

BRITISH MASTERS CROSS COUNTRY SKI ASSOCIATION

April 2020

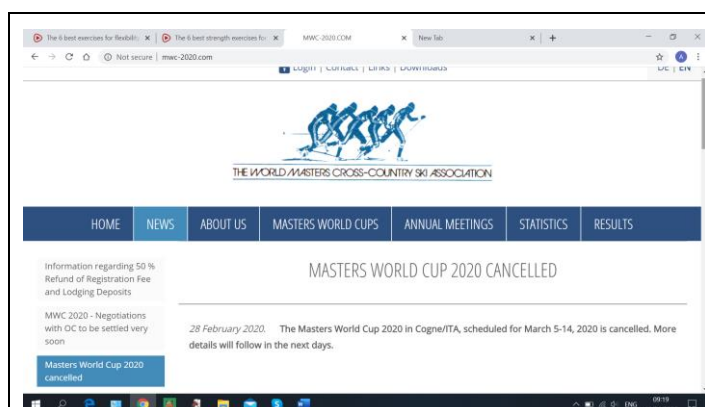
63 Beale Street
DUNSTABLE
BEDFORDSHIRE
LU6 1LZ

Tel/Fax: 01582 602 995
E-mail: aapinney@ntlworld.com

2020 'Very little to report' edition

"If the Pope went on a trip trying to encourage people to join his church, would he be a catalytic converter?" Rob Bryden or Steve Coogan

"If at first you don't succeed, suck a toffee instead." Anon



The information none of us wanted to see



The last World Cup closes in front of empty stands



Queuing becomes our national sport!



Our heroes

Editorial

Well, what a year so far. Who would have thought, back in early January when some of us were enjoying excellent ski conditions at the Winter World Masters Games (WWMG) in Seefeld, that a few short weeks later things would have fallen so badly to pieces?

The news of the cancellation of this year's Masters World Championships came a little less than a week before the event was due to start, a great shame for the 11 Brits (and two non-British BMCCSA members) who'd signed up to take part. Some people, myself included, believed at first that this was a gross over-reaction to what was not much more than a bad case of flu. How wrong were we about this? But not many weeks later the full effects of the pandemic became known, with all competitions of all sorts cancelled (including, sadly, the very popular Park Runs), gyms closed, queuing outside supermarkets, ... the story is familiar to all of us.

With the Masters World Championships (MWC) cancelled, for the very first time, it has been a bit of a challenge to get enough material for this Newsletter. We tidy up the British Roller Ski Series from last year, and then the report of the WWMG makes up a fair proportion of this edition. Instead of an MWC report, there's an article on Covid-19, because there are things to say about this and, unusually in a Newsletter about skiing, I offer a few thoughts on what we might hope for in Britain once the current pandemic is over. There's also a technique training article written mainly by Roger Homyer. We look forward to the British Roller Ski Series 2020 although, right now, there are no events likely to take place until September at the earliest. Finally, there are a few other articles which we hope will amuse and entertain you.

With Covid-19 dominating everything, we must not forget the other challenge facing us as skiers – climate change. Once again, we saw the majority of World Cup XC and biathlon races held on man-made snow. Worryingly, the World Cup in Otepää, Estonia at the end of January had to be cancelled because the weather was too warm for them even to make snow; Otepää is the likely venue for the Masters World Championships in a couple of years from now. We don't have anything about climate change in this Newsletter, but it is certainly not an issue which is likely to go away. I can tell you, though, that the MWC in Canmore in March 2021 is still scheduled to take place, so please start thinking about this – more details in the next edition.

If you're receiving this Newsletter as a PDF via E-mail, and this comes as a surprise to you, I can only recommend that you read the previous Newsletter! If you also pay by Standing Order, there's an article explaining the new membership arrangements, and you will need to take some action!

Finally, we would love to hear from you! There's an article asking for your views about the future schedule of the MWC. In particular, attending the MWC is currently a major undertaking: it needs one and a half weeks off work (for those still working), and travel and accommodation costs in the region of £1 000 to £2 000 which, for people with a family, might be difficult to justify for a trip involving, usually, just the skiing member of the family. Please send me your thoughts on this and, also, what it is that currently stops you attending the MWC yourself. Although the cancellation this year was exceptional and unprecedented, I fear that the cost and length of the MWC might be putting people off – do you share this view?

If you've visited our website (www.bmccsa.org.uk), do you have anything to say about this? I'm afraid that I don't have the time (or the interest) to update the website on a routine basis, and I rely on club websites and Facebook pages to give you regular updates. But if you'd like specific articles or other information to be put onto the BMCCSA website, please let me know. With the change in Newsletter distribution, the website is now the only substantial expenditure that the Association has so, as well as commenting on the content, if you know how I could reduce the annual £130 fee plus £7 a month hosting fee, please let me know about this, too.

Who knows what things will look like when we finally come through Covid-19? Let's hope that things improve soon because, frankly, if things remain as they are until September, there won't be much of a Newsletter to send you!

New members

Lauro Franzese: I've known Lauro for a long time – we probably met at the British Championships in Ruhpolding many years ago, but I'm not entirely certain of this. He joined BMCCSA recently with a view to participating in the Masters in Cogne but, unless you skipped the front page and the editorial, and you've opened the Newsletter at exactly this point, we all know how that turned out.

Lauro is a former Royal Engineer in the Army and comes to skiing from a middle-distance running background. He's been in infrequent roller ski racer but, perhaps in preparation for Cogne, he took part in the London Region 15 km and the Wessex 12 km 'sprint', both free technique, last year, winning the men's 60+ category in both of them.

Fun fact – there's a chance, according to the internet, that Lauro is also a gold dealer. According to the Taipei Times (??? *Ed*), Sunday, June 26th 2016, in an article entitled "London dealers scramble as Brexit sparks gold rush", it says: "After staying up all night in London to watch the EU referendum results, and mourning the outcome, Lauro Franzese decided to make some money. "I thought I might as well get something out of it," the 61-year-old army veteran said as he walked the streets of the city's Hatton Gardens jewellery district. "So I sold gold today — at about 30 percent profit." Of course I might be wrong about this – maybe there's more than one Lauro Franzese who are army veterans in the UK.

Jon Bowskill: Jon, a friend of fairly recent BMCCSA member Chris Maund, also joined to race in Cogne (see above). Jon is new to cross country skiing, but spent the winter this year in Beitostolen, Norway (the venue of last year's MWC) trying to convert his previous experience in endurance sports onto skis. In the past he has raced at Ironman distance in triathlon, completed the Marathon Des Sables and taken part in various multi-stage mountain bike races. Jon works in injury rehabilitation but is currently taking a sabbatical and hoping to spend more time upright on skis this winter and less time on the floor, both admirable ambitions but, possibly, having to be largely put on hold until next season!

New membership arrangements

The new arrangements for the BMCCSA Newsletter and associated membership fee were introduced in previous Newsletters, and thanks to all who replied saying that you're willing to receive the Newsletter via E-mail (yah boo sucks for those who didn't even bother to reply!). Although the website hasn't yet been updated to reflect the new arrangement (this will be done soon), here is the New Deal:

- if you *didn't* say whether you want to receive the Newsletter electronically, you will now get it via E-mail, as long as I have a valid E-mail address for you,
- there is no longer any membership fee for those getting the Newsletter electronically so, if you pay by Standing Order, this is the time to cancel it (I will not return any membership fee paid by mistake from now on),
- if you want to receive the Newsletter on paper, you will continue to do so but, in this case, your membership fee will remain at £5 a year and you should pay in the same way as before (in September),
- if you receive the Newsletter on paper but you are happy to receive it electronically, it's because I don't have your E-mail address, so send it to me and the arrangements will be adjusted,
- there will be a new, one-off, initial membership fee of £20 for any new members,
- your statutory rights are not affected, my mood may go down as well as up.

Now, does anyone want to buy a huge Brother double-sided colour laser printer?

Roller ski round-up 2019

We left you with an incomplete picture of the British Roller Ski Series 2019 at the end of the last Newsletter because, although most of the Series categories had already been wrapped up (only the Men's 60+ to be decided), the Wessex event had not taken place. So here are its results, followed by the final Series standings.

WBNSC roller ski Sprints 2019 – British Series Race 10							
Sunday 28th October, Castle Coombe Motor Racing Circuit, Chippenham				Free Technique – Marwe roller skis			
12 km mass start Senior Men				6 km mass start Senior Ladies			
Name	Club	Total time	Position	Name	Club	Total time	Position
Vinney Fountain	16 Regt RA	30:09.1	1st senior	Beata Nowok**	Western Track	18:38.7	1st senior
Szymon Orlowski	LRNSC	30:24.8	2nd senior	Rebecca Anderson	RAF	20:58.4	2nd senior
Martin Watkins	Wessex/BM	31:03.9	1st 40+	Mindy Hauman	Hyde Park	26:37.4	1st 40+
Jordan Andrews	Hyde Park	32:01.0	3rd senior	Juliet McBean	RAF	27:24.3	3rd senior
Georgi Nemov	Wessex	33:11.2	4th senior	Megan Campbell	LRNSC	29:43.2	2nd 40+
Richard Bond	RAF	34:34.4	5th senior	Lizzie Norton	RAF	32:42.7	3rd 40+
Nicolae Gaiduc	Hyde Park	35:20.3	6th senior	* = 3 km race. ** = Although recorded as senior, Beata scores 40+ Series points.			
Marek Pasterny	LRNSC	35:25.0	2nd 40+				
Jake Pearson	RM/RN	35:45.8	7th senior				
Justin Cerqua	7 Regt RLC	36:21.4	3rd 40+				
Lauro Franzese	LRNSC	38:17.0	1st 60+				
Andrzej Bojarski	LRNSC	39:42.7	4th 40+				
Matt Garwood	AMS	40:31.7	5th 40+				
Grzegorz Stasik	LRNSC	42:27.1	6th 40+				
David Palmer	LRNSC	43:20.0	7th 40+				
Greg Barnes	LRNSC	53:56.3					
Jake Pearson	RM/RN	8:28.7	8th senior*				
Matt Dewey	Wessex	8:55.4	9th senior*				
Grant Davies	Wessex	12:40.5	9th 40+*				

Congratulations go, therefore, to the following:

Steve Perry, Men's Senior Champion and Men's 40+ champion
 Beata Nowok, Ladies Senior Champion and Ladies 40+ champion
 Roger Homyer, Men's 60+ champion
 Amanda Richardson, Ladies 60+ champion

In terms of the Series overall, 2019 was a good year, with 96 men participating, an increase of 11 compared to 2018, and 39 women, up from 26 the previous year. A further 45 juniors (under 18) took part, too, making the Series as a whole very healthy after the decline in numbers of recent years. That said, among Senior men, 41 people raced only once (43 %), and a further 24 (25 %) raced only twice, with the corresponding figures for ladies and Juniors being 28 (72 %) and 4 (10 %), and 17 (38 %) and 3 (7 %) respectively. In addition, amongst senior men, only 4 people raced in six races (the maximum number which can be counted), only 2 senior ladies and 4 juniors did the same.

