

## CHANDRA'S MONDAY RACE REPORT

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*November 27<sup>th</sup>, 2006*

After a week in hot and foggy Kuusamo, Finland where I placed a disappointing 38th in my first sprint race, this update features breakdown of the racing action, Finnish food (bad) and a visit to our new team sponsor Halti (great!) followed by a bunch of question marks representing where I'm going next because there isn't any snow in central Europe and we have two weeks of training to do before the next world cup.



*My awesome teammates: (l-r) George Grey from Rossland BC, me, Devon Kershaw from Sudbury ON, Dasha Gaiazova from Montreal QC*

As Theodore Roosevelt said, "Far better to dare mighty things, to win glorious triumphs, even though checkered by failure, than to take rank with those poor spirits who neither enjoy much nor suffer much, because they live in the grey twilight that knows not victory, nor defeat."

I'll thank Roosevelt for backing me up here when I say: at least I'm trying. It was another tough weekend of racing, but one large factor distinguished this weekend from the last: the undeniable presence of excitement around my favorite event: the sprint race.

Added to the international circuit in the year 2000, the sprint event comprises racing a loop ranging from 0.9 to 1.2 kms up to 4 times in one day. First against the clock in a qualification round, and then in elimination rounds where the 30 fastest skiers go head-to-head in heats of 6. It is without question my specialty event. There are only 4 sprint world cups in this 2.5-month racing odyssey, and only one in classic. This is unfortunate

because I need more experience to improve my technique, but on the other hand, skating is my stronger suit and a ton of fun.

The classic sprint World Cup this weekend wasn't what I was hoping for, but I gave it my best shot and came away with valuable feedback on the technique improvements I'm trying to implement. There simply is no short cut to achieving my goal of becoming a great classic skier; I must go out there and try to ski a little better every day until I get the hang of it in all the possible different snow conditions.

On the wet snow in +2 I came through in 38th place, thus ending my race day earlier than I'd planned. But a bad race presents the greatest opportunity for growth and I've now come up with a couple ways that I can make up the 1.6 seconds needed to get into the top 30. Next time, with a quicker tempo up the big climb and a little less of the sticky klister wax on my skis I think have a better chance. Devon qualified in 27th place, but suffered from the opposite problem I had and with not enough kick wax ended up in 29th.

With 3 skate sprints to look forward to I'm now one month into the trip and am leaving the boiled potatoes of Scandinavia behind for now. French Prime Minister Jacques Chirac expressed his view on the gastronomic challenges in Finland when he made the following comment regarding the bids for the 2012 Olympics: "You can't have the Olympics in England, the food there is the worst in the world. Except, perhaps, with the exception of Finland."

Ok, Jacques. But what they lack in food they more than make up for with friendly folks and great performance clothing as encountered by our team in a visit to National team sponsor Halti. With great people and fantastic clothing for all your winter sport needs, our team really enjoyed our half-day spent with the Halti crew reviewing their sharp-looking line for next year.



*Kershaw and I in next years' parka*

But Halti in Helsinki was just one of our stops en-route to Courmaeur, Italy (on the Italian side of Mont Blanc), where our team hopes to find some snow. At the very least some sunshine would be nice; after two weeks without it I can't help but get "Whiter Shade of Pale" stuck in my head every time I catch my reflection in a mirror.

Although we were planning to go to Davos for training, we are now on the hunt for snow, starting in Italy. Our European friends caution us that the snow may have melted out in Courmaeur because it's been 20 degrees C in Europe this past week. Many of them will have to roller ski and do dry land training at home. Is there really snow in Courmaeur? We don't know, but our back-up plan is to follow the Italian team because their head coach has connections to the Italian military, who are apparently camped up on some high pass where the road is usually closed, and if all else fails they could perhaps be convinced to do some grooming.

Thanks for your support!

**-Chandra**