

Hi all;

Here's a brief report from Norway, where Katia and I are visiting for two weeks.

We are visiting an old skiing colleague of mine, Jim Haddon, and his family. Jim and I raced together in Ottawa back in the day. Jim, my twin brother, Adrian, and myself won the Canadian Junior relay championships back in 1984. In those days, there were separate junior and senior championships, and the competition included 3-man relays.

We are in the Trondheim area, about half-way up Norway. The area is one of the better known areas for x-c skiing, and x-c skiing is very much part of the culture here. There are lots of trails around the outskirts of the city, and there are a number of different areas with lit trail networks. People don't give a second glance at people carrying skis on a bus, or walking through a grocery store in X-c boots.

My friend Jim has three kids, two of which are active xc racers. The older child, Peter, attends a sport high school, which has about 70 xc skiers in a special program over 4-school years. They go until grade 13 here, and some kids take a lighter course load and take 5 years to go through high school. So those 5-year students are in school for 2 years longer than ours.

Peter has been very kind to Katia and has introduced Kat to some of the girls at his school, and Kat was able to train with the school team last week. They attend class from 8 to 9 am, then are off until 12:00 noon, and then are in classes again until 3 or 4 ish. So they have training time in the middle of the day. Their closest trails are about a 10 minute walk, but they sometimes drive.

Katia did a race last weekend, and will do another race this coming weekend. Kat had a good race, but was a ways behind the leaders, who are among the best in Norway. And we know how Norwegians rate against the rest of the world!!

There are number of skiing 'celebrities' in the area. Petter Northug lives a km or so away from our friend, and Johannes Klaebo is in the same club. Johannes' little brother was in the same race as Kat, and his mother and (coach) grandfather were at the race too. Kat was hoping to get a photo of Klaebo jr, but was too shy.

You might be asking about any secrets that I'm picking up. Mostly it appears to be their numbers: Lots of little racers, all very close to each other and always pushing each other. And they have quick tempo. And I'll try to get a video of Klaebo's 1-skate (called "double-dance" here). It's quite impressive and demonstrates the variation in the technique as the hill gets steeper.

Below is a selection of photos.

The first photo is at a local ski hut. They have great little huts sprinkled around the trails where they serve the ever-present waffles and brown cheese (made with caramelized goats milk), and other pastries.



The second is Katia on her race. The new race suits look great!!



The third photo is of Kat skiing above the tree line close to our friend's cabin near Ringdal. Ringdal was the home of Landsem skis, for those who remember the famous wood skis of yesteryear. Cabins are an integral part of Norwegian culture, and lots of people have one in the family.



The fourth photo is Kat, Peter and Erik, with Jim off in the background.



The fifth photo is Katia with a "Spark" push sled.



This photo is taken in an old former mining town called Roros in the mountains closer to the Swedish border. It's a cool little town with lots of little log-cabin style buildings. It's now a UNESCO world heritage site. One of the coolest things about the town is that they don't use salt or sand on the streets, and many people use the Spark sleds to get around town. Little old ladies carry their groceries in a basket on them, and school kids use them too. After arriving in Roros, Kat and I borrowed two spark sleds from the hotel, toured around the village and had lunch. One slight mishap though, as one of the sparks was taken while we were in a store. We didn't have the heart (guts?) to tell the hotel though, and went out for a short ski and then went for dinner, then had a walk about town. Fortune returned to us while out for our walk, and we found the spark parked a few blocks away from where we had lost it. Local hooligans!!!

Hope everyone is well there!

Please feel free to forward on to the race team if you think it would be appropriate.

Cheers,
David & Kat