest epic... epic (n.) is said to be defined as: a ride that must last for at least five hours and include at least three mechanicals that add at least an extra hour to the ride time. Epics are usually started with a statement like "the trail is buff, should only take three hours."



I was in a mid-week slump on Wednesday. The forecast was depressing and my mtb was calling. Two days later I was in a car with a good friend & our 2 dogs headed for the canyonlands of Moab, a short 6 hour jaunt over a few mountains from Colorado Springs. A few hours of sleep later, we were riding Porcupine Rim, epic-style, as a loop from our campsite on the river. It was a soul-quenching, mind rattling, lactic acid, 5-hour rendition of one of the most sacred Moab rides. It's like a spiritual awakening the moment you clean something formerly out of your league, go a little higher, climb stronger and yes, drop the biggest rock ever-the fog clears and everything just makes sense. It's as simple as that. I'm cruising down P-Rim after the overlook, riding so smooth, floating over rocks, babyheads & ledges and DOH! I just dropped about 3 feet without even slowing down and landed it with grace. It was like learning to ride without training wheels the first time, that simple. Day 2. Skies are blue and spring is in full swing in Moab. I couldn't be much happier for the moment. Jeeps are playing at the base of Cliff Hanger, the first drop-in to Amasa Back Trail, another beloved Moab ride (see entry from Tour of the Canyonlands disaster April 2003). I'm cool, I can clean this. But what I fail to recognize is, I'm cocky and overconfident too! from my super-girl skills the day before. But oh well, I'll go anyway and I drop in. And endo. And bust up both knees in front of a grand audience of jeeping tourists. Nothing like an involuntary dismount to sober up any air of arrogance that once existed. It's inevitable. The nature of the beast I guess. When in Moab, definitely visit Mondo CafŽ for some AM brew and a fresh breakfast. The coffee is yummy and the food is too. (For post-ride brew, try the Lime Beer at Eddie McStiff. You earned it.) Also recommended when you bring the double-burner camp stove but forget the fuel, The Jailhouse CafŽ (spinach/mushroom omelet is yum!) and Baja-style fish tacos at Miguel's. Day 3 calls for some mellow riding in Fruita, Colorado. By now, our legs are feeling an epic, a few crashes and the pound of the technical rides of the days past. AND we're 3 days past due for showers. Fruita is the answer to not quitting Moab cold turkey. Drive an hour on your way & you'll reach another mtb playground, known for it's fast, funky trail in the shadows of Moab. Fruita is special and amazing in it's own way. It will take the harsh out of your sad ride home to city-life and the 8-5. Once again, I came back a better person for spending time on my bike. Depending on where you are in your personal life, there is something about the still and quiet of the desert that can be life changing. Because with the drastic change in scenery also comes change in perspective and state of mind if you can wrap your arms around whatever beckons you there. I truly believe a caption I read in the Mountain Gazette was written only for me, "the desert is for startin' over." Absolutely. Enjoy the ride chicks.



march 7 2004 well, tonight my dog sleeps so I can finally sit down for a little download session. for a moment, I'm digging out from my puppy-ruled life to be a real person again- my world changed last week with the first addition to my little family of one. summit is a 12 week old german shepherd who sauntered out of her humane society kennel and into my life. the rest is history in the making. her knobby knees and giant feet have received plenty of these: oh, she's gonna be big!â and so she will aspire to great things! and she's getting a little self-conscious of those amazon-paws. it's been a hilarious ride and a learning experience. to summit my closet is a giant toyland of chew toys/shoes and i now know that it hurts when the tail gets shut in the door of my outback. (sorry!!) no one can resist her puppy breath, the clumsyness about the way she runs, her spastic rants where she crashes out with the squeaky frog toy still in mouth, the funny jerks she makes while she dreams...best of all, no one can resist her puppy love. especially me, iâm hooked. the trails are a big fat muddy mess right now due to recent heavy spring snow. so while the bike takes a momentary backseat, iâll teach summit trail etiquette and gradually build up her endurance and try not to spoil her rotten. according to my good friend marco, "it's not where you go, it's who you're withâ" that makes all the difference. and with the pitter-patter of my happy 4-legged friend next to me, i'll go anywhere. we'll see you on the trail.

