



XC World Digest

The Official Newsletter Of American Cross Country Skiers

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2023 Returns To Europe!
MWC2023 Seefeld/Austria March 15-25



Photo: Seefeld Tourism

In This Issue:

New MWC Competition Program	page 3
MWC2023: Seefeld, Austria	page 4
21/22 Season Re-Cap	page 12
2022 U.S. Masters Team.....	page 13
Mental Training (<i>from NOR</i>)	page 14
NM2023? TBD	page 15
Ditch The Poles (<i>from NOR</i>)	page 16
Future MWC Events	page 17
Heart Rates 101 (<i>from USA</i>)	page 18
American Ski Marathon Series 2023	page 21
The MWC Origin Story (<i>from CAN</i>)	page 22
5 Hours = Faster Marathon (<i>from NOR</i>)...	page 26
Workouts of the Week (<i>from USA</i>)	page 27
Memories of Canmore (<i>from CAN</i>)	page 30
Hydrate, Hydrate, Hydrate (<i>from NOR</i>)....	page 32
Creative Summer Training (<i>from NOR</i>)....	page 34
New MWC Pricing	page 35
Border Route Trail (<i>from USA</i>).....	page 36
Don't Think, Just Train (<i>from NOR</i>)	page 38

XC WORLD DIGEST is the official in-house publication of the American Cross Country Skiers (AXCS), a non-profit, 501(c)(3) membership association.

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From the XC Ski World **The New MWC Competition Program**

*The following is an original article by AXCS National Director and WMA President **J.D. Downing** developed exclusively for the XC World Digest.*

After years of debate and head-scratching, the World Masters Cross-Country Ski Association (WMA) took advantage of the MWC layoff forced by the COVID-19 pandemic to finalize a new MWC Competition Program that will take effect as of the 2023 Masters World Cup in Seefeld, Austria next March.

Several growing concerns helped push the need for change in the the MWC Competition Programs.

First, WMA has been watching as the peak in our bell curve of participation numbers has been steadily shifting older over the past 15-20 years. Whereas in the early 2000s one could see the biggest participation numbers in the 50s, we now are seeing the biggest numbers in the 60s and early 70s (for both men and women). That shift would not be a cause for concern if we were also holding onto steady numbers in the younger categories (30s, 40s, 50s), but instead what we are seeing is essential zero growth in the 30s and steady declines in 40s and 50s.

It doesn't take a math genius to figure out that if WMA doesn't figure out a way to change these trends, we'll eventually face a permanent decline in MWC numbers. Over time, we simply won't be able to replace older skiers on a one-for-one basis that begin to "age out" of consistent MWC participation with new younger skiers.

A second big concern facing WMA in recent years is that due to increasing life/work/family pressures as well as localized climate change factors, fewer skiers circa the 2020s have the time or motivation to get personal fitness levels high enough to race a MWC calendar of up to 85-90km over as many as 4 races in seven days.

This particular concern has been particularly focused on the younger men from 30-59 years (M1-M6 categories). But WMA has also had some worries about pushing the

kilometer count a bit too far for the middle tier of the MWC Competition Program — categories F1-F8 and M7-9. Interesting, the international consensus has been that we pretty much have nailed the Program for the eldest categories.

The third concern has been a growing worry that we simply will not be able to find enough high quality MWC venues in coming decades that can fashion a full 15km loop with good masters-level terrain combined with the annual worry with literally any venue in the world as to how to guarantee MWC events will happen with man-made snow or an alternative high terrain venue. Put simply, if WMA shortened the max distances and track requirements in our Competition Program, we would be far more likely to pull off MWC events in the face of inevitable pressures brought on by climate change.

Of course, the devil is always in the details and with dozens of national directors all having their own thoughts on the "perfect" future MWC Competition Program, it was a distinct challenge to finally arrive at a solution that would get the entire world on board. Please also note that a Competition Program doesn't just have to be attractive to skiers, it also needs to be realistic to host for local organizers.

Continued on bottom of page 8.



Photo: John Butler paradocsimages.com

MWC2023

Seefeld, Austria

March 15 - 25

(AXCS Trip Dates)

MWC2023 Seefeld, Austria

Located: Roughly 165km south of Munich/GER and 27km west of Innsbruck in the Tirol region of Austria.

Pronounced: *See - Feld*

USA Trip Dates: **March 15 - 25, 2023** (*Competitions from Sunday, 19th to Friday, 24th*)

Best Travel Plan: International flights to **Munich/GER (MUC)**. Then train, USA bus or rental cars over the 165km/2 hour ground travel distance to Seefeld. Salzburg/AUT (2 hours) and Zurich/SUI (3 hours) are alternative airport options, but Munich will probably be the “target” airport for the AXCS travel group.

This year the Worlds not only returns to Europe, but also returns with a bang to a world-famous location – no other than Seefeld, Austria!

