

By Melody Serra

Racing will teach you things about yourself. For me, racing awakened a competitive side that I didn't know existed. I started mountain biking in the mid 1990s but racing never crossed my mind. After all, I wasn't very fast, or strong, and women don't race, do they? Especially when they are moms! All that changed with a spin class in 2002 and an instructor who suggested I enter a race. And what an interesting ride it's been for me since then!

I started with a few duathlons (running and biking) that year, adding swimming to the mix with triathlons the following year. Triathlon was okay but really I just wanted to race anything that went uphill, no matter the bike – Mt Evans on a road bike, WP Hill Climb and Davos Dash (Vail) on a mountain bike. I wondered what it would be like to do more than hill climbs... perhaps a cross-country race? They seemed scary to me because I lacked confidence in my riding ability. But in 2006 I entered a mountain bike race in the beginner category, just for fun. What I hadn't expected was the adrenaline rush of the competition, the joy I felt with the wind whipping past me on a fast descent, the thrill of climbing a mountain faster than my competition... yes, I found my passion!

It's really never too late to find what you're passionate about. I consider myself a late bloomer in respect to sports. I started racing in my mid-30s. I am married (thankfully to a wonderful man who also loves mountain biking) and have two children. It's not easy to balance training with the demands of family. As the mom I think it's even harder. So I never thought I would go very far with mountain biking. But once I discovered how much I loved to ride and race, I decided I wanted to go as far as I could. It wouldn't have been very far without the support of my family or without a plan, specifically a training plan.

Rob has been my coach now for about 4 years. In that time, with a plan to follow, specific goals, and a coach to guide me, I have gone from racing Beginner to racing Pro. And what's most satisfying to me is the fact that I did it at a relatively late age (if you've done the math or looked at last year's bio, you'll know I'm now in my early 40s!). It's a great feeling to accomplish your goals, no matter how big or small they are. You might just want to be able to ride for an hour and not feel exhausted, or you may want to finish a race and know you were prepared and gave it your all.

Racing has given me confidence and a belief that nothing is out of reach. I achieved a huge goal by reaching pro level, but I still have a lot to learn on a bike – downhill switchbacks are still my nemesis! I'm excited about another new year of riding and racing and getting to know new teammates, and hopefully inspiring more women to find their confidence and hit the trails on a mountain bike.