Each year we question the validity of the Series and whether the scoring system is appropriate. We have no specific suggestions this year (and, in any case, the Series may well not happen for 2020), but it might help boost competition if the number of scoring races was lowered to five, making the Series a little more based on performance and perhaps encouraging people with a few scoring races to enter more. It might be worth, too, considering making the *minimum* number of scoring races two, to encourage those (particularly ladies) who currently enter only one race per year.

Appetite whetted from reading last year's results, after the overall Series positions is the programme for this year. As you can see, it seems unlikely that any races will take place until September, but who knows? LRNSC hasn't yet set the format for its races so, for each cancelled one, you can assume your least favourite distance, style and format, thereby reducing your disappointment that that race has been cancelled!

Senior and Masters men overall British Series positions 2019										
1	Steve Perry	RAF	40+	250		49=	Carl Carrier	Aising Pang	40+	45
2	Martin Watkins	WBNSC//BM	40+	224		49=	Thibault Mondon	Team Grenoble	Senior	45
3	Jason James	RAF	Senior	222		49=	Kyle Soden	REWS	Senior	45
4	Richard Bond	RAF	Senior	214		52=	Ed Rodge	Hyde Park	Senior	42
5	Dave Horsley	Huntly	40+	200		52=	Frank Kelly	RAF	Senior	42
6	Kieren Jarrett	RAF	40+	182		52=	Joshua King	REWS	Senior	42
7	Szymon Orlowski	LRNSC	Senior	174		55	Vim Thurlow	Hyde Park	40+	41
8	Carsten Uth	Hyde Park/BM	40+	172		56=	Brian Kennedy	SS Ireland	Senior	40
9	Georgi Nemov	WBNSC	Senior	166		56=	Fergus Newman	Huntly	Senior	40
10	Christian Ewald	Highland/BM	40+	159		56=	Chris Greene	MCCSC/BM	60+	40
11	Michael Hudson	RAF	Senior	143		56=	Robert Power	REWS	Senior	40
12	Oliver Newman	Huntly	Senior	142		60=	Callum Deboys	GB Para Nordic	Senior	39
13	Andrzej Bojarski	LRNSC	40+	138		60=	Brent Hushon	U/A	40+	39
14	David Knapp	Hyde Park	Senior	131		62=	Zander Bohle	Huntly	Senior	37
15	Neil Salmons	LRNSC/BM	40+	125		62=	Nicolai Gaiduc	Hyde Park	Senior	37
16	Jordan Andrews	Hyde Park	Senior	119		64=	Iain Ballentine	Hyde Park/BM	40+	36
17	Richard Vail	RAF	40+	115		64=	Oliver Roberts	RAF	Senior	36
18=	Luke Tyler	RAF	Senior	111		66=	Peter Thomson	Hyde Park	Senior	35
18=	Grzegorz Stasik	LRNSC	40+	111		66=	Martin Appleby	YDCCSC/BM	60+	35
20	Marek Pasterny	LRNSC	40+	103		66=	Lars Wikstrom	LRNSC	40+	35
21=	Joseph Rosfeld	Hyde Park	Senior	100		66=	Jake Pearson	RN	Senior	35
21=	Ryan Wallace	REWS	Senior	100		70=	Alastair Dargie	CBNSC	40+	34
23	David Palmer	LRNSC	40+	83		71=	Alistair McAlpine	RAF	Senior	34
24=	Rowan Leary	LRNSC	Senior	81		71=	Justin Cerqua	7 Reg RLC	40+	34
24=	Justine Hunt	RAF	40+	81		73=	Mike Hall	Tyneside	Senior	33
26	James Cottrill	Hyde Park	Senior	79		73=	Andy Goodwin	RAF	40+	33
27=	Paul Whibley	REWS	40+	76		75=	Dmitry Merkulov	U/A	40+	32
27=	Roger Homyer	Highland/BM	60+	76		75=	Colin Campbell	U/A	40+	32
29	Andrey Revyakin	LRNSC	40+	68		75=	Philip Lupoli	U/A	Senior	32
30=	James Mackie	MCCSC	40+	65		75=	Alan Morrison	REWS	Senior	32
30=	Greg Barnes	LRNSC	40+	65		79=	Jeffrey Edwards	LRNSC	40+	31
32=	William Hodgson	RAF	Senior	62		79=	Colin Duffus	Fife	40+	31
32=	Lauro Franzese	LRNSC/BM	60+	62		79=	Matt Garwood	AMS	40+	31
34	Simon Hutchins	RAF	40+	60		82	Roy Young	Huntly/BM	60+	30
35	Ade Angell	RAF	40+	59		83=	Kurt Rumley	Fife	Senior	28
36	Eric Seidel	Hyde Park	Senior	58		83=	Michael Smith	Lakeland	40+	28
37	Nathan Sayeg-Priestly	REWS	Senior	55		85	Matt Dewey	Wessex	Senior	27
38	Harry Lee-Smith	REWS	Senior	52		86	Grant Davies	Wessex	40+	26
39=	Hamish Wolfe	Huntly	Senior	50		87=	Philippe Therond	LRNSC	40+	25
39=	Des Goff	LRNSC/BM	60+	50		87=	Dominic Luck	LRNSC	40+	25
39=	Vinny Fountain	16 Regt RA	Senior	50		89	Robert Shaughnessy	U/A	40+	24
42=	Sergey Zakharov	Hyde Park	40+	49		90	Julian Jarvis	LRNSC	40+	20
42=	Nathan Allfree	REWS	Senior	49		91=	Russ White	WBNSC	40+	19
44=	Adam Pinney	YDCCSC/BM	40+	47		91=	Jakob Jonnerby	Hyde Park	Senior	19
44=	Dwayne Lecky	REWS	Senior	47		93=	David Vale	Hyde Park/BM	60+	18
44=	Steven Burke	REWS	Senior	47		93=	Jonathon Osbaldiston	Huntly	40+	18
47=	Simon Haynes	Hyde Park	40+	46		95	Paul Kaye	U/A	40+	17
47=	Connor Lewis	REWS	Senior	46		96	Chris Chamberlain	LRNSC	40+	15
Senior and Masters ladies overall British Series positions 2019										
1	Beata Nowok	W. Track	40+	300		21=	Edwina Hill	MCCSC/BM	60+	40
2	Amanda Richardson	Hyde Park/BM	60+	261		21=	Juliet McBean	RAF	Senior	40
3	Megan Campbell	LRNSC	40+	188		23=	Julie Symington	Huntly	40+	39
4	Rebecca Anderson	RAF	Senior	185		23=	Jane Leary	LRNSC	60+	39
5	Mindy Hauman	Hyde Park	40+	153		25=	Mary Wray	LRNSC/BM	60+	38
6	Sara Mancell	Hyde Park	40+	127		25=	Ana Amores	U/A	Senior	38
7	Carol James	Hyde Park	40+	119		25=	Abbey Armstrong	AWSA	Senior	38
8	Anastasia Coke	REWS	Senior	82		25=	Lizzie Norton	RAF	40+	38
9	Nic Rennett	RAF	40+	78		29=	Nadia Novichkova	Hyde Park	40+	37
10	Emma Brant	Hyde Park	40+	75		29=	Kirstie Macleod	Fife	Senior	37
11	Caroline Appel	Hyde Park	40+	72		31=	Kim Vale	Hyde Park/BM	60+	36
12=	Arnould Aline	U/A	60+	50		31=	Caroline Neil	U/A	Senior	36
12=	Barbara Grogan	Hyde Park	40+	50		33=	Katy Vincent	U/A	Senior	35
14=	Rebecca Weaver	Hyde Park	Senior	45		33=	Lynne Duncan	Huntly	40+	35
14=	Louise Hastie	Grampian SS	Senior	45		35=	Val Dawson	Hyde Park	40+	34
14=	Annika Flynn	U/A	Senior	45		35=	Zona Cooke	Hyde Park	40+	34
14=	Dagmar Junghanns	LRNSC/BM	40+	45		37=	Nicola Froud	LRNSC	40+	33
14=	Mari Marumets	Hyde Park	Senior	45		37=	Jackie Haliday	Hyde Park	40+	33
19=	Livia Bilevic	U/A	Senior	42		39	Jane Balcombe	Hyde Park	40+	32
19=	Holly Rees-Lay	CBNSC	Senior	42						

GB Roller Ski Race Calendar 2020

DATE	EVENT	GB Series	SCOTS Series	London Series	VENUE	ORGANISER	NOTES
Sun 17 May	Format TBC	GB 1		LON 1 (TBC)	Hayes	LRNSC	RACE CANCELLED
Sat 30 May	Huntly Sprints – FT	GB 2	SCOT 1		Huntly	HUNTLY	RACE CANCELLED
Sun 31 May	Clashindarroch Hill Climb – CT	GB 3	SCOT 2		Huntly/Rhynie A941	HUNTLY	RACE CANCELLED
Sun 7 June	Format TBC			LON 2 (TBC)	Hayes	LRNSC	RACE CANCELLED
Sun 21 June	Format TBC	GB 4		LON 3 (TBC)	Hayes	LRNSC	RACE CANCELLED
Sat 8 Aug.	Fife races, mass start – FT Brit. Championship	GB 5	SCOT 3		Lochgelly Cycle Park	Fife RS Club	RACE CANCELLED
Sat 22 Aug.	Format TBC	GB 6			Hetton Lyons	TYNESIDE	RACE CANCELLED
Sun 6 Sept.	Barnaby Norman Memorial, distance TBC – FT				Hayes	LRNSC	Marwe roller ski s provided by organisers.
Sat 12 Sept.	3.5/5.4/7.1 km – FT	GB 7	SCOT 4		Huntly	HUNTLY	Registration from 9 a.m., races start at 10:00. Relays follow main races. Marwe roller skis provided by organisers.
Sun 13 Sept.	Cairngorm Hill Climb (a.m.) – FT	GB 8	SCOT 5		Cairngorm Ski Road Glenmore Lodge	CBNSC	09:00, Any type of roller ski under FIS rules.
	Glenmore Time Trial (p.m.) – FT		SCOT 6				13:30, 3.2 km (10 laps) – Marwe roller skis provided by organisers.
Sun 20 Sept.	Format TBC			LON 4 (TBC)	Hayes	LRNSC	
Sun 4 Oct.	Format TBC	GB 9		LON 5 (TBC)	Hayes	LRNSC	
Sat 10 Oct.	Format TBC			LON 6 (TBC)	Olympic Park	LRNSC	Evening.
Sun 27 Oct.	12/6/3 km – FT	GB 10			Castle Coombe	WESSEX	Marwe roller skis provided by organisers. Plus 4 x 3 km men's and 3 x 3 km ladies relays.

