

November 13<sup>th</sup>, 2006

## Chandra's Monday Race Report



(Why wait for the after-party to bust out the disco?)

This is the first installment of my Monday Race Report, which will appear right here on this very website every Monday with the play-by-play from the weekend's racing. This week's report starts off with some random observations from Saariselka, Finland and ends with some funky reindeer boots...

Population: 350

Sunrise 10:45 am

Sunset 12:45 pm

Average daytime temperature during our 3 days here: -15

Finland is very white. The sky, snow, trees, reindeer, fish, and potatoes are all part of the blank canvas on which we paint our ski racing madness. (Note\* Don't let the confusion over whether or not we're actually painting reindeer over here ruin the effect of my attempt to use a metaphor).

Enough about those cute reindeer; on Saturday I had my first race of the year. This classic sprint, a FIS (Federation International of Ski) race that attracted Fins from all

over, as well as Swiss, Japanese, Russians and us Canucks, was pretty crazy. And when I say crazy, what I mean is completely disorganized. I spent 6 hours out in the windy cold – skiing around to keep warmed up and swilling so much coffee that I was still jittery at suppertime – just to race a 1.2km loop.

The theme I've decided on for my 2.5-month racing tour, Turning Negative to Positive, came in really handy as I encountered delay upon delay at the races until by the end everything was running an hour and a half late... Needless to say, Switzerland's punctuality is going to be a shock to the system in a few weeks! So I used the time to become even more focused, and build up even more pre-race anticipatory energy. By the time the gun went off I was just happy to be racing, and totally psyched to have some fast girls to rumble with.

Staying positive is a skill, and like anything it requires practice. If I can respond well to every inconvenience and nuisance day in and day out, this will eventually become my first reaction if things go sour when it really counts. I hope to become an expert in re-focusing on the positive. Why is this so important? Because everyone gets thrown off their game, and the people who succeed will be those who can re-focus faster.

Another thing I devote a lot of practice to is my classical skiing. I've been working on my classical technique every day since July, but this sprint race served as a strong reminder that there's still a long way to go.

My qualification round was terrible and I came in 8<sup>th</sup>, over 15 seconds behind Mona-Liisa Malvalehto of Finland (on a 1.2km loop!). She cleaned up at my last World Junior Championships in 2003, bringing home 2 golds. But unlike 3 years ago, this weekend she had to contend with having me skiing right behind her during the quarterfinal, semifinal and final, drafting and picking up technique improvements along the way. Focusing on staying behind her made me ski ever faster, but around the last bend in the final race I hit the wall and was passed by 5 people, leaving me in 6<sup>th</sup> place.

It was a great day with some fun races, and a good season opener on which to improve. Devon had a good qualification round, placing 5<sup>th</sup>, but got taken out by a Russian in his quarterfinal. As predicted by me, this misfortune and the emotion (pissed) that it stirred up in Devon was quickly spun into a Blessing In Disguise, as he managed to channel the frustrated energy into focused performance in the next race. In today's 15km classic race he went out there and placed 2<sup>nd</sup> in a field of 70 men, missing the win by only 3 seconds. Devon is one superstar classic skier, that's for sure. Today he skied so smooth and relaxed I thought he was asleep on his skis, but he was actually winning! Talk about efficiency...

Here's a shot of Devon with his 10lb trophy:



That wraps up an exciting weekend here in Northern Finland, and tomorrow we'll drive 7-8 hours to Gallivare, Sweden to prepare for the World Cup race Nov 18/19. In the meantime, check out these cool boots!



(Consider investing in a good pair of reindeer fur boots if you're going to be in Scandinavia for an extended period of time.)

Thanks for tuning in, check back next week for the latest news!

Onward!  
Chandra