The AXCS trip to Pillerseetal/AUT in 2014 plus many other events in Seefeld itself (including more recently the Nordic World Championships and the Winter Master Games) proved just how fun and inviting it is to race and vacation in a Austrian theme park of XC skiing and tourist attractions. Seefeld MWC2023 is indeed a “must do”.

Thanks to a sheltered location and snow-friendly-but-not-too-high elevation of 1200m (3937 feet), Seefeld is one of Tirol’s most snow-sure locations. Seefeld has been one of the most popular winter sports resorts in Austria since the early 1900s eventually earning the nickname the “Monaco of the Alps”. Hardly any other region in Austria has such a high density of four and five-star hotels as Seefeld. This is a true adventure playground with sophisticated charm.

A Cross-Country Ski Paradise

The Seefeld resort area features an incredible 245km of perfectly prepared cross-country tracks. If that doesn’t have you at “hello”, consider the history of XC skiing in the Nordic Hotspot in Tirol.

Seefeld was the first place in the Alpine region of Austria to make cross-country skiing popular under the name of

“ski hiking”. In 1964 and 1976, it was the venue for the Nordic competitions at not one, but two Olympic Games.

The FIS Nordic World Ski Championships took place here in 1985 (the last time that the competition was held without the skating technique) and again just three years ago for the 2019 FIS Nordic World Ski Championships.

Most importantly for master skiers, two previous Masters World Cups have taken place in Seefeld. The MWC1988 in Seefeld saw the largest MWC attendance ever (1,480 skiers!). Then in 2003 this event was orga-

Continued on the next page



MWC2023 continued from page 4.

nized in Seefeld by the German-based Ski Club Monte Kaolino, the same organizers of the MWC2023. In addition, the 2020 Winter World Masters Games were also held in Seefeld with several Nordic events getting positive reviews.

World-class and Right Around The Corner

The main Seefeld race venue is right on the edge of the Seefeld village allowing reasonable walking distance from many hotels (shuttles will also be provided). This will be one of the latest MWC events in history in the winter calendar so care is being taken to design race courses that will ski in a master-friendly way should we be in "spring conditions". More information on the courses will be provided in the Summer Digest.

Because climate chaos is always on skier minds these days, should natural snowfall fall short, 30 snow cannons in Seefeld and 6 in Leutasch ensure that a minimum of 15km of XC ski trails benefit from snow-sure conditions. There is also an emergency venue at the higher altitude of the Wildmoos Plateau which offers 60km of skiing and is just 10 minutes by bus from downtown Seefeld.

...welcome to the "Monaco of the Alps"...

All MWC off-snow events will take place in the cavernous 2,500 square meter WM Hall (World Cup Hall) located within walking distance of both the stadium and the heart of downtown Seefeld.

Amenities Second To None

In addition to cross-country skiing, Seefeld offers Alpen-style toboggan runs, dog-sled rides, lighted ski tracks, winter hiking trails, alpine ski slopes, ice skating rinks and a biathlon facility.

A new ski jumping facility was built in 2010, as well as a new roller skiing track for summer training. The biathlon facility has been brought up to the latest state of the art standards to ensure perfect competition conditions. Major annual events include the Euroloppet Ganghofer Run Leutasch and the Kaiser-Maximilian-Lauf.

From traditional Tirolean fare to haute cuisine, there is a wide range of gastronomic delights to choose from. The village core also offers ample shopping options.

page 5

AXCS Suggested Trip Schedule 2023 Masters World Cup

Wednesday, March 15 -- Depart USA
(arrive to Seefeld Thursday, March 16)
Friday, March 17 -- Official Training
Saturday, March 18 -- Opening Ceremony
Sunday, March 19 -- 20/15/10km CL (AM) & FS (PM) middle distance races
Monday, March 20 -- 10/5km CL (AM) & FS (PM) short distance races
Tuesday, March 21 -- Rest Day Adventures
Wednesday, March 22 -- 4 x 5km Relays
Thursday, March 23 -- 30/20/15km FS long distance races
Friday, March 24 -- 30/20/15km CL long distance races & Closing Party/Banquet
Saturday, March 25 -- Return to USA -- *or -- head off to other adventures!*

You can indulge in the essential pleasures of rest and relaxation two wellness centers and there is even Casino Seefeld should you want to channel your inner James Bond.

Further afield, Innsbruck is less than an hour away (via car or train) as are many other alpine and Nordic resorts.

Easy Access

With year round "ICE" intercity rail connection into the heart of Seefeld plus a new Seefeld railway station, easy access is going to be from all corners of Central Europe should AXCS members wish to extend your trip on the front or back ends of the MWC.

The Seefeld railway station is located directly at the entrance of the Seefeld pedestrian zone. It is only a few minutes walk to the WM Hall and to the stadium area.

Continued on the next page.

