

LAPPE NORDIC NEWSLETTER

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***The Year In Review : World Championships:
Memory and Motivator, By Tasha
Betcherman***

It's been a few weeks now since I've put my racing skis into storage, but my memories from the World Championships are as fresh as ever. I'm thankful for the opportunity to write this article for the Lappe Nordic newsletter because Lappe has been, and continues to be, an important factor in my development as a Cross Country racer.

This spring I made a short return to Thunder Bay and Lappe where I got a chance to race and ski on the Lappe Nordic Trails. I was very happy to see a thriving club with so many young and talented skiers who seemed excited to train. I got a chance to speak with some of them at the races and was a little emotional after, as Dan can attest to, when they told me they had been following my results. They even noticed my name scratched into the bottom panel of Timo's sit-up and back-up bench from many years ago. Timo - you may have started a new tradition there - you better set some strict guidelines or your bench will be whittled away to nothing!

Making the team to compete at the World Championships this year in Val Di Fiemme was both an honour and a bit of a surprise! I knew I was getting close with some of my results but truly felt the level of racing in Canada was going up and I was struggling to remain near the top. When I found out I was going and that Dan was too, I was extremely happy!

We started out with a training camp in Pontresina, Switzerland. We spent ten days adjusting to the time change and preparing for the Worlds. We did a sprint race on the main street in town, with thousands of fans lining the course. These weren't just ordinary fans, they knew our names, and asked for autographs after the race. One gentleman offered me his parka through the barricade because he thought I looked cold. After being eliminated rather

early I got to watch Beckie Scott and Christian Zorzi ski to the top of their podiums in powerful style. We spent the rest of the days training on the beautifully groomed trails connecting the mountain passes and villages throughout Switzerland. About twenty minutes away, by skiing, was the village of St. Moritz, which was hosting the World Alpine Championships for the duration of our stay. We were so close we could see the Downhill and Giant Slalom run from our hotel. As well, we heard the cheering from our beds while we were napping and the rowdy fans walking the streets at all hours of the night. We couldn't help but be motivated by the Canadian Alpine results, we kept telling ourselves, they're on snow, and we're on snow - small difference up or down!

We drove to Italy with plenty of time to get to know the race trails and the venue. This was the World Championships and the best of the best were there. Anyone you can think of from the race results was out training, testing or just walking around looking good! Our hotel was situated right on the Marcialonga trail, so we could ski to the stadium and wax cabins in around seven minutes. The first weekend the rest of the team drove to Asiago for a world cup race, while I stayed back in Val Di Fiemme, since I'm not World Cup eligible yet. One good thing was English Eurosport, so I could watch Beckie's silver medal performance, live, right from my room!

My first race at World Championships was the 15 kms mass start classic. I was prewarned by the world cup regulars on our team that this race would be the toughest of my life. They were right. The pace was relentless and the competition was aggressive. They don't pass, they ski over you. It was physically a very demanding course, the climbs were steep, and the downhills didn't seem to help me recover at all. I learned right away that your shape is everything, you need to be able to climb hills very well. All the other skills involved that I thought were very important, barely seemed to matter at all.

My next race was the best of the World Championships, the 10 kms individual classic. My skis were quite good and I just went for it with all my might. Seeing myself on television later was very eye opening. I learned not to muscle through a steep uphill-get out and run! It saves your arms and covers

the ground much faster.

The 5 + 5 km skiathlon was a bit more challenging. This event isn't really suited well to me since I need to give my skating muscles a good warm-up or I tend to stiffen up right away. So, although my classic portion was very good, I lost ground in the skate portion. My transition was very good, probably from all my practice at the Lappe run and ski.

I thought the 30 km free might be a good event for me and felt my new skis were running well. Even with a bit of a break after the first races, I was starting to get tired. This is one race you need to have good energy for. I started forty five minutes behind many of the top girls, so I knew things would be tough. Everyday we were in Italy the temperature would rise dramatically throughout the day and really slow things down. That day was no exception, just that it even got warmer than any of the previous days. I still had one entire lap to go and the red group was in. This was what they meant by the Tropical seed! I was very impressed with one of the Norwegian women who started around the same time as me. I tried to hang on to her for as long as possible but she was just too strong. She overcame her poor start position to finish 25th. Most of the people had cleared the course for my last lap, so I was out there all by myself, except for one lone Italian fan who kept yelling at me to die (means go in Italian!) and my support crew who faithfully stood by throughout.

The World Championships of 2003 have come and gone. I can sum things up by saying of my first International races in Europe that although I went there with ideas of performing, what I took away was much greater. I have already started preparing and planning for next season and have "getting in really good shape", on the top of my list!

My best wishes go out to everyone at Lappe. Congratulations on another successful season and I'll see you on the trails this winter!

Tasha :)

Attached is a picture of Tasha Betcherman at the **World Championships**. What an experience!

