



INSYDOR REPORT

BY ALISON SYDOR

BC BIKE RACE ROCKS!



Getting ready for another day of amazing singletrack.

Rocky Mountain Bicycles

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I must be having fun because time sure is flying now. It seems like just yesterday my teammate and I were enjoying the pain and pleasure at the BC Bike Race, and now I'm back in Europe sitting on my teammate Carsten Bresser's sofa for a couple days recovering from jet-lag fog, before we drive to the Bavarian Alps for the start of the Trans Alp Challenge. Apart from a scar from a massive blister on my hand, I'm feeling well recovered from what was without a doubt the most singletrack riding I've ever done in a week! Though the scar on my hand still remains, the pain in my arms, legs and back is long forgotten. But ever-present are the mental images of beautiful B.C. and the memories of the wonderful week of “home” singletrack.

A late change in my race calendar gave me the chance to experience my first-ever BC Bike Race. Fortunately, the Rocky Mountain-Maxxis race team was able to lend me my teammate, Lea Davison, for the week. In an email sent before she arrived in Vancouver, she wrote that she was pretty sure she would be at ease on the B.C. trails, being a Vermont girl and experienced World Cupper. However, judging from her wide-open eyes at the finish line after Day One on the North Shore, she was just one of hundreds of non-locals attending the BC Bike Race who had just discovered firsthand that “cross-country” riding in B.C. is something very different.

After Day One, we realized that, as far as the race was concerned, we would be a few places off the super-strong, technically solid Luna Pro Women's team. Still, we kept trying for at least a stage win, while in complete agreement we would keep things in perspective — ride well and hard together, and come out of the week, for me, ready for Trans Alps and, for Lea,



Sydor says: BC Bike Race two thumbs up!

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the next set of cross-country World Cups and US championships. Things went according to plan, and I was pretty amazed with the improvements to our skills after a week of superb technical riding.

After experiencing other stage races all over the world, I can definitely say that the BC Bike Race course is the most technically demanding I've ever seen. In fact, many of the stages rival the hardest stuff on a World Cup course, especially given the fact that the group rides these routes “blind.” I have to say I was very, very impressed with the course designers, and equally awed by every rider who conquered each day's route.

Every stage race, including the BC Bike Race, is unique, as each organizer puts his ideas into action, while, of course, Mother Nature has her say. The BC Bike Race advertises itself as the ultimate singletrack experience, and I don't believe anyone could accuse the organizers of false advertising there. Many times during the week, I felt like a tourist in my own town. Even after nearly two decades of B.C. riding, the trip felt as fresh to me as no doubt it did to the riders who came from as far away as South Africa. Each day, I thought how lucky I am that I can easily revisit the many trails I'd just raced on.

While the organizers and course designers did their thing to make the BC Bike Race special for all the riders, I have to say that, for me, the riders themselves were also part of this unique experience. I'm sure it has something to do with racing where I can speak the language of almost every rider. Still, in all my epic stage races, I've never been to one with such friendly, chilled-out people on the race course. It's the first time I've actually heard riders whooping, hollering and expressing their glee while racing. I've also never before experienced riders who were that courteous, talkative and supportive of each other.

The BC Bike Race was the best “rider” route I've experienced in five years of stage racing. Hats off to the organizers and staff for the dynamic showcase of B.C. riding (and tourism!) they not only dreamt up, but put into action. It's so great to have an event such as this in our country and, for many of us, in our own backyard. I have no doubt this race will grow and improve.

I love, too, that these stage races are the most inclusive events in our sport. This year, the B.C. Bike Race provided pros and serious amateurs with the most amazing natural arena to duke it out on, gave the well-travelled MTB tourists a wild and very special ride and challenged the newbies to reach for new heights.