february 19 "check your pulse, it's proof that you're not listening to the call your life's been issuing you... scared of the world outside you should go explore" - john mayer

this is not about taking a read from your heart rate monitor. every now and then, depending on your level of self-awareness, there comes a time to stop what youâre doing and take inventory. Take your proverbial "pulse". Because while youâre out there doing what you're doing, at the same time you may be completely missing your mark. And what a shame to go on with life, living with no intention, no passion. So through a string of revelations both in the mundane and serious arenas of my life, a few things that I thought were lost, have come back to me. What a satisfying feeling. Riding in Colorado has been well, very uncharacteristic of Colorado in February, at least through my yellow-lenses. Usually around this time of year, I succumb to Mother Nature, the bitter cold of winter and the blankets of snow she covers over the mountains. I take to indoor training and set my bikes sadly aside while I take my skis out for another ride or snowshoes for a hike. But not this year, I've almost completely cheated winter. Amazing, yes! But I admit, winter cycling has its ups and downs (think fingers so frozen you can't grip your brake levers and little toes that feel like rocks in your shoes). On my last mtb ride before the trails became snowy again, I passed two cross-country skiers. I laughed out loud, questioned my sanity and kept pedaling up Cheyenne Canon. Even stranger, the next day while descending into Manitou Springs, I rode past three llamas walking in the street. Again, I laughed out loud for the curiousness of the situation. All the while happy to be outside taking in the sights and sounds of winter atop my bike.

Don't wait until Spring, take your pulse, and go outside and play. Happy Winter mtbchicks. I'll see you on the trail.

January 24, 2004 Remembering Mark Reynolds

Most days I ride for me: for fitness, for pleasure, for release, for freedom from the daily-ness of life- but tomorrow I'll ride for someone else. On the eve of a Memorial mountain bike ride to remember Mark Reynolds, whose life was taken by a mountain lion as he stopped to fix his chain on January 8th, I am forced to reflect and I write with a heavy heart.

I moved to Colorado a few weeks after college graduation and was eager to meet people to ride with in my new town. Through a mutual friend, I met Mark on a ride in Cheyenne Canon while he was working for Carmichael Training Systems. Anyone who knew Mark will say he is remembered as an exceptionally caring and compassionate man with a heart for others.

In the fall of 2002, I was forced to take time away from my bikes to recover from surgery. Understanding my withdrawal, Mark showed his encouragement with a surprise gift delivered to my work. There are many kinds of friends - long time friends who grow up with you and others who come in and out of your life over the years. Each serves a purpose and each is equally important in the life lessons we learn and experiences we go through together. Mark was only part of my life for a short time but no doubt, I know his spirit will live on the trails and in the hearts of all who loved him here, including mine.

At a service held for him last week, a poem was read: "I ride ahead. Do not wait for me too long. I do not sleep. I am not gone, but over some ridge, riding, riding, riding."

Mark often asked fellow cyclists for donations to help needy children obtain their first bikes. His family has requested that donations be made to a fund set up in his name: **the Mark J. Reynolds Memorial Children's First Bike Fund, c/o OMS Sports, 2300 E. Katella Ave., Suite 430, Anaheim, CA 92806.**

Chicks and Friends of Mtbchick.com - It's almost that time! The most famous of all 24 Hour Races in the great mecca of Moab! This race embodies much of what mountain biking & mtb racing is all about. You see, in the middle of the Utah desert lies a sacred ground & every year it morphs from home to lizards and other desert creatures to a virtual tent city made of riders from every area of the country. Solo-ers, pro teams & amateur riders alike flock to 24 Hours of Moab.

For just over 24 hours, the desert rocks. Music rolls through the canyons. People line up 12-deep just to shower in a trailer. Have you ever peed in a port-a-potty in the pitch-black (what you can't see won't hurt you)? Ah, nothing like the latte wagon to make you feel at home. To the cycling-inclined, whether novice to pro, add this race to your 'must-do' list and do it. And afterwards on your bleary-eyed drive back to Iowa or wherever, you'll swear you've put the check in that box and say 'no more 24 hour races'. But, a year later you'll be back. You know you will.

So for the 24 Hour Race virgins, here's a peek into what goes down & how to make it the most positive experience:

The lowdown on Behind the Rocks Trail. The first 10 or so miles are wide singletrack that is rocky and much like other Moab riding. There are only a few technical spots, one you'll have to dismount - but everyone hike-a-bikes it there. There is ample passing room on the whole course. Pre-riding is recommended as there are a few sections where the line you take is critical, especially in the dark. *If you haven't had a chance to pre-ride, stay left on the technical sections. Think SAND! The start is somewhat sandy, and you'll encounter a few other beachy sections over the ~15 mi. course. Keep pedaling & concentrate on your balance. It takes more out of you to dismount & run through it, so just try to stay up. The last few miles are dirt road - so you'll want to big-ring it & crank into the finish, where you'll hand off your baton to your teammate. Coordinate the timing of your race laps with your team so that you get to ride the sunrise lap - it will be the most soul moving ride of your life.