CT = Classic technique. FT = Free technique.

VENUES

HAYES: Hillindon Cycle Circuit, Hayes, Middlesex
HUNTLY: Huntly Nordic and Outdoor Centre, Aberdeenshire
HETTON LYONS: Hetton Lyons Cycle Track, Durham
CASTLE COOMBE: Castle Coombe Motor Circuit, Wiltshire
GLENMORE LODGE: Glenmore Roller Ski Track, Aviemore
CAIRNGORM: Ski Road, Aviemore
FIFE: Fife Cycle Park, Lochgelly, KY5 8AA
Olympic Park: Queen Elizabeth Cycle Circuit, London

NOTES

All races organised by LRNSC have **NO ENTRY ON THE DAY**. To enter go to <http://www.londonnordic.org.uk/online-race-entry/>
Races covered by SE or SNSC Public Liability Insurance. Skiers who are not members of affiliated clubs will be required to pay an additional insurance premium of £5 SE or £3 SNSC per day.
Individuals are responsible for their own personal injury insurance.
Roller skiing, like most sports, has a risk of injury. Competitors enter all races at their own risk.
SE = Snowsport England – www.snowsportengland.org.uk
SNSC = Snowsport Scotland – www.snowsportscotland.org

GB SERIES DIRECTOR: Neil Salmons, neil.salmons@traveleditions.co.uk

SCOTTISH SERIES COORDINATOR: TBC

RACE ORGANISERS:

HUNTLY: Huntly Nordic SC – Peter Thorn (Tel.: 01464 831 429; E-mail: huntlynordicsc@yahoo.co.uk), www.nordicski.co.uk
LRNSC: London Region Nordic SC – Des Goff (E-mail: desgoft@hotmail.com), www.londonnordic.org.uk
WESSEX: Wessex Biathlon & Nordic SC – Bob Anderson (E-mail: bob@wessexbiathlon.org), www.wessexbiathlon.org
CBNSC: Cairngorm Biathlon & Nordic SC – (E-mail: cairngormbiathlonnordicskiclub@outlook.com), www.cbnsco.co.uk
TYNESIDE: Tyneside Loipers – Alasdair Wilson (E-mail: awilson.craw@blueyonder.co.uk), <http://tynesideloipers.org.uk>
FIFE ROLLER SKI CLUB – Alex Standen (E-mail: alex@snowsportscotland.org)

It's all in the mind – By our Irish correspondent Phil O'Sophy

It isn't (whatever "it" is, but here we're talking of sporting success), of course, all in the mind; some of it is in the body. But the aim of this article is to give you some thoughts and tips which might just help you train and race better. Maybe they will work for you, maybe they won't. The idea for this article came, though, from something I saw on the BBC about a year or so ago. Apparently if, when exercising, one takes a drink of water but then spits it out immediately without swallowing, the body nonetheless *responds* as though the drink had been swallowed. Strange, n'est pas? But it shows that both our minds and our bodies can be 'tricked'.

Treadmill running: When you run on a treadmill, do you run right up close to the front bar, or are your heels always clipping the back roller? There's no speed or effort difference, but there can be a psychological difference, especially over longer distances. If you run right at the front, it's as though you're 'ahead' of the machine, which is trying to keep up with you. On the other hand, if you're right at the back of the machine, the machine is 'beating' you and there's always the chance that you might be spat off the back. This, therefore, becomes mentally tiring, whereas running at the front is invigorating.

Counting down or counting up: This probably applies most when doing long interval training, and it depends on whether you are timing from zero up to your desired interval time (say zero to 5 minutes), or whether the timing starts from 5 minutes and comes down (in this case, on machines, the clock shows the time left, e.g. 4 minutes to go). Again, there is no difference whatsoever, but there can be a psychological difference. If you're counting up, the first time you see "3" (3:00), it's very positive; you've only got two more minutes, you're more than half way, you can easily complete these last two minutes. If you're counting down, the first time you see "3" it's 3:59. Oh no, still almost four minutes to go, nowhere near half way, I'm struggling, how can time be going so slowly? and, worst, "I give up"!

In the pack: Skiing, running, cycling, whatever, if there's a pack around you, where do you position yourself? At the front is not generally very sensible; you're being pressurised by everyone behind you to go faster than you want to. At the back is no good, either. You're desperate to keep up and the fear is that at any moment now you will be dropped – this is the most stressful place to be. In the pack, though, this is ideal; you're protected, you're being pulled along, if you get a little tired you can drop back a place or two and yet still be well within the pack.

Constantly racing: In a race, do you believe that you must beat everyone, all the time and at all stages of the race? If someone's behind you, you have to leave them behind, whereas if someone's just in front of you, you have to catch up and overtake them? Hold on a second there, cowboy (or bullgirl, for equality), *why* do you need to get away from them or beat them? The only time that you need to be ahead of as many of your rivals as possible is as you cross the finish line; at any time prior to that, your rivals can be your friends rather than your enemies. So instead of trying to beat everyone, all the time, ask yourself whether a rival, or a group of rivals, can assist you rather than challenge you. Are they going marginally quicker than you and can pull you along? Can you and they form a pack which works together to your advantage? Etc., etc.

No grip in classic skiing: Are you struggling to get grip in difficult conditions when classic skiing? Are you convinced that your wax is 'wrong'? When you kick down and back to drive yourself forward, the ski just skids back with no grip whatsoever? I will ignore the possibility that you really have got the wax totally wrong, e.g. using stick wax when you should be using klistar, or *vice-versa*, but the method to resolve "no grip" works, in principle, even in this case, and it requires a change in your mental approach to classic skiing.

If your view is that you are gliding on one leg, and that you must bring the 'kicking' leg down into contact with the snow, allowing you to kick backwards, then 'wrong' wax will, indeed, lead to no forward movement. If, on the other hand, you imagine that the 'kicking' leg is already stuck to the snow and you are not kicking back, you are, instead, driving the 'non-kicking' ski forwards, your 'no grip' problem is solved! You no longer specifically need to find grip, kicking your foot forwards moves you forwards by the desired amount; the 'kicking leg' takes care of itself without you having to think about it. It takes some practice, I agree but, if you get this right, you can classic ski on snow with no grip system whatsoever (i.e. using skate skis) or you can classic ski using skate rollers, and this has nothing to do with applying a very slight edge, pressing your ski up against the edge of the track, or any other action which would be 'cheating'!

Winter World Masters Games – Seefeld

Tronald Dump might believe that climate change isn't happening, but if he wants proof that it is, he only needs to look at the contents of my wax box. I have various stick waxes ranging from -10 °C down to -30 °C which have not been used for longer than I can remember (*How can you be sure of that? Ed*), apart from as base binders. If that wasn't proof enough, then why the heck was the temperature in Seefeld, west Austria, ranging from about -4 °C up to about +5 °C, *in the middle of January*? This was exactly what we found when we turned up for the once-every-five-years Winter World Masters Game (WWMG), sort of the Winter Olympics for Masters and which covers various winter sports including cross-country skiing.

Regular listeners will recall, from our experience of the WWMG in Pokljuka, Slovenia ten years ago, that this event has a reputation for rather poor organisation, and various things occurred to maintain this well-deserved reputation. They got all my race entries wrong initially (although they did change them when I pointed out the mistake), and I wasn't the only one. When we went out to inspect the tracks on Wednesday prior to the first race on Sunday, there was no track marking whatsoever, and even the day before the first race, there was still no marking (although if one memorised the track plan, or carried a map, it wasn't too difficult to find the routes). Start lists only appeared very late, and the athletes' briefing meetings took place only at 9 o'clock on the morning of the races (we didn't bother going!).

There were other things which were at best questionable, at worst daft. The first race for classic skiers was the longest, 30 km, and the course used for this (7.5 km) was disproportionately difficult when compared to the 3.75 km track used for the 7.5 km race and the 5 km track used for the 15 km race. Not only did the 7.5 km track have a second series of steep climbs and descents, it also went from the shaded, left side of the valley, where the temperature stayed fairly low all day (and where the two shorter tracks stayed) over to the right hand side of the valley, into full sun and the +5 °C.

Andy Robinson, Hans Nilsson and I met up on Wednesday morning with a view to testing out the tracks; it was -8 °C so Swix VR 45 was working well as grip wax, while Andy, on his hired skin skis, seemed to be getting good grip, too. The tracks started fairly easily, a kilometre or so of flat, rolling stuff, before we came to the first hill. This was steep, and fairly long and, because it belonged to the tracks used for the elite World Championships of a year ago, too tough for Masters. After that, the tracks dropped steeply and over a bridge (we didn't know that at the time!), before climbing again and rolling along past the downhill slope until they turned and started their return down through the road tunnel (dangerous, because if one lost control going round the corner leading into the tunnel, one was heading for the concrete, and that 5 cm thick mattress was not going to make much difference!).

After the tunnel the track continued flat for a while, passing an area where the snow was very thin and stony, before turning left and starting to climb up around a right-handed bend. There followed a second, thin, brown and stony section before a fast, long, run down back into the valley. Another gentle climb led to another left-hand turn where the climb got steeper, culminating at the high point after a steep climb round a right-hand bend. Half a kilometre of rolling terrain with two steepish climbs led into the next downhill, which continued fast around a right-hand corner, followed by another short climb, straight run down, short climb and then left turn and long run down over the bridge back to the start area. That wasn't quite it, though. Remember the climb just before the finish that featured in the World Champs? We still had to go up and back down there before we got to the finish. All in all, quite a demanding track for Masters. It was the climbs that made it hard (particularly those *uphill climbs*, as Patrick on Eurosport has started referring to them as, to distinguish them from those pesky downhill climbs); at least the descents could be handled in the familiar 'racing snowplough'.