***Be led by your dreams,
not pushed by your problems.
-- Roy Williams***

AXCS Travel Packages MWC2023

National Director Notes:

AXCS has blocked out considerable space in two excellent 4-star hotels as well as a nice collection of 1-2 bedroom apartments at different price levels. Unfortunately, last fall's WMA Annual Meeting was forced into a virtual format. As such, AXCS has had to rely on the recommendations of the Organizing Committee (OC) since AXCS National Director J.D. Downing has thus far been unable to tour the lodging options first hand as is customary AXCS protocol.

VERY NOTABLE NOTE: We need placeholder requests this year much earlier than normal due to the anticipated high demand for this particular MWC from nations around the world. **AXCS has been requested to solidify as many of our preliminary reservations as possible by April 24.**

Note that AXCS members can set up a preliminary reservation without paying a deposit until June 10. So the late April date is really just so AXCS can show that we have enough skiers interested in the MWC2023 trip to justify holding our USA space another couple months.

Travel package prices are listed in Euro (EUR) so that currency flux (which AXCS cannot control) is adjusted over the year prior to the final balance payment. The prices listed below for AXCS lodging packages are subject to minor changes over the coming year. AXCS always works to keep prices as low as possible, but changes due to the pandemic or other international forces could always result in adjustments beyond AXCS control.

All prices are based on a 9-night stay with half board meals (breakfast + dinner), all taxes & AXCS trip fees.

It is OK to alter the length of the MWC trip with earlier/



Photo: MWC2020

later dates if you desire. If the hotels require different pricing on earlier dates, AXCS can find out after you specify travel dates. With any special date requests, be sure to narrow down your plan as soon as possible.

MWC2023 USA Hotel Packages

ALPENPARK RESORT SEEFELD (4 star superior hotel)
www.alpenpark-seefeld.com

20 double and 5 single rooms are reserved for AXCS bookings. Additional singles available at added price.

This hotel is 2km (15-20mins walk) from the ski stadium and a couple minutes walk to the center of Seefeld. All meal packages include a "gourmet rich breakfast buffet" and "gourmet evening buffet meal with soft drinks included during dinner". The hotel offers a spacious spa with indoor and outdoor pools, saunas, steam bath, as well as beauty and massage treatments (separate payment). All rooms equipped with shower/bathtub, hair dryer, TV/radio, safe, and most rooms feature a terrace or balcony.

Alpenpark 9 night Lodging Packages

Double Room with half board meals
(per person) -- 1,315 EUR

Single Room with half board meals -- 1,315 EUR

HOTEL ZUM GOURMET (4 star hotel) zumgourmet.at

41 rooms (right now the whole hotel is booked as a "USA House").

This hotel is 1.9km (15-20mins walk) from the ski stadium and just 650m (5km) from the center of Seefeld. All meal packages include a "rich breakfast buffet" and "gourmet dinner including soft drinks, wine, and/or beer during dinner". The hotel offers a spa with different saunas, steam bath as well as beauty and massage treatments (separate payment). Several international teams have used this hotel as their home base.

Zum Gourmet 9 night Lodging Packages

Double Room with half board meals
(per person) -- 1,270 EUR

Single with half board meals
(double room used for 1 person) -- 1,765 EUR

Note: Due to the total cost, single rooms at this hotel require an extra billing process in November 2022. AXCS will describe the process once a preliminary booking is in place.

MWC2023 USA Apartments

The **Appartemanthaus am Gschwandtkopf** is a group of apartments that Team USA has entirely to ourselves for preliminary bookings. There are 17 separate apartments with 1 or 2 bedroom designs and some with pullout "couch beds" if families are traveling together.

All units have either a kitchenette or kitchen. The apartment complex is next to the Seefeld stadium with a cafe next door for quick meals when you want them. A short walk will take you to the Seefeld shopping core for groceries and other needs.

Halfboard meals will not automatically be included in these packages but it is always possible to eat dinners ala carte at various hotel restaurants if you wish.

Prices vary a great deal based on the unit and the number of people staying in the unit. For budgeting purposes, here are low and high end pricing over 9 nights.

Low end 1 bedroom, 2 person, 9 night apartment package: 1275 EUR total for the apartment

High end 2 bedroom, 4 person, 9 night apartment package: 2980 EUR total for the apartment

AXCS Trip Estimated Costs Per Person

Air Transportation (big price ranges)

As we return to European travel, air prices will vary greatly depending on USA gateway and how the industry adjusts to the "new normal" of the coming year. Using similar dates to 2023, tickets this March could be found in the \$600-800 range from a typical AXCS selection of major USA gateway airports to Munich!

Ground Transportation (\$130-200 per person)

Pending what AXCS learns about the ease of the train route with large bags, the alternative will be that AXCS books charter buses to/from Munich Airport on main

travel dates. For those needing to travel on other dates, using trains should be a viable option. Rental cars are another option.