1. At the baton handoff, take a support person with you to cover you with blankets & keep you warm until your teammate rolls in. If you have the luxury of having such great support, I highly recommend it. Forget the stereotype of the steamy hot desert - it gets super chilly when the sun goes down, especially in October.

2. Bring clothes for all conditions & be prepared. You may want technical fabric like Windblock, tights, gloves, etc. Don't count on your sweaty clothes drying in time for your next lap. Bring a new kit for each lap.

3. Practice riding at night, a lot! Don't trust the advertised life of your light. Get familiar with yours - know how much time you'll have before your battery dies. LOTS of people have lights die on the course; with HID systems, they'll be moching off of your lights to make it in! You don't want to be 'that guy'.

4. Two things to do between laps: eat & sleep. Even if you're too amped at night - sleep while you can, you'll need the energy. You won't feel like it, but remember to re-fuel your body with the appropriate foods after a lap.

5. Bring your own support team. If you think you'll have the juice to clean your bike, tweak any mechanical problems, feed yourself AND clean up after a race lap, think again. Appoint someone to 'manage' your team. This person would ideally be responsible for making sure racers are awake in time for their next lap & seeing to it that the bike & rider are prepped. Having people to count on as your support will allow you to focus on the race and your own well-being. (Or if you're part of a 4 or 5 person team, assign the person 2 laps before you to be your personal alarm clock so you'll have time to get dressed, warm up, etc.)

6. I personally recommend the HID light systems. The white light reminds me of florescent lights like my office - HID lights are so bright and can't even compare other systems. They're a little more spendy than the regular systems, but the battery life is significantly longer so if you can spring for them, DO! (Check out HID lights from Light & Motion and Nightrider at www.coloradocyclist.com .)

7. If you encounter a mechanical problem & need help, visit the Team Ironclad tent - FREE tech support. They will do anything they can to help you!

8. The Real Time scoring is so much fun - your family & friends at home can follow your racing live throughout all 24 hours at www.grannygear.com .

9. When you're on your 3 am lap, don't be too serious. Encourage the passersby and those you pass. Have fun and remember why you do what you do. Ride happy.

July 7 2003

My travel schedule has slowed for July and I'm finally able to enjoy all that I love about Colorado. A week in Detroit just about did me in. I spent the following week coughing through several rides, trying to overcome the air quality that comes with being a very automotive city. Traveling creates a rollercoaster-ish training schedule and the race results to prove it. Especially when coming home means 7,000 feet elevation. How about starting a ride at 11,000 feet? Climb about 1,000 feet and drop almost 4,000. ah yes, the beloved Monarch Crest Trail. Over 40 delicious miles of singletrack. So much rocky technical downhill that your hands get all pumped and when you remove them from the bar, you can hardly open your fist. On the 4th of July I headed into the mountains near Salida to ride "Crest Trail" - a soul-moving ride. If you're ever facing burnout or just not in a happy place, Crest Trail will bring it all back. This trail ranks up there with other epics like 401 (Crested Butte), Government Trail (Snowmass), Kenosha to Georgia Pass. The first few miles are an unforgiving granny gear climb - I could've sworn I had a few drinks at the start. As the altitude increases, your balance is compromised, much like feeling your 2nd or 3rd margarita. The trail climbs up to Marshall Pass and the Continental Divide over high alpine meadows and a few snowfields untouched by summer. Then aside from a few more grunt climbs, it's a screaming downhill through forest, creeks and rock fields. The kind where your vision is blurred from being so rocked, even on a full suspension bike. I was giddy at the top of the pass, partially from the lack of air, but also for the views of pristine pines that covered the valley into which we were about to descend. What a day. The weekend is short and there are more miles to cover! Off to Winter Park to ride and do some camping in the Arapaho National Forest. I'm cruising up Vasquez Road, enjoying the high clearance of my Outback when suddenly to my horror, my bike appears in my side view mirror! My bike bounced her way right out of the skewer fork mount. Bike is fine, car is fine. I continue on. I pre-ride the course with friends Betsy and Micah, cook dinner, sleep and prepare to race the Winter Park Super Loop. Again, rolling down the rocky road, oops, I have forgotten my mtb shoes that are drying in a tree. I race back to the campsite, and guess what? I am one lucky girl to have a bike in one piece and all car windows in tact! Finally, I get to the WP base area, register just in time and begin my warm-up. I take a big hit coming down singletrack and knock my disc brake out of alignment. My bike is a squealing mess. The great Neutral Tech Support guy temporarily tweaks it and I'm off. Needless to say, a number of factors at WP claimed my 2nd ever DNF (the first one was also at WP). Feeling emotionally defeated, I race every now and then, and you can't race well on spent legs. Already the 4th of July weekend is past. I'm about to face my 25th and raced for the first time in the 25-29 age category. Isn't it great that skill and speed come with time and experience! That's what it's all about. I'll redeem myself at SolVista next weekend!