That was the 7.5 km track used only for the long race. The shorter track, 3.75 km, followed the longer track at first but then doubled back on itself before taking a different climb up the hill to meet the 5 km track which used the same first steep climb as for 7.5 km and did the bridge drop. After a climb and short flat, the 5 km track continued for an additional loop, down a short drop and round a sharp left-hand corner. This was on the limit of what could be handled in the tracks, as Andy and I proved by trying it many times over, not always with success! Another short climb, nice drop, uphill then left-hand downhill corner, swooping right hand bend

and re-joining the 3.75 track which had doubled back on itself, and then both tracks started the return section. This consisted of two sharpish drops with a short climb in between, before a final climb up to a short loop and then down over the bridge and back to the start. Still not quite there – that World Cup climb had to be negotiated before the finish!

Although the grip wax worked well early in the cool and shade of the morning, it worked substantially less well in the heat of the sun and in the warmth of the afternoon. So, on the Thursday with very little grip, I bowed to the inevitable and bought a pair of racing skin skis! Friday brought an unfortunate incident for Andy. On the drop on the far loop of the 7.5 km track, he fell, hitting his head and shoulder and prompting double vision! This led to him deciding not to race the full 30 km classic race but, instead, to only start it (to get the feeling of pre-race nerves) and then pull out after the first climb. Hans, complaining of a lack of fitness, had already decided not to do this race.

Sunday, cold, -8 °C, and finally the 30 km classic race. I'd had my new skin skis prepared in the shop with HF glide wax, and I'd prepared my waxable skis with Guruwax klister (-2 °C to +7 °C) with stick wax over the top. Tricky decision; the waxed skis gripped excellently but might stop working at some point, whereas the skins had somewhat less grip but were certain to keep this throughout the race. In the end, I opted for the waxable skis and wasn't disappointed, at least not by the grip. In fact, I felt that the grip was excellent; having been at the back of the main group out of the start and for the first kilometre or so, I was able to pass about five people by staying in the tracks almost the whole way up the first long, steep hill. The only thing that stopped me was a lack of puff, not a lack of grip! Having said that, the grip wax was probably too good, and this was slowing down the glide. So I was, for most of the first lap, in a small group of four; I pulled ahead on all the uphills while they shot past me on the downhills. This continued until I had a ridiculous fall, going uphill! I'd shot down a hill and was gliding up the other side at speed, when my skis slid apart and down I went, losing contact with my little group and losing complete contact with my hat!

After that, the next three laps were spent mainly on my own; I caught one of my original group and had the same experience for a lap (catching on the uphills, losing on the downhills) until, on the third lap, I pulled ahead, and I got caught and overtaken by one M60. It was, though, a hard, hard race, and I was happy when it had finished. At least, it felt hard but, when I think back over other Masters 30 km results, while I've done the race faster in the past, I've also taken longer for it, so maybe these tracks were not so difficult after all.



Dr Pinney, hatless but looking rather dynamic, starts another lap, with R. Homyer shadowing his skis

A few people we know (Paddy and Hilary Field, and Chris Donnelly) were entered but unable to attend which, in Paddy and Hilary's case, was a shame because they were guaranteed medals! A couple of other Brits, some unknown to us, also entered, including Chris Maund, Cristopher Corbett, John Moffat (also racing biathlon) and Hilton Shaw. These are only shown in the following results where they started a race. Regular listeners might remember Sorin Milas, former British Roller Ski Series champion, and Beata Nowax, reigning British Ladies Roller Ski Series champion who picked up three medals, but neither of these are shown in the results. There were, also, medals for GBR in the Nordic Combined, for Alan Jones (no, not that one!) and for Colin Blackburn in ski orienteering. If you want to see the full results, you can find them on the World Winter Masters Games website.

Men's M30-M65 30 km classic technique, Sunday 12th January

Fastest	Christian Baldauf	AUT	M50	1.22:51.2	22.0 km/h	
1)	Jaromír Simunek	CZE	M60	1.38:04.9	18.4 km/h	
11)	Adam Pinney	GBR	M60	2.07:54.5	14.1 km/h	30.4 %
	Andy Robinson	GBR	M60	DNF		
	Hans Nilsson	GBR	M60	DNS		(16 starters)

The following day dawned cold, -9 °C, but with the prospect of it being much warmer, -3 °C by the time we started our 7.5 km journey at 11:45. Although there were two age categories together on the start line (M60 and M65), this was probably the greatest number of people representing GBR starting together, six of us although one, John Moffat, was unknown to the rest of us. There was a bit of a difference of opinion amongst us about grip system, Alasdair and Andy favouring skin skis, Roger and I on klister with stick wax over the top, and Hans unknown. In reality, it probably wasn't a klister day, despite this being the Swix recommendation, and the Swix VR55 alone would have been enough but it didn't really matter, because Roger and my grip system worked very well.

Getting to the start from the changing rooms and toilets was quite a trek, through a tunnel and along various gravelly path from which, in my experience at least, bits of gravel inevitably got stuck in my boots. I was worried to see everyone already lined up as I was getting my transponders put on. Luckily, the starter made some sort of mistake, and the start was delayed for 5 minutes, giving me time to catch my breath.

When the gun went, I was away alongside Hans but pulled past him and led the British contingent for the first half a kilometre or so until, at his kind request, I allowed Roger to pull in ahead of me. Roger had been baulked at the start, where the piste fairly quickly narrowed to two tracks, and the way that the course markers had been placed meant that it wasn't possible to get out through them onto the flat snow at the side. Once again, we were able to pass a large number of people with our better grip up the hill, again only lack of breath forced me out of the tracks, rather than lack of grip.

The race progressed almost without incident after that. The downhill were far better than they'd been the day before, because they were soft without having the deep soft snow of the long race. Still, though, I wasn't brave enough to run them straight, and lost places (albeit not to anyone in my class), on the downhills. Even Hans was happy on the hills, something he's not been earlier in the week. The one major incident saw Roger catch an edge on the last major downhill before the finish, which moved him from a probable 4th position down to 6th. At the end, though, everyone seemed happy, in particular Andy, completing his first proper Masters race.

Men's M30-M65 7.5 km classic technique, Monday 13th January

Fastest	Christian Baldauf	AUT	M50	19:17.6	23.3 km/h	
1)	Daniele Vuerich	ITA	M60	20:14.4	22.2 km/h	
11)	Adam Pinney	GBR	M60	28:12.3	16.0 km/h	39.3 %
18)	Hans Nilsson	GBR	M60	33:53.3	13.2 km/h	67.4 %
19)	Andy Robinson	GBR	M60	36:21.0	12.4 km/h	79.5 %
	John Moffat	GBR	M60	DNF		(21 starters)
1)	Nikolai Karetnikov	RUS	M65	23:10.1	19.4 km/h	
6)	Roger Homyer	GBR	M65	27:12.3	16.5 km/h	17.4 %
9)	Alasdair Wilson	GBR	M65	33:28.2	13.4 km/h	44.5 %
						(9 starters)



Andy, getting plenty of grip from his skins, starts the first, long, climb

Another cold start on Tuesday, around -8 °C but, as usual, warming rapidly to a high of +4 °C by 2:15 p.m., the time scheduled for Roger's start in the 7.5 km free race. Roger awoke claiming of feeling tired after the 7.5 km race of the previous day (*What? 7.5 km? Real men race 30 km on one day and then 7.5 km the day after. Ed*), but was the only Brit racing on this day. His race was uneventful but, as before, he was catching people on the climbs and losing out on the downhills, including snowploughing down the hill where he'd fallen the day before.

Men's M30-M65 7.5 km free technique, Tuesday 14th January

Fastest	Andreas Schwarz	AUT	M40	17:05.5	26.3 km/h		
1)	Friedrich Nockler	ITA	M65	19:09.2	23.5 km/h		
15)	Roger Homyer	GBR	M65	23:32.0	19.1 km/h	22.9 %	(21 starters)

Wednesday was not a day for stick wax, although during the warm-up the combination of Swix VR50 and VR55 had worked well. The early-morning temperature was one degree warmer than predicted the night before, and the very early start (08:40) didn't give much time for waxing in the morning. It seemed that, more or less between the warm-up and the race start, the temperature went up to around zero and most people were struggling. I got off to a rather slow start, because I discovered that one of my pole straps was undone, as a result of having to get little stones out of my boots before the start and, as a consequence, I got stuck between Mr Fat and Mr Slow and, by the time I'd got past them, the pack that I should have been with was already 30 metres in the distance. I was hoping that, when I came to the first uphill, I would catch the herringboners but, a short way up the hill, I realised that I had very little grip either, and had to join them in herringboning. As the race went on, the situation got worse, and I was having to herringbone up even modest slopes, but so was everyone else. On the plus side, though, the downhills were nice and could be run almost straight. Andy, on his skins, improved his speed compared to the 7.5 km and was very happy with this.

Men's M30-M65 15 km classic technique, Wednesday 15th January

Fastest	Christian Baldauf	AUT	M50	38:48.3	23.2 km/h		
1)	Daniele Vuerich	ITA	M60	41:29.2	21.7 km/h		
11)	Adam Pinney	GBR	M60	59:31.1	15.1 km/h	43.5 %	
17)	Andy Robinson	GBR	M60	1.11:29.2	12.5 km/h	72.3 %	
	Hans Nilsson	GBR	M60	DNS			
	John Moffat	GBR	M60	DNS			(17 starters)

The 15 km classic finished the racing for Hans, Andy and me, but there were still two races to go, Roger and Alasdair in the 15 km free and then, finally, Alasdair alone in the 30 km free. Morning conditions were cold for the first of these but it soon warmed up for the race itself. There were two groups set off together, the M60 and M65s and, as they came past me standing at the bottom of the first big climb, Roger was about mid-pack, while Alasdair was at the back of, but still attached to, the rest of the pack. I then moved to take photos in a different part of the track on the second lap, the bottom of one of the long drops and the start of a short climb. What was interesting to note here was that the leader of the M40 class came down the hill with such speed that he needed to do nothing whatsoever to get up the short climb (he just glided up it), whereas other, less daring, individuals had to skate up it; there's work for us Brits to do here! I waited for a while to catch Alasdair at this point but, complaining of a lack of fitness, he'd pulled out at the end of Lap 1.