Note: Once in Seefeld, from many lodging options you'll be able to walk to the venue, but otherwise the MWC2023 organizers will provide a daily shuttle loop. You will certainly not need a rental car in the immediate area. AXCS is currently researching how easily the many side trips (example: Innsbruck) can be done without a rental car.

Bag Fees (\$200-300)

Depends on your flights and airline status.

MWC2020 Race Entry (220-250 EUR)

The World Masters Association has not increased the cost of the MWC at all in many years and (as we all know too well) the cost of pretty much everything has been rocketing upwards. To continue making the MWC a viable event for quality organizers to host, we are long overdue for an entry fee increase. (See page 35.)

Travel Insurance (\$75-150)

AXCS strongly recommends getting some kind of travel insurance for MWC trips. Cost varies, but this is a very important protection for both unanticipated trip cancellation as well as emergencies while on the trip.

*Ready To Go?
See page 8 for your first steps
to get signed up!*

Air & Add-On Travel Assistance For MWC Trips & Personal Travel

Diana Lynn Rau has retired, but AXCS is happy to recommend her friend **Erin Rountree**, from the Sun Valley, Idaho area, who has been a travel agent for over 20 years, also a Travel Society agent and is familiar with the travel needs of active outdoor adults. "Erin is someone who really knows how to take care of people".

Erin Rountree Contact Info:
etravel@cox.net ph-208-788-2870

Please give Erin a head's-up why you have her contact info such as: "I am a member of AXCS"

I Want To Sign Up For The MWC2023 Trip -- What Do I Do?

page 8

Step #1.) - AXCS is now officially accepting preliminary trip reservations for the MWC2023 AXCS Lodging Package. Email or call the AXCS Office to get your name on the first-come, first-served preliminary reservation chart & start your planning process for lodging, transfers, etc..

jd@xcskiworld.com or 541-317-0217

When you call or email, mention if you want a single or double hotel room or an apartment — your preference of our two hotels OR your preference in terms of apartment type. AXCS will attempt to post on-line a basic listing of our available apartments so you have more details on each unit.

If you need a roommate for a shared double hotel room, it is best to get one lined up before you get on the reservation list. But AXCS can set up preliminary reservations for one person while we search for a roommate match.

Step #2.) After you are placed on the preliminary reservation list, you will have until **June 10, 2022 to submit a \$750US deposit (per person) payable to AXCS**. See terms below. Final balance payment will be due in the late fall. AXCS will announce the exact final balance due date by end of August & will send individual "invoices" for each booking no later than one month prior to required payment dates.

Deposit can be paid by the following methods:

a. You can use the PayPal button active now on the MWC2023 Trip Info page of xcskiworld.com (*non-refundable processing fees apply*). AXCS is working on another e-payment option as well.

b. Mail a check/money order payable to AXCS: PO Box 604 Bend, OR 97709.

AXCS Deposit Terms: The deposit holds your room/board space in your AXCS hotel or apartment for the number of nights you request. If you cancel at any point between June 11 - August 31, you will be refunded all but \$60 of your deposit. For cancellations between Sept 1 - Oct 31, all but \$90 of your deposit will be refunded. Refunds on cancellations on or after November 1 will be subject to hotel policies + AXCS retaining a minimum \$130 amount (a portion of which is tax deductible). AXCS urges all skiers to have travel insurance to protect your trip investment!

Step #3.) As of the beginning of May (most airlines only sell air tickets 10-11 months out), begin research for your best fares and/or any other trip add-ons you want.

Step #4.) Make sure your AXCS membership is current for 2022/23. All bookings with the AXCS Travel Package require at least one current membership -- and everyone actually racing at the MWC2023 under the USA flag must be a current AXCS member.

Step #5.) Talk to your ski buddies and urge them to go. MWC trips are a blast with friends and we always want the biggest contingent possible. This particular trip is going to be really fun for non-competing skiers so don't be shy about talking up the MWC trip to friends that would just enjoy the great skiing, great organization by AXCS, and camaraderie of a fun group of fellow USA masters!

-- End --

New MWC Comp Program continued from page 4.

Ironically, the pandemic essentially paved the way by forcing a break in the MWC calendar and allowing time for WMA to really dive in to potential solutions. The end product is the Competition Program we'll be using in Seefeld for the MWC2023.

The biggest changes in the daily sequence will now take place right off the bat on "day #1" of the new Competition Program as we will now have all middle distance racing take place on an opening double race day. M1-M6 skiers will now be offered morning 20km (2 x 10km)

classic and afternoon 20km (2 x 10km) freestyle races — the same back-to-back format as our traditional "short distance" day. F1-F8 and M7-9 skiers will still ski 15km options (classic morning, freestyle afternoon), but now will ski 2 x 7.5km). M10-13 and F9-13 skiers will still have 10km options (classic morning, freestyle afternoon) and still 2 loops x 5km.

