



Simon Hayes

All Things Considered...

Flying into Adelaide for the final period of the track season is always an exciting time. It symbolises the fact that the World Championships are almost here. It seems like only a short time ago that I was in Poland racing at last year's World Championships but another year has passed and here we are again. This year it was decided that we would spend three weeks in Adelaide at track camp before heading to Copenhagen one week out from competition starting. Track camp mainly consisted of double sessions each day – either a track session in the morning and a road ride in the afternoon or vice versa.

By chance training camp for me was broken up with a quick overnight trip to Hobart, Tasmania. The Tasmanian Sports Awards were on during the middle of our camp, which meant that I was allowed out for 24 hours to attend a dinner and accept my award - 'Female Athlete of the Year!' Although only an overnight trip it provided great chance for me to say a quick hello to my family and friends in Tassie. As we all know one of the toughest parts of being an elite athlete is maintaining the 'balance' in your life. My trip combined with the double training sessions made the days fly by and before I knew it, track camp had finished and we were leaving for Copenhagen.

After my body had adjusted to the new time zone and started to feel 'normal' again there were still a few days before my race. The last couple of days leading into a major event always seem to drag

on forever! When you get this feeling you that you are ready - all the hard training has been done and you just want to get out there and race.

Race day arrived and everything felt good.

Going into the Scratch Race I had set my goals high. After finishing with the bronze medal in the last two World Championships my goal was the Rainbow Jersey. The race started off quite slowly and for the first few laps, everyone seemed content to ride around the top of the track and get a feel for the boards. It wasn't long before the first attack went and the pace increased. My plan wasn't necessarily to be the most aggressive rider but to keep an eye on the race and if there was a decisive break I wanted to be in it. At about 13 laps to go, I found myself with a small gap over the field with two other girls but no one was 100% committed to the move and we were soon reeled in by the bunch and another attack was made.

With seven laps to go I had put myself in what I thought was a good position until disaster struck! One of the girls ahead of me touched the wheel in front and wasn't able to hold it up. She crashed and slid along the track taking out several riders, including me. As I was sliding along the ground trying to avoid everyone else who was doing the same, I looked up and could see the score board, seven laps to go. Normally you have five laps to get back into the race after a miss-hap but that is only up until five laps to go. Instinct kicked in and I jumped up and scouted for my bike – I knew I had to get back into the

race within the next two laps if I wanted to have any chance at fulfilling my goal of being on top of the podium.

Stuart, our team mechanic was at the scene of the crash in an instant and checked over my bike for any mechanical issues I that may have resulted from the crash. Fortunately nothing was broken and I was back on my bike and in the race at five laps to go! Just in time! However, I can say that some of the others involved in the crash weren't so lucky, there was a bike that was completely snapped in half and a rider who had lost her front teeth!

At times like this I think instinct and intuition just takes over. I managed to jump back in the race and place myself on the wheel of last year's winner, Yumari Gonzalez Valdivieso from Cuba. The next couple of laps were a bit of a blur until I heard the bell. I sprinted the best I could at the time and ended up finishing third.

When the adrenaline faded from my body, I pulled up quite sore in the neck and shoulder from the crash. After my experience last year with broken bones, I have been overcautious with determining the extent of my injuries and at this stage it looks like everything will be ok and the pain and stiffness from my crash that I have will settle down in the next couple of days!

All things considered the Bronze Medal was a good result and left me with a deeper desire to win the World Championship Gold Medal next year.

Happy training,
Belinda