28.apr.03

I'll never be a roadie.

Ah yes, the dreaded road bike. If you're an avid mountain biker, you probably understand that in order to be a competitive racer, it will behoove you to spend time riding on the road. In the wake of a 200-mile ride I did last weekend, the reasons why I mountain bike are forever seared in my head. Aside from the physical benefits, these are few things that keep me of the mountain biking persuasion...

° #1 - The sheer boredom of road riding from being hypnotized by the wheel in front of me. This is especially true on long rides. There is nothing fulfilling about turning the pedals mindlessly over asphalt hour after hour after hour with your head down. (Exception: unless you are lucky enough to live somewhere like Colorado Springs, where the usual 30-mile post work ride consists of landmarks like Garden of the Gods, Cheyenne Canon, and views of a 14,000 peak.)

° Fearing for your life. Riding shouldn't stressful, but plant yourself on the shoulder of somewhat busy road, and the success of your ride is no longer dependent on you, but the drivers around you. Sometimes I can feel the tension taking over my whole body as trucks and really busy people whiz by dangerously close to my little road bike and me. Anyone who rides road can tell you plenty of 'close call' stories, probably daily. There's something inherently wrong with the fact that this school of cycling can encourage road rage from within.

° What's the challenge in riding pavement? What about the exhilaration of a fast, technical descent or the sense of accomplishment from cleaning a tricky section? Seriously, anyone can jump on a road bike and turn the pedals in circles, but how about becoming a well-rounded cyclist on more technical terrain?

° The peace of riding mtb. There's nothing like escaping the noise and traffic of the city and retreating to a quiet mountain ride where the only thing you hear is your own breath, your bike, and nature around you.

° Don't forget 24 Hour Racing, night rides, mtb camping road trips, banked turns, catching air, full suspension, single speeds, and the list goes on... It no longer is just a bike ride, but a soul-moving experience.

Having said all of this - were it not for the few remaining beneficial qualities of riding road I'd be a true devout mtbchick. But as long as it helps with things like endurance, smooth pedaling and developing a quiet upper body, I'm forced to share my time between road and mountain riding. And thankfully, road riding allows me the opportunity to ride while still being a good steward of the trails after snow or rain. But given a choice, I'll always choose singletrack over road. Leave the stresses of the everyday at work and take to the trails.

4.7.03

Moab Rides & Spreading Love

Moab shows me no love. Don't get me wrong, Moab is full of great people. Rather, I've got a load of stories about my own personal string of bad luck/karma/what have you in Moab. I'm trying not to take it personally. And I don't wish it on anybody.

In past treks to the proverbial Promised Land of mtb, I've broken a rather costly pedal riding Slick Rock Trail, lost the suspension ability in my fork while descending Amasa Back Trail, and hiked miles of snow covered Porcupine Rim just to name a few.

Adding to my poor track record, one more not-so-great adventure in Moab...

I set out to pre-ride the Tour of the Canyonlands racecourse on Friday. My friends were practicing downhill runs, so I ventured out alone. No big deal, since there would be plenty of other riders on the course to catch up with. I climbed out Kane Creek Road and over Hurrah Pass and strangely enough, I didn't see a soul for 17 miles.

That's when, in the spirit of my typical Moab ride, things started to get crazy. I stopped to see about a knocking sound from the rear-triangle bolt area. To no avail, I kept trucking down into Jackson's Hole. The desert was quiet and beautiful. A bit lonely, but I kept my focus on the ride and how nice it was to be out in the wild. Lizards crisscrossed the trail in front of me and little cactus flowers spotted the basin.

So the sun is shining. I'm working on my tan and life is good. Then oil spewed everywhere from my rear shock and the

casing blew off the threads. Sweet, my shock just blew up. I'm 17 miles away from anything. Out of water. I'm trying to ride but my pedals keep bottoming out on rocky road below me. I had no choice but to start hiking back. Surely some jeeps would pass and offer me a lift back to town. Of course not, Moab has it out for me.

Some time passed, and panic started to set in. I shed a few tears. I was gauging my speed - computer says I'm walking 2mph... 16 more miles to go... uh oh. Crazy thoughts ran over me about being stranded in the dark or meeting a big scary animal in the desert, hungry for a mtbchick. In the middle of the great big desert, in such a situation, you start to realize how small you are. They didn't teach survival skills at Girl Scouts. I'm a light rider, my equipment doesn't usually fail.