The short distance day, held on "day #2" of the new Competition Program, will remain identical for all categories as the old format up to Canmore MWC2022.

Continued on the next page.

Similarly, the rest day and relays on day #3 and day #4 will remain identical to old MWC formats.

Then for the two long distance days (days #5 and #6), the tweaks focus on race distances. M1-M6 will now be offered 30km (3 x 10km) classic and freestyle races on separate days (down from the past 45km long distance count). F1-F8 and M7-9 skiers will also be lowered to 20km (2 x 10km) classic and freestyle races on separate days. M10-13 and F9-13 skiers will stick with 15km (3 x 5km) options for their two long distance offerings.

The hoped-for payoff from all these changes.

-> Younger masters will find it easier to "crowd" their MWC participation into as short as a two-day window. We know that fitting in 2-3 races in the back-to-back double days (which WMA feels many organizers will schedule on weekends in order to maximize volunteer availability) is far more realistic than our previous MWC Competition Program. Similarly, if a skier can do both techniques, it's now very possible to do both long distance races on back-to-back days which offers another MWC "short schedule" value-for-money opportunity.

-> For masters of all ages, the new Competition Program offers the exact same number of race offerings as the past few decades, but trims off one day of travel which can be hundreds of Euro in savings for each skier. One less competition day also has a net benefit for MWC organizers.

-> The number one reason that younger masters give for not taking part in MWC events is the time and cost involved. The future Competition Program offers far more realistic ways to condense the MWC experience and still get a reasonable value for the entry fee.

-> The total kilometer count is reduced by 30% for men 30-59 years and 20% for F1-F8 and M7-9 skiers. This should help address growing personal fitness concerns amongst many MWC skiers. Our hope is also that trimming off some of the distance will make it far more realistic to race a full MWC schedule whenever the Worlds is designed to dovetail with another major ski event (example" MWC2019 dovetailed into the 2019 Norwegian Birken).

-> Taking away the WMA requirement for a 15km loop is probably one of the biggest positive changes to future MWC organizers. Finding 10km of masters-quality

terrain is a much easier ask than 15km. It is also a no-brainer that smaller tracks are far more realistic to manage in tough snow situations.

Although WMA realizes that not every skier is going to be thrilled initially with this new Competition Program, AXCS would ask all skiers to keep an open mind as we go into the coming years and give the new Program some time to grow on you.

MWC Competition Program: Starting MWC2023

Day 1: classic morning & freestyle afternoon middle distance races

20km (2 x 10km) — M1-M6

15km (2 x 7.5km) — F1-F8 & M7-9

10km (2 x 5km) — M10-13 & F9-13

Day 2: classic morning & freestyle afternoon short distance races

10km (1 x 10km) — M1-M6

10km (1 x 10km) — F1-F8 & M7-9

5km (1 x 5km) — M10-13 & F9-13

Day 3: rest and adventure day

Day 4: Relay Day

4 x 5km (leg 1 and 2 classic, leg 3 and 4 freestyle)

Day 5: Long Distance (classic & freestyle will alternate years day #5 and #6)

30km (3 x 10km) — M1-M6

20km (2 x 10km) — F1-F8 & M7-9

10km (3 x 5km) — M10-13 & F9-13

Day 6: Long Distance (classic & freestyle will alternate years day #5 and #6)

30km (3 x 10km) — M1-M6

20km (2 x 10km) — F1-F8 & M7-9

10km (3 x 5km) — M10-13 & F9-13

-- End --

www.MWC2023.com

(official event info)

+

xcskiworld.com

(official Team USA info)



From USA
**The 2021/22
 Season Re-cap**

Written by AXCS National Director J.D. Downing

With a press time that was pushed up almost a month to get going on Winter 2022/23, we are actually still rolling in the 21/22 season. But since the AXCS focus was so tightly tied to the Canmore MWC2022 event, we can still manage a re-cap on what we all need to consider a very successful season.

MWC2022: Practically Perfect In Every Way

With all apologies to Mary Poppins, calling the MWC2022 in Canmore, Canada “practically perfect in every way” is about as good a description as anyone is ever going to find.

We’ll start with a world-class organizing team that knocked it out of the park from start-to-finish. Perpetually smiling volunteers greeted skiers day-after-day, all the customary MWC bells and whistles, incredible skiing with a stunning scenic backdrop — “like something out of a dream” was uttered more than once over the MWC2022.

With the exception of a couple hour sudden snow squall of a few inches falling in the middle of the short distance skate races (yes, quite similar to MWC2018 in MSP!), excellent snow conditions, weather, and grooming were on display all week. Waiting an hour on the relay morning to let temps warm up a few degrees was about as big a weather concession that was made all week. Incredible.

Then you turn to the racing. Although the main worry for those attending was that MWC2022 would be an exclusively North American showdown, there were certainly enough Europeans spread over the bulk of categories to add an international element for a “true Worlds”. And the NorAm showdown hardly disappointed either.