From the President - Liz Inkila

Another busy and exciting ski season has come to a close. As the only place with snow, Lappe Nordic Ski Centre was a thriving place in November. Non skiers would look at us with disbelief when we would tell them "we're going skiing tonight!" The weather presented event organizers and racers with many challenges in 2002/2003. Despite the cold weather and lack of snow, the club did manage to hold 24 races including an Ontario Cup, and the LSSD Championships. Our only cancelled event was the Marostica Subaru 24 Hours of Lappe. Not bad!

Club racers had many successes this season. Tasha Betcherman travelled to Europe to compete in the World Nordic Ski Championships. It was exciting to watch her results on the web. She returned to Canada to win two gold medals at Nationals, Congratulations *Tasha* for a great season! *Timo* Puiras also had a great season qualifying for the Canada Winter Games. Timo took home a bronze medal in the relay. He also won two gold medals at the Ontario Cup here at Lappe. Way to go Timo! Home turf does have some advantages! Becky Laakso, also had an impressive season winning a silver medal at the Nationals and placing in the top ten in several Continental Cups. Another Lappe skier Jodie Mapea had an opportunity to compete at the World University Championships in Italy.

Our Junior Development team had many successes as well this year. Another double gold medalist at the Ontario Cup was Christina Groulx, racing in the Midget Division. Travis Comeau and Berit Dool both qualified for the Nationals. They both placed in the top ten at their first National competition. Congratulations! It was very exciting seeing our Junior team compete in many races this year.

At the Run & Ski held on March 29, our Club Awards were presented. This year the Diehard Award went to the very deserving **Werner Schwar**. Werner has been involved with Lappe for many years. He is a member of the Board, Master's Coach, Junior Racer coach and represents Lappe as a racer. This year he had several top ten finishes at the Nationals. Pauli's

Award is given to the most improved skier. Club members vote for this award at the Run & Ski. This years recipient is **Logan Maley**. Congratulations Logan!

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the volunteers who helped out at all of our events. Many thanks to those who took a leadership role to ensure the success of our races and preserve the “Lappe Reputation”. Please come out and support the Club at the **AGM** (*annual general meeting*) on Monday, May 12, 2003. Getting involved can bring great rewards.

Liz Inkila

Shanes European Adventure: By Shane Maley

Hi Everybody!

It was great to see so many awesome performances from the Nationals and Onaping Falls, congratulations to you all! On the other side of the pond, the skiing has been going well too. Training and racing in France has definitely been a great experience. I've done three races to date, all skate, with one classic race still ahead of me. So far, I haven't had any spectacular results, but the races have been valuable in providing me with new experiences. Contrary to my expectations racing here is very similar to racing at home. I don't know exactly what I was expecting, but most things are really no different. I've found that everybody does the same warm-ups, races the same, and they even play the same music! The differences tend to be in the details surrounding the races. As the distances between venues is much shorter than in Canada, we usually drive to the races on race morning (250 kms goes by fast when you're doing 160 km/h in a huge team van!). The courses also tend to have a steep “ learning curve” , usually a ninety or one-eighty degree “ curve” at the bottom of the hills! It doesn't give you much time to recover during the race! The only other difference I've noticed so far, is the food table after the race. In addition to the customary oranges, raisins and water, so far I've found prunes, apples, biscuits, baguettes, four kind of cheeses, salami, ham, onion soup, crepes, tea, and hot wine. I don't know how some people can tackle a ham and cheese sandwich right after a 10 km

ski, but apparently, it's the norm here.

So far the level of competition has been great, with two national races. (Etoile des Saisis Loppet, and Coupe de France final), and one Ontario Cup equivalent. (Coup du Jura final). As I had no idea what to expect, I was very happy to find a thriving competition and training environment very similar to that of Thunder Bay - last week skiing with the bronze medalist from the sprints at the World Juniors, and a European Cup winner. On the way to my last two training sessions I've decided to count all the team vehicles that I see, so far, three different Team Rossingnol vans, one Team France van and one car, and one Team Fischer car. As in Thunder Bay, the skiing community is very supportive and it shows! One day when I was out training I noticed a guy skiing through the stadium with a Nakertok jacket on, so I approached him, and asked, “ excuse me, are you Canadian?”. He immediately recognized my Lappe jacket and answered, “ Ya, so you're from Thunder Bay?” He used to live in Ottawa, and lucky for me, is the past president of the regional ski community, so he set me up at the Grenoble University Club (GUC) team right away. Since he is a former Nakertok skier, and Al Mortimer (from Nakertok) coached the B team, he was also the one who set up some of the training and racing for the “ other Canadians”, who were here this year. It definitely is a bonus to have the same training environment as they did! Since then, I have been able to do all my racing and training with the GUC ski team which has been lots of fun.