Roger powers on, alongside two rivals

Men's M30-M65 15 km free technique, Thursday 16th January

Fastest	Stefan Heindl	AUT	M30	33:27.4	26.9 km/h		
1)	Vladimir Andronov	RUS	M65	39:12.6	23.0 km/h		
10)	Roger Homyer	GBR	M65	45:35.5	19.7 km/h	16.3 %	
	Alasdair Wilson	GBR	M65	DNF			(19 starters)

There's not really a great deal to report from the final race, 30 km free. Alasdair invoked the "not in good enough condition" clause (he was also racing in the ski orienteering) and didn't start, and that was about it!

Men's M30-M65 30 km free technique, Friday 17th January

Fastest	Sergey Tarasov	RUS	M35	1.25:13.0	21.3 km/h	
1)	Nikolai Karetnikov	RUS	M65	1.45:01.0	17.1 km/h	
	Alasdair Wilson	GBR	M65	DNS		(14 starters)

So how would we summarise this event? Well, compared with Slovenia 10 years ago when, for example, we had pin-on paper numbers and the track for the longest race wasn't cut until the night before the race, the organisation has certainly improved! This time we had proper bibs and the tracks were always very well-prepared; it was just disappointing that they weren't marked before the races.

Seefeld is a very easy place to get to, and Roger, Alasdair and I found an excellent AirBNB apartment, almost right in the centre of town and just 10 minutes' walk from the track, which worked out at just €30 per night for each of us. We found that the race facilities near the start were fairly basic, and in fact we got on much better using the locker room right at the start of the public tracks, which gave us a warm place to put on boots and get ready, and gave us a 500 metre ski up to the race start.

The WWMG doesn't attract the same number of racers as the Masters World Championships. I would guess that there were maybe 500 racers compared with 1 000 for an MWC, but the standard is much the same, so our normal measure of percentage of the winner's time remains valid. I was happy with the tracks and, despite an initial feeling that they were harder than a normal Masters, I'm not sure that this was really the case, although perhaps the uphill were a little steeper. All in all, it was a good fun event, and one worth considering when it comes around again in five years' time, although I have no idea at the moment where it will take place.

Possible changes to the MWC– your chance to hear and be heard

One issue of the Masters World Championships, right from the beginning, is that an event which begins on a Thursday and continues until the following Friday requires a week and a half holiday, at least. This can be challenging for those in work, but it was potentially slightly improved with the introduction of “any three races” a couple of years ago. There are various options associated with this but, at its shortest, it involves one race on Sunday and two races on Monday or, maybe more realistically, one race on each of Saturday, Sunday and Monday. But either of these involves a lot of racing in a short space of time and rather negates the benefits of travelling to a new venue, with very little free time. Of course, anyone wanting to do three races, one of which is the longest, has to stay at the venue from at least Monday until Thursday.

I have been pressing, for a while now, the World Masters Association (WMA) to try to reduce the event to one week, allowing people to travel on Friday and leave the following Saturday morning. The best option to achieve this would be to remove the relays, but this has consistently been resisted. Recently, though, a new proposal has come up, involving having both medium-distance races, somewhat shorter, on the same day. The whole programme would then look like the following:

Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
		Medium C/F	Short C/F			Long C or F	Long F or C	
Arrive/ training	Arrive/ training	20 / 15 / 10 or 7.5 km	10 / 5 km	Rest day	Relay	45 /30 / 15 km	45 /30 / 15 km	Depart
			1 st party				2 nd party	

This looks promising, but it doesn't solve the real issue; to attend the whole event, one has to travel on Wednesday and then leave on Thursday or Friday, getting home on Friday or Saturday, so still a week and a half. On your behalf, therefore, I have asked the WMA to keep the same basic races but shift everything back by a day. For people happy with just one day's training, they could travel on Friday and, leaving on Saturday morning, everyone should then be able to get home by Sunday evening, ready for work on Monday. This proposal has not yet been debated, though, **so do you have any views? If so, please let me know.**

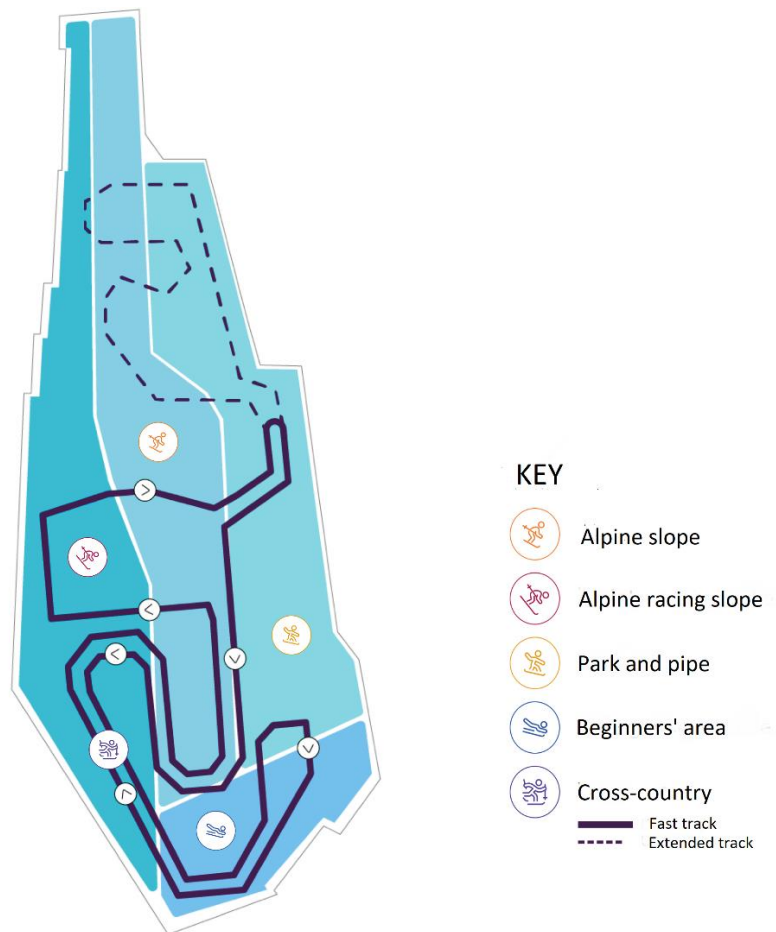
Changes have, though, already been agreed to the relays, which potentially benefit us and get more relay teams involved. In future, only one person is required in the lowest age group (which defines the team's age category), with all other team members being in the same or older age groups. Such a team will be designated "Regular" and can win medals. Mixed-nation teams will also be permitted, with the same age rule but allowing any combination of nations up to and including one racer from each of four different nations. Mixed teams won't, though, be eligible for medals. I would ask if you have any views on this proposal, too, but it's too late because the decision has already been taken and will, I guess, be implemented in Canmore 2021.

A post-pandemic return to snow?

Many of us are familiar with indoor snow, and there are now venues in many different countries. The London Region club organises a trip to Obersdorf each autumn, Snowsport England has used the tunnel in Vuokatti a few times, and who can ever forget the fun that wasn't the 120 metre XC track at the Tamworth Snow Dome? Personally, I'm not convinced that a visit to one of these places in the summer is particularly beneficial: fitness training can just as well be done on roller skis, and the technical benefits of being on snow are probably lost by the time the outdoor ski season comes around six months later. But an early-season trip, in October or November, could well be a good thing, and a relatively new venue in Oslo, <https://snooslo.no>, offers this. The Snø Oslo Centre is now Europe's largest indoor ski arena.

The cross-country track at the Snø venue is for both beginners and professionals, of all ages. It's one kilometre long (or 1.5 km long if you look at the Visit Oslo website!), 5 metres wide, provides for both classic and free technique, and stays at a constant -2 °C to -4 °C. It starts out on a mezzanine – hanging 20 metres above the ground, and then it winds around with slight gradients and a total climb of about 32 metres, providing good variation throughout. As the map overleaf shows, though, there is a lot more to Snø than just cross-country.





The main downhill slope is 500 metres long and 90 metres wide, with a drop of 80 metres, so ideal for practicing that GB weak area, downhill skiing (not sure whether you can use cross-country skis on the slope, though). When you've had enough of skiing, there's also a fitness centre and different restaurants, cafes and a bar. If you want to be first onto the track every day, there is even a hotel, the Thon Hotel, right above the ski area (although there are, no doubt, cheaper places in Oslo to stay). There are, of course, changing rooms and lockers, included in the entry price, and it's also possible to rent skis at about £15 a day. A day pass to the centre costs £27, while a two-day pass is £50 (although the whole venue is currently closed).



The centre is about 15 minutes from downtown Oslo, so within easy range of a wide variety of accommodation, of which probably the cheapest option is an AirBNB (other rental sites are available) apartment, with typical prices being around £60 a night for two people. There are, of course, many normal and budget flight to Oslo.