For certain it wasn’t as deep a field as some MWC events held in Europe over the past few decades, but if one fairly compares apples-to-apples against McCall 2008, Sovereign Lake 2011, and Minneapolis 2018, the quality and depth of most categories was easily on par

— if not occasionally higher -- with more recent North American-hosted MWC events. That is no small statement given the pandemic challenges right up to the event week.

Without question, Team USA did exceptionally well. Medal counts really aren’t something we worry too much about at the MWC (especially when it’s in North America), but let’s just say Team USA collected plenty of hardware!

In the end, this was a Worlds for your loyal AXCS National Director that seemed like a triumph just to have it happen. Four years is a long time to fight and scratch against every obstacle imaginable to make sure a major ski event takes place. But once it started, MWC222 ended up so much more special in being able to celebrate with long-separated friends from across North America and around the world.

We certainly would have loved to have so many other AXCS members that in another situation would have happily joined us in Canmore for MWC2022. But hopefully the pictures on pages 30-31 will allow those that couldn’t join us feel some of the joy of the moment and help us all look forward to more play out on the snow in years to come!

Continued on the next page.



Season Re-Cap continued from page 12.

NM2022: Best of the Best

Given the hard road faced by everyone that traveled to the MWC2022 in Canmore, it's tempting to just bail on the AXCS tradition of naming an honorary U.S. Masters Team based on best 3-of-3 scoring over the MWC2022 and name every participating athlete from the USA in 2022. So let's just say the list of "honorable mentions" this year is nearly 200 skiers deep.

What is undeniable is that there were a whole lot of amazing top performers out on the Canmore race trails and boy did they rock the world -- and the nation.

The complete listing of the 2022 U.S. Masters XC Team is found in the right column. All Team athletes were named based on points accrued over their three MWC individual races (you had to do all three).

Fun fact: Although we often have ties when the AXCS National Masters is overlaid on a North American-hosted MWC event, this year it just worked out that one athlete in every category had a distinct high point total.

Congrats to all these top performers and all the other Team USA athletes participating at the MWC2022!

ASM Season 2022

It can be hard to believe sometimes in all that has transpired over the past couple years, but it really was only the super weird "lost" season of 20/21 where we didn't have "live" domestic ski marathons filling up weekends from January to March.

But this winter, the ASM calendar returned with a vengeance and (as of press time) all but one of the scheduled ASM events will have taken place without a hitch!

As the longtime administrative resource behind the American Ski Marathon Series, the AXCS Board will be presented this spring with some ideas on what our association could potentially do with the ASM heading into the coming decade.

The most popular AXCS Office concept is changing the focus to an "American Ski Odyssey" approach (much like the Worldloppet) where a skier attempts to ski all events over a lifetime. If any AXCS members have input on this idea, please email the AXCS Office.

-- End --

page 13

2022 U.S. Masters XC Team

The honorary 2022 U.S. Masters XC Ski Team was announced following the MWC2022 based on the results of top USA overall age/gender category performances in the best 3 of 3 races at the 2022 AXCS National Masters held in conjunction with the 2022 Masters World Cup.

Congratulations to all these athletes on earning this very special designation!

2022 U.S. Masters Women's Team

F2 -- Lindsey Bengtson
F3 -- Jill Sorensen
F4 -- Carrie Carney
F5 -- Alison Arians
F6 -- Suzanne King
F7 -- Elizabeth Youngman
F8 -- Katie Meyer
F9 -- Carolyn Tiernan
F10 -- Trina Hosmer
F11 -- Abett Icks

2022 U.S. Masters Men's Team

M1 -- John Fitzgerald
M2 -- Phillip Violett
M3 -- Orion Berryman
M4 -- Artie Huber
M5 -- Stacey Moon
M6 -- Rune Harkestad
M7 -- Barry Makarewicz
M8 -- Robert Youngman
M9 -- Glenn Jobe
M10 -- Owen Hanley
M11 -- Bob Gray
M12 -- Tim Carter

***It ain't the six minutes ...
it's what happens in that six minutes.***
-- Vision Quest (movie)



From Norway **Mental Training, No Magic Beans**

The following is a translated and summarized article by **Sigvor Melve** originally appearing in **Norsk SkiSport**, No. 7, 2004 as well as the 2004 AXCS Spring Digest.

Translation and summary by Inge Scheve exclusively for the XC World Digest.

In modern elite athletics, the margins often determine who wins. Athletes increasingly turn to sports psychologists to gain a competitive edge and learn how mental training can help them capitalize on their competitive advantages. For instance, biathlete and cross-country star Ole Einar Bjoerndalen (NOR) repeatedly credits his counselor Oyvind Hammer as a key to his tremendous success.

