

Yetifan Interview with Tara Llanes, back in around 2003/04

1) OK, So we know your name, tell us a little about Tara Llanes, and what makes her tick?

Hmm....well that's kind of a big question. In short I guess I love to ride and race my bike and sometimes I still can't believe that I do it for a living. I feel fortunate not so much lucky because I know I've worked really hard at what I do to make myself better everyday. I've have met so many wonderful people all over the world throughout my career and will have these friends for life. I guess what makes me tick is my competitive side. I am always striving to be better. Not just a better racer/rider, but a better person and believe it or not this "job" has taught me so much more than anything I could have ever learned in a text book. Not to say school is bad, but this is just what worked for me.

2) Last time we spoke you at just started riding with the Giant/ Pearl Izumi team, how has that been for you?

Riding for and being part of the Giant family has been a great experience. I've been with the team now for 4 years and I feel like I have 7 brothers now if you count mechanics. I mean if you think about it we are with each other for about 6 months out of the year riding together, traveling together, joking and laughing with each other, and getting mad at each other for stealing each others food. I feel like I found a family with Giant. And not just with the team, but the people at Giant. I know all of them and love going to the office.

3)Before your time at Yeti, you were on Specialized with Shaun Palmer, that must have made for an interesting time?

Interesting is a understatement!! When I first found out I was going to be teammates with him I was scared out of my head. I think I had just turned 20 or 21 and was still fairly young and really shy. It's funny now that I look back b/c quite a few people took my shyness for being cocky when in all reality I was anything but. I just sort of kept to myself. Then when I heard Kirt Vories was going to be on the team as well I didn't know what to do. I was the only US female on the team and the only other females were Elsbeth Vink from the Netherlands and Marga Fullana from Spain so it's not like I conversed much with the other women. I hung out mostly with the boys and in the end we all got along great. I really ended up hitting it off with Kirt and we trained a fair bit together when he lived in Santa Barbara. That team was really by far one of the best teams I had been on. Between the talent field that we had and the budget back in those days I honestly felt like a rockstar. I just tried to take everything in every single day and not take anything for granted.

4)) You were on the YetiPearl Izumi team with Nathan Rennie, Paul Rowney, any funny stories or fond memories you can share with us?

I'm surprised you didn't ask that about Palmer!! :) Yeah, I'd say there are a few. One that sticks out in my head was when we had some race I think it was in Wisconsin. Some random place where we had had a race before. Anyway, on Sunday after the race everybody went out and both Rowney and I had told Rennie that he had to at least be back at the house by like 7am that next morning because we had to catch a flight to another race and we couldn't be late. Well 7:30am and then 7:45 rolls around and he's not there so we left. I couldn't believe we did, but we left him there. Somehow, somehow he found his way to the next race and I was laughing my ass off. Oh and I almost forgot this one. Rennie, Scott Sharples, and I were driving from one World Cup to another in Vars, France. It was a couple days drive and on the way we stopped at a rest stop for obvious reason. When we got out Rennie saw this guy trying to sell a video camera. Mind you I had literally just bought a Sony video camera just before that trip and new how much they cost. Well, this guy was trying to

sell it to Rennie for like \$500 bucks. Both Sharples and I TOLD Rennie.. "DON'T DO IT!" I told him, "if it's too good to be true then it usually is!" So I come out of the bathroom and this guy is handing Rennie a sort of leather zip up bag and Rennie is handing him \$500 bucks. Both Sharples and I are shaking our heads as we get in the car. As soon as the guy took Rennie's money this car pulls up really fast and the guy gets in it. Immediately I was like, "Rennie..open the damn bag!" So he's trying to open it, but the stupid bag is glued shut!! So Sharples turns on the car and we start chasing these guys on the motorway for like 5 miles or so hauling ASS. Rennie finally gets the bag open and it's a freakin' box of salt!! He just sat there dumbfounded and couldn't believe it. In the end it was funny, but he lost \$500!! Silly, silly boy. I took a picture of it, but can't find it or I'd send it to you. So yeah some funny times. Too many to mention.

5) What are your personal MTB career highlight/s ?

Umm...well here are a few. 2006 US National Downhill Champion, 2-Time US National Four-Cross Champion (2000&2004), 2003 Sea Otter Omnium Winner (all three events combined), X-Games Gold, Silver, and Bronze Medallist, and Numerous top 3 Podium finishes at both World cup and Norba events.

6) So, where's your favorite 3 places to ride or race?

Tough question. I did this sweet XC ride this year at Worlds in New Zealand with a bunch of the Giant Australia people and it was beautiful. Anywhere in Durango, Colorado, and either this super sweet trail I found with my teammate Carl Decker in Livigno, Italy or a fun DH I rode in Les Gets, France. Too many to list.

7) Your favorite bike to ride is a.....?

Right now it's a tough call between my new Giant for Women Trance with sweet Fox Talas forks and all the new Shimano XTR goodies or my Giant Reign.

8) What interests you outside of the Mountain bike world?

Reading, playing basketball, and traveling.

9) Which cyclist (in MTBing)do you admire the most?

Hmm...Thomas Frishkenect has always been such a cool down to earth guy and he still pins it. Also, Sue Haywood. She had to deal with alot of crap when the whole Olympic thing went down last year and she handled it like a champ.

10) Any sponsors or people your obliged to plug?

Yes, thanks for asking. Giant and Giant for Women, Shimano, Easton, Michelin, Fox Racing Shox, Troy Lee Designs, WTB, www.pushyourlimits.com, BIKESKILLS, and Spike.

I'll try to send you piccies later today. I'm running late and need to head out on a ride with my teammate Jared Rando. Cheers!! Tara