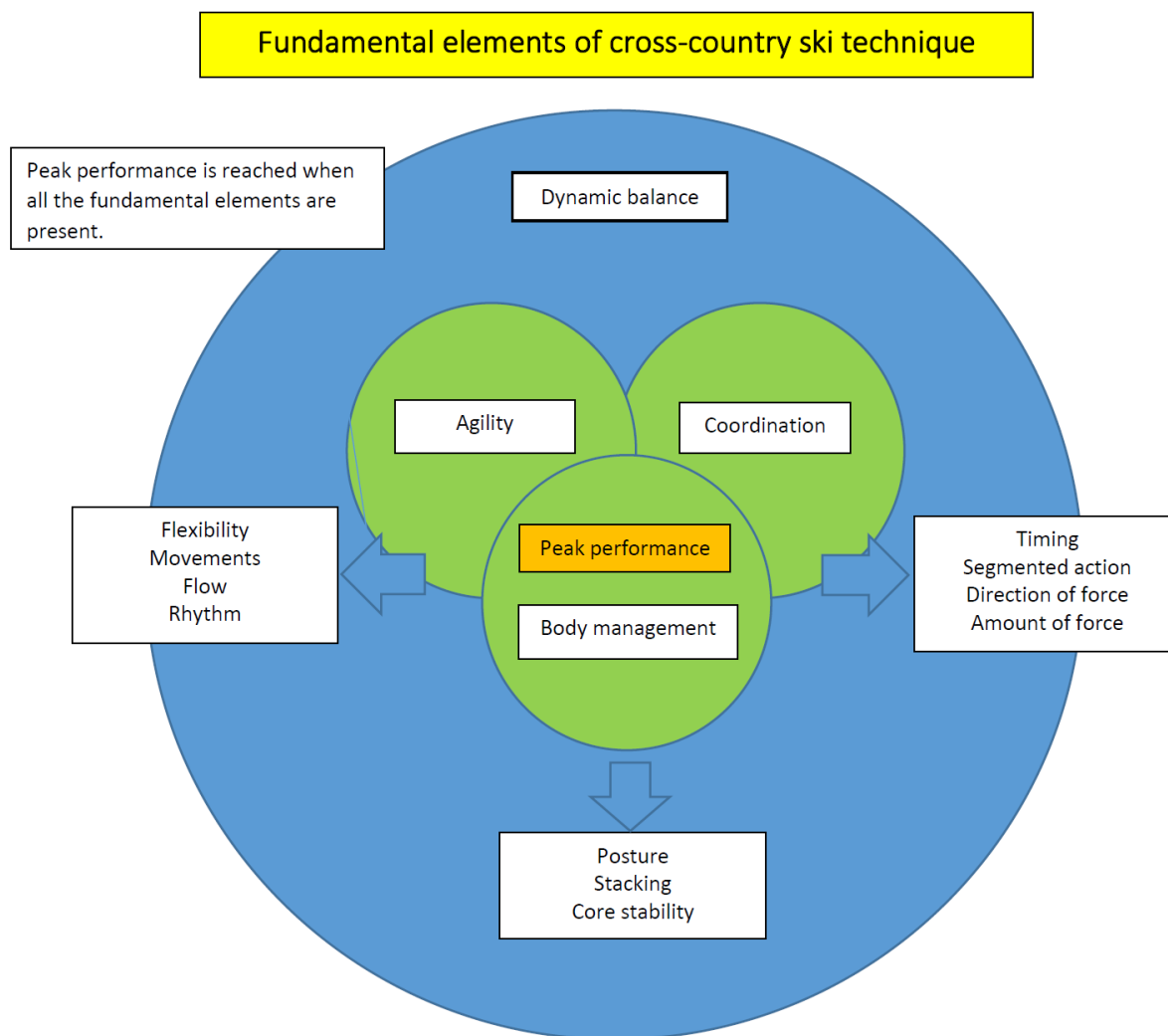
If you're considering a trip later this year (assuming that later this year becomes possible), please feel free to let me know, and maybe we'll be able to get a group together.

Fundamentals of cross-country ski technique

By Roger Homyer (with contributions by Adam Pinney)

Part 1 – Fundamental elements

The Venn diagram below shows what are considered to be the main elements for peak performance in cross-country skiing. This article, and subsequent articles, will outline these elements and suggest ways we as coaches and/or athletes can improve upon each element.



Firstly, think about how you learned to ski. Probably you had a friend or a coach who showed and told you what you need to do to start to gain proficiency in each sub-technique. You copied and gradually began to progress. But it is likely that you found some things difficult to acquire and repeated practice didn't help. That's where these fundamental elements become important. Any progress requires good balance whilst in motion = dynamic balance. Do you practice your balance? What drills or exercises should you be doing to improve?

Agility represents the degree of flexibility, range of movement, together with speed and accuracy of movement. Agility might also include rhythm and flow in skiing. Flow is where you ski well but without conscious effort around a course, each sub-technique varying as required by speed, terrain and other skiers. So how do you improve agility, both on and off skis?

Coordination consists of your timing of force, amount of force, and direction of force applied by your lower body and upper body. Clearly, this will be very important in determining your speed of travel and efficiency. How do you develop coordination?

Body management is used to describe how you stand on your skis. This includes your posture, stacking (this term is used to describe the relationship between your body segments and the direction of the gliding ski(s)) and your core stability. How do you improve body management?

In the following we'll look at some fundamental drills on skis or roller skis for diagonal striding. Meanwhile, if you have any thoughts on the fundamental elements, let us know.

Part 2 – Drills for classic skiing

As a runner as well as a skier, I often include running/sprint drills in my warm ups and training. If I go to a track, I'll see runners of all ages and abilities doing high knees, butt kicks, fast feet, kick outs, etc whilst walking, running, skipping and stepping. These drills are intended to reinforce aspects of running form. So why don't cross country skiers do similar drills? They are not just for beginners but should form the technical basis for almost every session.

The photo below shows me (doing the Klaebo Klomp for those of you who watch Eurosport) at the top of the big hill at the Winter World Masters Games, Seefeld, 2020. Although I'm working hard, the secret of effective classic hill climbing is the development of the elements above so that, primarily, the action is efficient and effective, allowing the 'hard work' to contribute directly to climbing speed, not to superfluous movements.



Here are some suggestions for drills on skis or roller skis which emphasise fundamental aspects of diagonal striding. Whilst most are relevant for many fundamental elements, decide which one or two are the most relevant for you from dynamic balance, agility, coordination and body management:

- 1) one ski striding, no poles (change skis to practice glide on each leg),
- 2) no poles striding, concentrating on 'easy' balance and foot control¹,

- 3) striding downhill, selecting a slope which you're happy with,
- 4) striding with a long glide (a lower overall rhythm may help for this),
- 5) striding with a long glide, then short, choppy strides, then uphill run²,
- 6) striding with a powerful hop onto the glide ski,
- 7) lane changing while striding, ensuring accuracy of actions³,
- 8) no poles striding, but getting power from kicking the recovery leg forward (the other, 'kicking', leg takes care of itself).

Notes: 1) Several aspects of foot movement are important and worth concentrating on: ensure that your feet come together about 20 cm apart side-to-side, because wider than this and it's very difficult, if not impossible, to balance; ensure that the recovery foot comes in moving straight forwards instead of in a narrow skate direction which then needs a recovery movement; the returning foot should not touch down until it is at least alongside, if not a little ahead, of the glide foot. If normal striding doesn't allow you to achieve these things, try using shorter strides at first and then extend – if this works, excellent, but if it doesn't, return to shorter strides and then extend again.

2) Many people struggle with demonstrating real difference between long and short strides! So either have someone watch you or, over a set distance, count the number of strides; there should be twice as many short strides as long strides.

3) On snow, a change from the left to the right track involves a push off the left leg, the right ski passing over the right track, with the left leg coming down directly into the right track (opposite legs when changing from right to left). Practice until the action is smooth and, in particular, to avoid the non-skating foot coming down outside the track. On roller skis, imagine (or draw) two parallel lines at the distance apart of two classic tracks, then push across with the non-skating leg coming down moving directly forwards along the line.

Part 3 – Double poling

The following technical drills are useful for developing effective double poling:

- 1) no pole double poling, with 'active' arm recovery leading to forward and upward movement of body,
- 2) double pole with pause before strike at highest arm/hand recovery point, ensuring balance in this position and keeping elbows bent at about 90° (avoid taking the hands too far forward),
- 3) double pole action but using a single pole, locking the core to maintain correct poling action,
- 4) one ski double pole, concentrating on balance and maintenance of correct poling action,
- 5) variation for speed, slow to fast (cadence slows as extension of shoulders increases, body projected up and forwards, knee flexion reduces),
- 6) variation for acceleration or cruising; when accelerating from standstill, the action is short with hands not passing the hips, as speed increases, the hands swing further back (see Note 2 above),
- 7) variation for gradient (cadence increases and arm action shortens as slope steepens),
- 8) double poling using only: arms, or abs crunch, or knee flexion,
- 9) rising up on the toes, to be at maximum rise when the hands are forward, allow full body drop to initiate the double pole,
- 10) transition into double poling from diagonal stride or double pole kick, then from double poling back to one of these techniques, ensuring that the transition occurs early enough to avoid 'stalling'.

Further Parts will follow, covering position on skis and skate techniques, but if you have any comments on the techniques so far, please feel free to get in touch.

Masters World Championships, Cogne, Italy, 2020 – or not!

It was Friday evening, a little less than a week before the MWC was due to start in Cogne, and I was on my way home from a week's work in Kosovo. It was not very long after the bad storms which had hit the UK and, because I was due to set off for Cogne the following day, Saturday, but was worried that my plane home might be late, I'd left my car, with everything needed for two weeks' skiing, at Heathrow. It hadn't helped that, when I'd arrived at Heathrow a week earlier, my £45 a week meet-and-greet parking service hadn't shown up (the company involved, I've been told, is now of interest (but not that much interest) to the police) and I'd had to pay £115 on the spot for alternative parking, but that's a completely different story. Anyway, I'd been training hard since the Winter World Masters Games in Seefeld in January, and I was fully *ready* for the MWC!

Corona virus, or as it's now known Covid-nnnn19 (the average age of the combat disease in Vietnam) had been in the news, and Lombardia, the northern part of Italy around Milan, was starting to shut down. Cogne, however, further north than Lombardia, had no Covid cases. There had been some E-mails, during the previous week, from the World Masters Association saying that they and the Cogne Organising Committee (OC) were monitoring the situation but the plan was that the World Champs would still go ahead. Then, as I sat in Pristina Airport, the E-mail we'd been fearing, but hoping wouldn't arrive, did arrive – the whole event was *cancelled*. GB had eleven people scheduled to attend, and they were all informed by Julie.

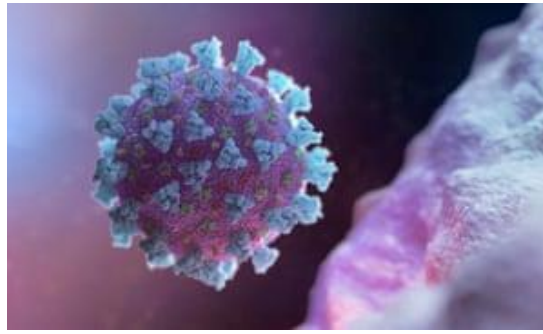
Just to complete this part of the story, my plane home was bang on time, so the parking charge was a complete waste of money. There was a final E-mail from Cogne to say that, although the event itself was off, the tracks were all cut and open, anyone who wanted to come would be welcome, and hotels would only charge half price. I was sorely tempted, but the big risk would have been arriving in Cogne, Covid-19 to break out, and we might then have been quarantined there for 14 days. That was too much of a risk and, in the end, it meant that none of us made the trip, and I have no idea how many people from other countries made the trip, either.