Tension Levels

The sum of all the tensions created by physical and mental mobilization is often called the tension level. This level is comprised of the individual's resident tension and added stressors. The resident tension is the amount of tension an athlete experiences before a workout, and is typically low. Added stressors are tensions that the body generates for instance leading up to a competition or an important workout such as a time trial.

The amount of tensions – added and resident – when an athlete performs the best is called the optimal tension level. Tension levels vary among individuals, and are influenced by a variety of factors including personality and social environment. An athlete who gets nervous easily, has ambitious personal standards and goals, and feels pressure from the social environment, will be subjected to high tension levels.

Too Much Tension

The sport and discipline determines what the optimal tension level is. Too much tension will have different consequences depending on the sport and the athlete. Performing a ski jump and racing a 50-kilometer cross-country race require widely different kinds of mental mobilization. In a ski jump, every move must be per-

fectly timed and completed within a short period of time. If the jumper is over-tensed, the muscle movements will cancel each other out, and the end effect is a slower overall performance and a shorter jump. Long cross-country events present different challenges. Over-tension in a long race will typically result in that the racer depletes the mental energy and ability to focus too early, and the athlete is likely to "bonk" or run out of fuel.

Application

It is not necessary to hire a sports psychologist to take advantage of mental techniques. In practice, elite coaches learn mental training from their athletes, and they learn to know their racers so well that they know exactly what to tell them to help them perform at their best in a given situation. That said – many coaches find

Continued on the next page.



Photo: Craftsbury Ski Marathon

Mental Training continued from page 14.

it helpful to learn some basic sports psychology from a professional. They quickly realize that the methods these sports psychologists employ are quite elementary and certainly no "hocus pocus."

Mental training is the most widely used technique in sports psychology. The athletes fill out a survey form to help the counselor interpret in which areas they have the most to gain by using mental training. Based on this form, the counselor and the athlete will plot a course on how to improve. This kind of training helps athletes be better mentally prepared for competition.

The Internal Conversation

To visualize victory is an effective form of mental training. An athlete who can't visualize what winning would feel like will have a harder time achieving it and reaching other goals. On the other hand, maintaining a positive internal conversation can be a self-fulfilling prophecy. Athletes who visualize success are mentally better prepared for it, have an easier time adjusting to this (new) situation and feel less insecure about success.

Examples of Mental Training Techniques

Visualization: See yourself perform the perfect race, jump or competition.

Relaxation: Learn how to relax effectively.

Self-talk: Talk to yourself with positive messages.

"Psych" yourself up in front of competitions.

Goal-setting: Determine achievable goals for each workout & race, as well as long-term & season goals.

-- End --



2023 National Masters? TBD

Spring 2022 is not only already distinctive for marking what we hope will be a conclusive turning point in the COVID-19 pandemic, but also for being the first spring in nearly a quarter century that AXCS does not have a firm plan in place for the AXCS National Masters the following winter.

Put simply, the uncertainty over just how well things would go over the 21/22 racing season ended up delaying serious planning or research by the AXCS Office right up until press time.

The good news is that the AXCS Board of Directors will soon be seeing different options for a NM2023 including a few that really think out of the box.

AXCS has had reasonably good results overlaying the annual NM distinction on top of different American Ski Marathon Series events. We certainly can restart that pattern in 2023 and based on locations for the NM2020 (New England), NM2019 (Rocky Mountains), and MWC/NM2018 (Midwest) events, the leading candidate site in 2023 would be the Tour of Anchorage.

Using existing ASM events has a level of elegant simplicity in that the marathons get a nice infusion of non-local skiers that might otherwise not travel to those events -- while at the same time, AXCS can rely on established event management to literally do what they normally do to produce a quality NM event.

However, what we were seeing up until the NM2020 is a year-by-year erosion of the "traveling skier" numbers that would use the NM designation as an excuse to try out different ASM events in another part of the country. So one of the big questions for 2023 and beyond is whether or not there's anything AXCS can realistically do to boost turnouts beyond skiers that normally attend regional ASM events. Or does that even matter?

If any AXCS members have ideas for the future of the NM, please email jd@xcskiworld.com to let us know what you are thinking.



From Norway

Ditch The Poles, Hold On To The Running Shoes

*The following is a translated and summarized version of an article from **Norwegian Ski Masters** magazine, No 2/2018.*

Translation and summary by Inge Scheve exclusively for the XC World Digest.

How do you best take advantage of the first snow? After a long dryland season, the first snow makes every skier itch to get in the snow. But it's important to keep things in perspective, says Anita Moen. The former Olympian, who has 17 years of experience at the World Cup level, recommends a gradual transition to snow: Focusing on snow workouts on technique while doing intensity sessions on foot for the first weeks of consistent winter.

Moen emphasizes the importance of establishing a solid technique base at the beginning of the season before adding intensity on snow, and happily shares her training tips for the transition period.

