



Dear Fellow Alaskans,

My most successful biathlon season was the winter of 2004-05. That year, everything came together for great athletic performances. I kept a diary from my last week of racing that year – a chaotic trip to Siberia. Here is an entry from my last race of the season:

Living on the edge...

When you are ranked somewhere between 30 and 40 in the overall standings, mass start days can be interesting. Essentially you are on call and expected to be ready to race with as little as two hours notice. My first mass start was in Fort Kent, Maine. I had no idea there was even a chance that I would race. When our coach told me I was in, I was still recovering from a hard night of dancing. I learned my lesson. That race hurt.

This winter I have been in three mass starts, two of them as a last minute replacement. On the morning of each race I ask, “am I in or out?” I’m getting used to living on the edge. I decided if I ever got my own bobble-head doll it

would be called Reserve Racer Rachel. If shaken, it would say “put me in coach! I’m ready to race!” Today at 11:30 a.m., I found out I would race at 2:20 p.m. That gave me plenty of time to gather my rifle, gear and thoughts. This race was a gift – a second chance to end my season on a high note. I finished 12th with only two standing penalties. It was a bittersweet performance. After the race I found out that I missed the pre-qualification for our Olympic team by four points.

As I changed clothes after the race, it all hit me. I was disappointed, tired and homesick. On my way back to the hotel I gained some perspective. As I stood at the top of the stairs that lead from the venue to the hotel, I looked out over the range and trails. It was a beautiful, crisp day and I had just matched my best performance ever, but I wasn’t even smiling. Suddenly, I realized how lucky I am. I have an exciting life, I’m healthy and the people I love are healthy too. I get so wrapped up in this world of sport and it is too easy to forget that there is more to life than hitting targets and skiing fast.

During my career I had tremendous support from my friends and family. Although I trained seriously for biathlon for over 13 years and competed in two Olympics, fitness and health have always my primary goal. When I re-read this diary, I realize how easy it is to get wrapped up in winning, hitting targets and making teams. After all, everyone wants to succeed. In the end, how you feel at the end of the day, knowing that your family still loves you, is what is most important.

Rachel Steer

Top American Olympic Biathlete