At home securely in the club I never really noticed how much time and effort it takes to do everything, from setting up workouts, to registering for races, to actually getting to the start line on top of a fast pair of skis! Luckily after a month of organizing the details for myself, my new coach, Christophe, is taking good care of me now! Great coaches and organizers, volunteers, parents like we have in Thunder Bay are truly priceless. Well, looking out my window here, I can only see a third of the way up the mountains, the rest is hidden in (hopefully, snow bearing) clouds, the skiing should be good for tomorrow morning's training session! Keep training hard and having fun.

Shane Maley



Coaches Report, By Marc Metsaranta

Lappe Nordic Ski Club revived its competitive group training in June 2002. Club members interested in ski racing met through out the past summer and winter regularly several times a week. Fitness and technical improvements improved the competitive capabilities of club racers for the LSSD racing circuit, provincial Ontario Cups, and the National Championships. Active group participants gained insight into the demands of cross-country ski racing. The group has responded with enthusiasm and dedication. Most realize that you have to ski to improve, to perform and to be competitive.

There is much potential in the group. In order to realize this potential, the plan in the next year is to take a more “ personal approach ” with those interested to take the gains of the past season to the next level of improved racing capabilities and performance. Session for the 2003-2004 season will begin soon.

Marc Metsaranta

Bailey’s Series Wrap-up, By Paul Inkila

It will be tough not to call our Wednesday Night Race Series, the “ Bailey’s Series”. But, as everyone now knows, Bailey’s Cycle and Ski is going out of business and will no longer be our Wednesday night sponsor. Bailey’s has sponsored these races since their inception in the mid 90’s. Many of you will recall the highly competitive races we had in the early days. On any given Wednesday, a national level skier could easily end up in fifth! A points system was used, and the tradition set of having a series winner chosen by results relative to others of similar ability.

Through the years, participation has gone up and down, but Bailey’s has remained our sponsor, and for that we owe them our gratitude. We wish the gang at Bailey’s well as they move on to bigger and better

things.

Fret not about next year though, as Fresh Air Experience has already stepped forward, and volunteered as a sponsor. Does the Fresh Air Series roll off the tongue? Hopefully, it will next winter!

This year’s Wednesday Night Series was affected by the weather as was cross country skiing in general in our region. We were able to ski two classic races before Christmas with Reijo’s “ snow-grabber grooming”, and Pauli’s relentless shoveling. When we finally did get decent snow in January, temperatures plummeted and several races were canceled and with the quick meltdown in March, the last few races were interesting. Our last official event was a series of uphill sprints on Pilon’s, the Grunt, up Pilon’s downhill, and finally up the Toilet Bowl. (No friends made that night!)

The series leaders ended up being Todd Inkila (Midget), Will Fitzgerald (Senior Men), and Matt Schoales (Junior Boy). The three took the top prizes with their best eight of nine results counting and as is usually the case, they each raced in all of the events.

The intention of Wednesday Night races is to encourage racing in all levels of skiers. It is a great way to experience ski racing and test yourself against others of similar ability. For the more serious, it is a more enjoyable way to get in your interval training. Don’t let the elite skiers who participate scare you off though, as we had children as young as 7 years old participating this year. Give it a try in 2003/2004.

Paul Inkila

Lappe Nordic Centre Contact List

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Lappe Hotline at 623-3735

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Judy Vinni, Jackrabbit Inf. 933-4147

Snowphone and trail conditions 767-2423

Dragon Our Skis: Christina Groulx

Once again “ Dragon Our Skis” has put together another team to compete at the Youth Dragon Boat Competition which is to be held May 31st and June 01, 2003.

Our team consists of young skiers between the ages of 12 years to 17 years. Our Lappe team members are from the Junior Development Team, as well as skiers from Big Thunder, and Kamview.

We look forward to a fun and exciting competition!

Christina Groulx

Masters Group

Once again the Lappe's Masters program was a smashing success. Despite less than ideal snow conditions we were able to get in several sessions of both classic and skate instruction.

It should be noted that this group caters to both advanced and novice skiers, as well as anything in between. Not only were the instructors helping a great deal with technique, they also offered the opportunity to ask questions about individual training techniques.

A great thanks goes out to Jeff Moustgaard, Scott Kipkie, Paul Inkila, Reijo Peltoniemi, (on an injured knee!), and of course Werner Schwar who is the driving force behind the program.

With thanks to all the instructors, we look forward to seeing everyone in the fall!

The Masters Group

To Our Sponsors, Thank-you!

Thank you for supporting our athletes at various events. It is greatly appreciated.

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Congratulations to **Esko Pesonen** for skiing a grueling 4500 kms, to surpass the most kms skied at Lappe Nordic, by Marc Metsaranta. Who's up for next years challenge?

Reminders

Bingos: May 26, 5:45 RRRD

June 20, 5:45 Aud.

Annual General Meeting

At the Lappe Ski Centre , **May 12,2003.**

at 7:00 p.m.

All members are encouraged to attend.

Newsletter: By Janice Groulx

(If any comments or feedback feel free to email me at **igroulx4@shaw.ca**)

Have a Fun and Safe Summer!