We were all shocked because the MWC was one of the first major sporting events to be cancelled, and some of us, me included, believed that this was an unnecessary, far too cautious, move by the OC. There had been problems attracting racers to Cogne and the deadline had been extended but, even with this extension, the final count was just 609 men and 223 women, so a total of just 832, the lowest since the MWC really got established in the early 1990s (apart from Minneapolis two years ago). It is generally reckoned that about 1 000 participants are needed for an MWC to make a profit, so I even speculated that the event had been cancelled prematurely so that the OC could claim on their insurance and prevent them from making a large loss. If the event had been scheduled for, say, two weeks later, we would all have fully understood the reasons for the decision!

The cancellation meant financial losses, in terms of travel costs and accommodation, as well as the entry fee. No insurance claims could be made, because flights (or, in my case, the ferry) still departed and hotels were still open. At first it was feared that no refunds whatsoever would be made but, after some negotiation, it was agreed that half of the €200 entry fee would be given back and, for people who'd booked accommodation through the OC, deposits would also be repaid (but this didn't extend to anyone who'd booked privately). Nonetheless, some of us lost around £1 000, and it was a lot more than this for anyone coming from further afield, such as the US, Canada or, worse, Australia. Ironically, too, snow conditions in Cogne were apparently excellent! Anyway, with nothing to report on the MWC, instead we have an article about Covid-19 itself.

What are coronaviruses and Covid-19?

Let's start by asking exactly what we're talking about. "Coronavirus" is a generic term covering a large family of viruses, where "corona" (crown) refers to the spikes on the virus surface that look like crowns. They were first identified as human pathogens in the 1960s and, to date, seven coronaviruses that infect humans have been identified. Coronaviruses produce symptoms ranging from the common cold through flu-like illnesses up to severe respiratory problems and pneumonia. SARS and MERS, the viruses behind two previous outbreaks, were both coronaviruses. The virus behind the current pandemic is actually Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus-2 (SARS-CoV-2), and it is this virus which leads to the disease called Covid-19. Although the symptoms of Covid-19 may be flu-like and the transmission method is the same, coronaviruses are very different from flu viruses and they work in different ways.



A model of a betacoronavirus, the virus linked to Covid-19

Where did it come from?

Covid-19 first emerged in Wuhan, China, in late December 2019 – that much is well known. There are different opinions on where it actually came from: some reports suggest that bats are the most likely source, another report suggests that both bats and pangolins (scaly anteaters) contain viruses similar to SARS-CoV-2, with the bat virus, RaTG13, being the closest. Some newspapers report that it got into humans by bats biting pangolins. Finally, the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) says that the source is currently unknown. Both bats and pangolins are native to China, but one report suggests that pangolins are illegally imported, for food, from Malaysia and are sold live in Chinese markets. There are two possibilities for how SARS-CoV-2 developed: it mutated within an animal and was then transmitted to humans, or a different virus was first transferred to humans and then mutated into SARS-CoV-2 within humans. Detailed genetic analysis provides strong evidence that SARS-CoV-2 is not the result of deliberate manipulation, i.e. it was not manufactured in a germ laboratory and then either accidentally or deliberately released, dispelling one rumour!

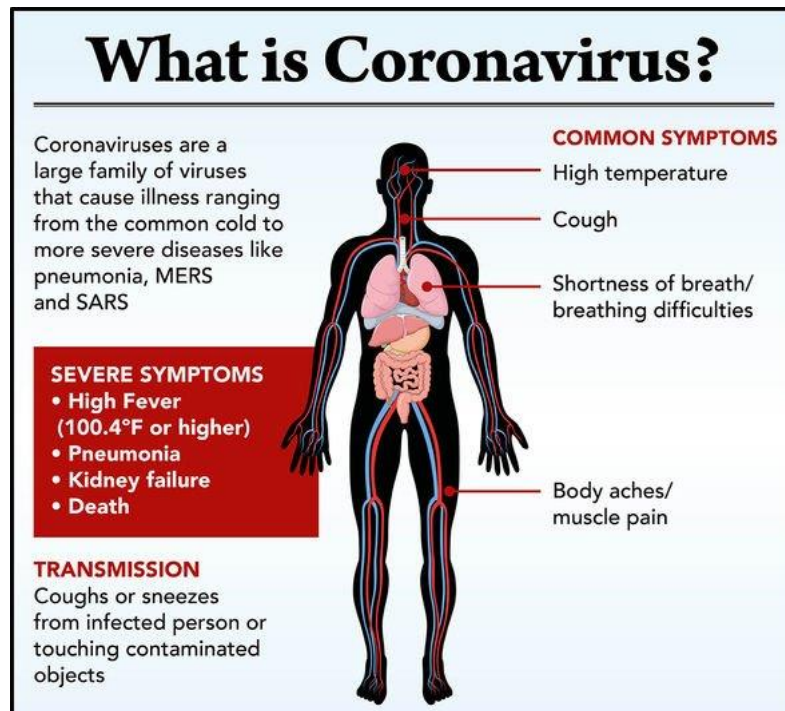
How is it spread and how does it work?

The World Health Organisation (WHO) says that, as a respiratory disease, people catch Covid-19 from others who have the virus. The disease mainly spreads from person to person through small droplets from the nose or mouth which are emitted when a person with Covid-19 coughs or exhales. These droplets land on objects and surfaces around the person, other people then catch Covid-19 by touching these objects or surfaces, followed by touching their eyes, nose or mouth, through which the virus enters their body. People can also catch Covid-19 if they breathe in droplets from a person with the disease who coughs out or exhales droplets. Other transmission routes might be possible (such as from faeces) and these are still being examined, but they appear unlikely to be anything other than very minor sources of transfer. There's a difference of opinion about transmission, though. WHO says that most Covid-19 transmission occurs once symptoms have appeared, whereas some virologists say that transmission can, and does, happen well before this.

Droplets being inhaled explains why it is important to stay more than 2 metres away from a person who is sick (although research suggests that particles from a sneeze can travel at least 8 metres), while picking up the virus from surfaces, using a hand which then touch the face, explains why washing hands regularly is crucial, and also why people are not allowed to sit on benches, for example, when outside, because the next person to sit on that bench might then pick up the virus from there. But, hang on a second, *standing* 2 metres apart might be fair enough, but if *moving* 2 metres apart (if we assume that 2 metres is far enough), aren't we moving into possibly contaminated air? Doesn't logic suggest that we need to be much further apart if we're moving?

Many people with the disease experience only mild symptoms, particularly in the early stages. It is therefore possible to catch Covid-19 from someone who has, for example, just a mild cough. Once virus-ridden particles are inhaled, they come into contact with cells lining the throat and larynx. These cells have large numbers of receptors, known as Ace-2 receptors, on their surfaces. SARS-Cov-2 virus has a surface protein that is primed to lock on to Ace-2 receptors and slip its RNA (genetic material) into the cell. Once inside, that RNA inserts itself into the cell's own replication machinery and makes multiple copies of the virus. These burst out of the cell, and the infection spreads within the person's body. Antibodies generated by the body's immune system eventually target the virus and, in most cases, halt its progress.

Occasionally, however, the virus can cause severe problems. This happens when it moves down the respiratory tract and infects the lungs, which have even more cells with Ace-2 receptors. The lungs become congested and patients need treatment in intensive care. Even worse, in some cases, the immune system goes into overdrive, attracting cells to the lungs in order to attack the virus, resulting in inflammation. This process can run out of control, more immune-system cells pour in, and the inflammation gets worse. In some cases, this can kill the patient. Just why this occurs in some patients but not in the vast majority is unclear. One possibility is that some people have versions of Ace-2 receptors that are slightly more vulnerable to attacks from the coronavirus than are those of most people. The main symptoms of a Covid-19 infection are the following:



There is currently no specific treatment or vaccine against coronavirus-caused respiratory illness (antibiotics, which deal with bacteria, have no effect on viruses). Supportive care is the mainstay of management for all patients confirmed with Covid-19; oxygen, IV fluids and possibly mechanical ventilation may be warranted for patients with severe symptoms. Several antiviral treatments are under investigation for use against SARS-CoV-2 but it will take many months, if not years, before any such treatment is first identified as being affective and then receives approval for use on humans.

So why the big panic?

WHO estimates that the flu kills 290 000 to 650 000 people per year while, at the time of writing, Covid-19 has taken about 175 000. Although the Covid-19 total will certainly rise, and could rocket if it takes hold in the developing world, one might ask why, when flu seems to kill far more people, every year, and yet is relatively preventable and treatable, more isn't done to combat it. But I have no real answers for this. We also tend to forget that Covid-19 has not *replaced* flu, other diseases or, indeed, other causes of death, it has come *on top of* these, which explains why NHS and other resources are struggling.

The major difference between Covid-19 and flu are the severity of the illness and the death rate. For Covid-19, 80 % of cases are mild or asymptomatic, 15 % are severe, requiring oxygen, and 5 % are critical, requiring ventilation while, for flu, only about 2 % of cases result in hospitalisation. For flu, the death rate is about 1 in 1 000 (0.1 %), while for Covid-19 it is between 30 and 40 (3-4 %) according to WHO. However, a report in New Scientist on the 11th February suggests that 18 % of people in Wuhan, confirmed to have the disease, have died, while a recent article in the Daily Telegraph suggests death rates between 0.7 % and 3.4 % depending on the location and, crucially, access to good hospital care (this article also suggests that SARS-CoV-2 has already mutated into two strains, one more aggressive than the other, which makes finding a vaccine more challenging).

Currently, about 2 600 000 people have Covid-19, of which 7 % (175 000) have died. This is a lot higher than the WHO's 4 %, but this difference may be because many people who have Covid-19 are not recorded. It seems that the main reasons for the drastic control measures put in place for Covid-19 stem from three issues:

- there is currently no treatment for and no vaccine against it,
- there is no immunity against it, because it is a new virus (many people have some immunity to flu),
- the rate of infection could become so high that health services would be unable to cope.

The real question would seem to be whether the control measures were justified or excessive. Please note that I'm making no moral judgement here whatsoever about the importance of life against economic activity, I am only presenting figures; it is up to others to make their own judgements. To make this judgement, though, it is necessary to estimate how many people might have become infected without the control measures, and here there is a great deal of uncertainty.