Several riders started coming past me and for whatever reason, didn't feel like stopping to check on the hiking mtbchick (they say, 'what goes around, comes around'). I was beginning to get a bad feeling for the mtb community... until I met Will who stopped, threaded the shock together, and I was on my slow way limping in my injured bike. Ah, finally - 6 hours later - a car ride and water!

Maybe I've offended this rider's Promised Land called Moab, I don't know... Anyway, if you're heading there soon, put in a good word for me. Perhaps we can make amends.

THANKS to Will and the two crazy, Canadian riders who picked me up 5 miles outside Moab and saved the day!

"I've seen and met angels wearing the disguise of ordinary people living ordinary lives".

3.11.03

I am convinced that cycling is one of the greatest things you can do as an adult to reacquaint yourself with your inner child. In fact, I met mine a few times last week, bringing me back to the days of skinned knees from trying to ride my bike without training wheels. I have to laugh because as a coordinator for a non-profit ride, and I see grown men and women wipe out all the time. Call me a jerk for doing so, but there is something so humorous in that.

Saturday brought warm temps to Colorado Springs, uncovering the dirt on the trails once again (a rare sight in Colorado Winter). My brand new Juliana Superlight sat idly in my living room looking squeaky clean with the little knobbies still on the tires. I ignored word that snow still lingered in Cheyenne Canon (nestled around 8,000 ft.) and headed up the Chutes to Columbine Trail with a few guys.

Later, I limped home with a gnarly bruised left thigh. Seems like most crashes happen so fast that you don't really know how you did it or what happened. Could've been that Speedplays were not meant for hiking through the snow... or maybe it was an uncontrollable two-way slide in the snow, more successfully pulled off by skis. Either way, I went down painfully hard in about a foot of snow. The bike came down on me and I broke a bar end with my leg.

Better yet, in an attempt to work out the soreness, I sampled more gravel during a mountain ride a few days later when I washed out on a hard packed corner, going down again. I limped home, right leg bruised, bloody and packed with Ute Valley Trail.

Regrets? Absolutely not! If you ride, you are going to crash. If you don't, you're not riding hard enough. I suggest crying if feel like it. Pound your fists into the dirt if it makes you feel better. But get back on (barring serious injury) & keep pedaling. Learn from it. Relish your crashes. Laugh. Take pride in your battle wounds because it means you are going faster, pushing yourself and your limits. We don't get stronger by never taking risks.

Have fun & keep the rubber side down.

3/5/03

Steph on finding her bliss...

"Go in the direction of your dreams, live the life you've imagined." Thoreau's quote came to life for me. I remember my first truly blissful ride and the first feeling of being really "on" and in tune with the bike. I knew I would never be the same.

Afternoons during high school, I dabbled in mtn biking, jumped a picnic table on my skis at the local ski hill and practiced at field hockey. My best friend & I were dubbed "Dirtball & Scumbag" for the elegant way we donned dirt after riding muddy Pennsylvania trail. And I was plotting my move to Colorado - a vacationland to me that I dreamed of calling "home".

But college plans took me to the small, somewhat stereotypical town of College Station, Texas. In a way, I felt robbed of who I was & in a state of a cultural displacement. The adventurous girl inside me became lost in the Texas cheerleader/ beauty queen female student body. Lucky for me, a certain guy caught my eye & shared with me his passion for mountain biking. I fueled all the passion I had for skiing & the outdoors into my new love... addiction and inevitably, my lifestyle.

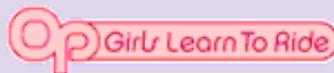
I got my first racing bike, a bass boat green Schwinn Homegown was invited to join my a team. I remember one of my teammates saying to me "those pink socks make you look like a girl". DUH. I was the only female mtb chick on the team. I tagged along with the guys (not too many mtb biking women in the Lone Star state), following close behind, watching their lines and all the while getting stronger and more confident.

Would I ever have guessed that I would land here, making a living out of bicycling living in a vacation? Probably not, and I owe it to the men in my life who have encouraged me, pushed me (literally), custom built and painted bikes for me (ground up, litespeed & santa cruz) - outfitting me with nothing but the BEST, waited for me on the trail and let me win too... thanks.

I always remember the real reason I ride - I never do a training ride I don't feel like doing... IÖm not afraid to ride alone... I have more dollars invested in cycling than the stock market, or my car, home or anything else... I ride because it touches my soul. It sets me free.

All this said... find what it is that brings you to life & fall in love.

See you on the trail.



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