An unpublished modelling study in the UK, which is subject to some criticism, suggested that between 36 % and 68 % of the UK population could catch the disease, although even these figures are subject to a lot of assumptions. Other reports suggest that 80 %, if not 100 %, of people in any country could catch the virus. We can judge the severity by considering eight countries which probably have the highest rates of the virus, and we will assume a low-level of total infection (35 %) and a death rate of 3.5 %:

Country	Population	Current infections	Current deaths	Infections at 35 % of population	Death rate at 3.5 % of infections
United States	330 000 000	810 000	44 000	115 500 000	4 040 000
Italy	60 000 000	185 000	52 000	21 000 000	740 000
United Kingdom	70 000 000	130 000	17 000	24 500 000	860 000
China	1 440 000 000	85 000	5 000	504 000 000	17 640 000
Spain	50 000 000	205 000	21 000	17 500 000	610 000
Iran	80 000 000	85 000	5 000	28 000 000	980 000
France	70 000 000	120 000	21 000	24 500 000	860 000
Germany	80 000 000	150 000	5 000	28 000 000	980 000
Totals	2 180 000 000	1 770 000	170 000	763 000 000	26 710 000

This table appears to answer the question extremely clearly. If the virus was allowed to spread uncontrolled, more than 25 000 000 might die in just these eight countries. The last major pandemic, Spanish flu in 1918, killed 50 000 000 and Black Death 25 000 000 (the world population was a great deal lower for these two latter, however). Just by way of comparison, with 7 800 000 000 humans in total, if Covid-19 really did go around the whole world, almost 100 000 000 could die. Even with the restrictions in place, it might reasonably be assumed that total deaths might double, to something like 350 000, making this still a major cause of death, roughly on a par with flu but, of course, in addition to flu and other causes of death.

What other effects has Covid-19 had?

The pandemic has brought out the best and the worst in people, so let's look at some of these things, starting with just a selection of the worst:

- the country of origin of the pandemic, economically the most powerful country in the world, turning a blind eye to the sale of live animals and the illegal import of endangered animals for food,
- panic buying in the UK: why? Did people honestly think that they were going to starve in their own home? Not only was there panic buying of food (with the only amusing aspect being that one of the first things panic-bought was tinned tomatoes followed, about a week later, by panic buying of pasta when people woke up and realised that they needed something to go with all those tomatoes!), but there was also panic buying of freezers to put it all in. And why panic buy toilet paper, when Mr Murdoch produces tonnes of material, every day, which could serve exactly the same purpose?

- news media reporting on panic buying; do these idiots not realise that the best way to promote panic buying is to report that people are doing it? Or do they, these days, do it deliberately (but unconsciously), so that they can then report on it?
- not-so-Priti Patel trying to apologise to health care workers by saying “I’m sorry if people feel there have been failings”. Sorry, darling, the dictionary definition of “apology” is “an act of saying that you are sorry for something wrong you have done”, and yours just doesn’t hack it. I think that what you meant to say was “I’m sorry that we have failed to get sufficient personal protective equipment to you, even when you have been telling us that you don’t have it. I am going to resign immediately, and get a job in the NHS, putting my life on the line every day, just like you have been doing”¹!
- the conspiracy theory that Covid-19 could be spread by the 5G network, leading to people setting fire to wireless masts; I asked a friend of mine why, because these Australopithecuses had obviously just learnt to walk upright, were they not concentrating on their next task – searching for the secret of fire but then I realised that they *had* found this secret, and just wanted to try it out;
- a minority of people flouting the social distancing rules and movement restrictions, threatening the restrictions being made even tighter (France and Italy both banned going outside for exercise, for example); it would be a strange legal precedent if the innocent majority was penalised for the actions of the guilty minority;
- footballers complaining about potentially having to give up 30 % of their salaries when they are not playing, while it was pointed out that what the average premier league player was being asked to sacrifice every two weeks is more than many nurses earn in a year!
- the ineptitude with which the restrictions were written – we needed restrictions, of course, but laws should only be enacted if they can be sensibly enforced. Three limitations make very little sense: ‘essential shopping’, ‘local travel’ and ‘one hour of exercise’. People should limit shopping to the minimum required but, while in the supermarket, why not buy everything that’s needed, to avoid a second trip when something which isn’t current essential runs out? It’s not distance travelled or time outside which contribute to the risk of transmission, it is contact with other people and surfaces. Poorly drafted rules lead to even law-abiding people breaching them because they make no sense (as happened to the Chief Medical Officer in Scotland);
- protests in the USA which, if we paraphrase them, are saying “Our income before your lives”.

On the best side:

- people volunteering, for the NHS and their neighbours, proving that ‘society’ still exists, and Boris confirming this, reversing all the damage previously done by Mrs Thatcher with her famous “There’s no such thing as society” comment;
- some BMCCSA members donating their returned MWC entry fee to charity;
- captain Tom Moore, an extremely modest 99 year old who set out to raise £1 000 by walking 100 lengths of his garden before his 100th birthday, and ended up raising more than £27 million!
- people starting to talk about how things will be different, and better, once the current pandemic dies down, which brings us nicely to ...

What’s the future?

There are two parts to this section: the future of coronaviruses and then, more importantly, what sort of society might come out as a result of the pandemic (assuming, of course, that societal changes do happen).

No one knows how long this pandemic might continue, although some reports suggest that we have roughly reached the peak in the UK. Coronaviruses will be with us indefinitely, either as SARS-CoV-2 or as mutations although, from an evolutionary point of view, SARS-CoV-2 has been extremely successful at spreading itself around the world, so there’s little incentive for it to change. Two main hopes exist, however: that we will gain immunity over time, and that a vaccine will be developed. Some research, though, suggests that, even if we do develop immunity, this will last only two years, and will not be fully effective against a next-mutation coronavirus. The hope is that a vaccine will be found similar to that used against mumps, i.e. immunity will be provided for a long time, but this still had to be developed. Ultimately, a combination of long-term vaccine plus routine, milder, outbreaks which build shorter-term immunity, may well be the future

¹ The recommended contact distance for Ms Patel is 2 km, according to all civil servants.

Future mutations might be less severe than SARS-Cov-2 but, according to one virologist, SARS-CoV-2 is already more deadly than the original SARS-CoV virus discovered in 2003 and which was behind the SARS outbreak at that time. The first SARS virus went straight to the lungs, so symptoms appeared quickly and it was possible to isolate those who had the virus, thus controlling the outbreak. SARS-CoV-2 has a longer incubation period, 5 days, and can spread well before symptoms become evident. SARS-CoV-2 is already mutating, but these mutations are minor, so should not affect the efficiency of a future vaccine.

Two final, and perhaps ironic, aspects of this pandemic have emerged. Firstly, Covid-19 might actually result in a net *increase* in the world population! When Wuhan and other areas shut down in China, Chinese pollution rates dropped immensely, and this pollution kills far more people, 1.6 million per year, than the virus. The reduction in deaths from pollution might actually exceed the deaths from the virus. Finally, and sadly, death rates from other reasons might actually increase, as people no longer go to their GP or to hospital.

As for societal changes, I have been waiting for this for more than a third of my life. You, dear readers, believe that I took on the role of BMCCSA president to serve British skiing, but you'd be wrong. For 22 years I *have* served British skiing but only in the hope that, one day, I would have the chance to put my radical societal philosophy to you. That moment has now arrived! If I have any choice in the matter, my post-virus society would include the following:

- no one to earn, net, more than (say) £2 000 000 a year or, better, no one to earn, net, more than five times the salary of the lowest-paid people in a country (the situation, for example, in Norway and Finland),
- an education system which teaches kids *how to think*, rather than simply teaching them *facts* which are of little use to them,
- an education system, and society in general, which promotes altruism and the interest of other people and beings above simple self-interest. As long ago as the seventh century, for example, Shantideva, an Indian Buddhist master, wrote:

*All the joy the world contains has come through wishing happiness for others.
All the misery the world contains has come through wanting pleasure for oneself.*

- companies and individuals throughout the world having to pay, properly, for their contribution to climate change, but with an upper limit so that the super-rich can't destroy things for the rest of us;
- things which bind society together to be re-established, moving us away from the only current binding factor of vacuous 'celebrity',
- all UK government ministers and civil servants forced to learn how to write sensible laws and also that 'laws' aren't the solution to everything,
- 'contentment' to mean something totally different from wealth!

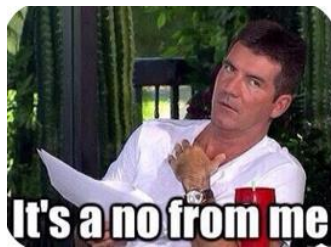

Wild dreams? Who knows? But if we have a chance to make things better, surely it is now. You might, though, need a special passport if you plan to enter my world!

There will, no doubt, be an endless series of studies and reports once things return to something like normal (although the news tonight suggest that this is a year or more away!). Did the government overact? The evidence seems to suggest absolutely not. Did the government act too late? Possibly; a new theory suggests that peak infections occurred in the UK a few days *before* the lock-down started in full. Was the government prepared? Almost certainly not! Why do we rely on importing personal protective equipment (PPE) from low-cost countries, with the assumption that it would always be available, and why is the UK *exporting* PPE to other EU countries? No idea!

Perhaps it's difficult to criticise the government too much for acting too late; after all, this was the first real pandemic anyone has dealt with. But did it put economics above lives? This is very difficult to know. Of course, hindsight will do wonders in the analysis and it is, after all, a wonderful tool. In fact, just a few days ago, a friend of mine asked what, if I were a super-hero, my super-power would be. I replied that I'd love to be a master of hindsight. When he suggested that this wasn't much of a super-power, I replied "Well, of course, I know that *now*". Thank you, fans, I'm (stuck) here all week (and for weeks after this)!

And finally, some romantic advice

It's some time since we provided you with any romantic advice, but now might be the perfect time. When we finally emerge from lock-down, there will be a lot of sad people who've had no social contact with anyone for a very long time. So you might find yourself subjected to various chat-up lines, possibly from social meejah, to which we offer you suitable replies:

Chat-up line	Your response
Did it hurt when you fell out of heaven?	I dug my way up from Hell.
The voices in my head told me to come talk to you.	The voices of the men in white coats tell you to go and talk to them.
I love your smile, what else can your mouth do?	Tell you to f*** off.
I thought happiness started with an "h", why does mine start with "u"?	Some type of dyslexia?
What's your favourite sex position?	The moon. Means I'm 239 000 miles away from you.
Do you know I love you?	By Billie Eilish?
Will you go out with me?	
What's cooking, darling?	It's when you combine ingredients, then heat them to make them tasty.
Please talk dirty to me.	Rubbish bin, my car, kitchens.
I'm no photographer but I can picture you and me together.	I'm a baker so I say "dough".
On a scale of 0 to 1 000, how cute do you find me?	999
Can I be your friend?	
Will you send me a photo of you in your bra?	

Stay safe, stay strong!

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