Patience

"It's important to take the time now to do plenty of easy skiing at an easy pace. You have to keep the intensity down in order to focus on the technical details. That's hard to do if you're obsessed with going hard and fast,"



Photo: Craftsbury Ski Marathon

says Moen, who runs her own ski school in Trysil, Norway.

"Establishing proper weight transfer and hip drive takes time, and by keeping the effort easy you are able to stay out there longer and put in more time," she explains.

At the same time, it's important to quit while you're ahead and you are still getting something out of the workout.

"You are better off skiing 1.5 hour with good technique than two hours if your technique starts falling apart," she notes.

Ditch the poles

Moen is a fan of lots of no-pole skiing, particularly at the beginning of the season. Without poles, you have to time the kick right, and really complete the weight transfer in order to get forward.

"Try aiming for skiing half of the time without poles. It will make a huge difference for your weight transfer, which is the basis for all skiing - skate or classic," she points out.

Hold on to your running shoes

For those who typically do four workouts per week, Moen recommends aiming for two on-snow workouts focusing on technique in the transition period, as well as one foot-intensity sessions (either outside or on a treadmill if the roads and trails are slippery), and one strength session.

"Maintaining one solid foot-intensity session makes it easier to keep the on-snow workouts easy enough to focus on good technique, since get your endorphin kick from the interval workout," she says.

Continued on the next page

Ditch The Poles continued from page 16

For those who generally log two workouts per week, Moen recommends prioritizing time on snow.

"With two workouts per week, I would stick to skiing, but still keep the effort easy enough to really focus on technique," she says.

No rush

Moen doesn't stress about getting on snow, and doesn't recommend chasing the first snow at all costs. There is no need to ski fast before Christmas, particularly if your main season goals don't happen until February or March.

"It's always nice to get on snow if you can and it's convenient. On the other hand, a lot of people ski well even if they don't have a lot of hours under their belt early in the season," she points out.

"I don't want to create some sort of snow hysteria and a fear that not skiing in November is detrimental. There are a lot of good dryland alternatives, and there is no hurry if you're not racing until after New Year," Moen concludes.

AXCS Editor's 2022 Notes:

Many AXCS members have or will find that "ditching the poles" entirely (meaning both poles) can be a difficult thing to do and still ski or train effectively -- particularly with classic technique. Skiing completely without poles can result in skate skiers sitting back and classic skiers struggling with both kick and smooth technique in all but the easiest possible terrain.

However, a compromise route is to adopt one-pole skiing in gently rolling terrain. Using one pole allows your body to have half the upper body power in play and can generally result in more effective and efficient time on snow.

-- End --

***The first fall of snow is not only an event,
it is a magical event. You go to bed
in one kind of a world and wake up
in another quite different, and if this is
not enchantment then where is it to be found?***

-- J.B. Priestley

page 17

Future Masters World Cup Updates

With the long-awaited and hard-fought MWC2022 now in the books, it is finally time to do a re-set on the future calendar for Masters World Cup events.

After all, a whole lot has changed over the past few years.

2023 – Seefeld, Austria

This one is a 100% done deal and it's gonna be an amazing return to Europe with a ton of skiers in a picture-perfect spot. See the complete write-up starting on page 4. Start blocking out the calendar, you want to be with us for this one folks!

2024 – Vuokatti, Finland (99.9% sure)

Just a month before press time the story for 2024 was a distinctly different story. The WMA Board approved in late Fall 2021 a return to Syktyvkar, Russia in 2024 and all signs pointed to just that happening going into this winter.

Well, we all know what has happened since early February 2022. As the guy who had to send various emails around the world and call for a first-ever WMA vote to rescind the MWC2022 bid, I can safely say this was about as brutal as it gets in the all-about-just-sport-and-no-politics international scene of masters XC skiing. But ultimately there was no choice. It takes several years to put together a successful MWC and with the Ukraine equation as horrible as it is effective Spring 2022 — WMA could do nothing less than pull the plug on Syktyvkar and move on to another venue.

Vuokatti, Finland became the overnight favorite replacement as we needed a strong and recent host that was also keen to host the MWC again. As host of the very favorably reviewed MWC2016, Vuokatti checked every box. With overwhelming international agreement at our WMA Virtual Meeting, the WMA Board voted to approve an emergency bid process. All that remains is ironing out an Event Contract this spring. Tentative dates will be February 9-16, 2024.

Continued on page 25, bottom right.



From USA

Heart Rates 101

The following is an original article by AXCS National Director and XC Oregon Coach/Director J.D. Downing originally appearing in the XC Oregon E-News.

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One of the most common training errors that I see happening year-after-year with a wide range of skiers is a misunderstanding of what our training and resting heart rates tell us in a real world sense.

Although every person is different, XC Oregon has enough background with a huge range of ages and abilities to have a high degree of confidence in certain general rules of thumb. Let's call this a "cheat sheet" of the most common issues raised by skiers of all ages related to heart rates.

The Easier-to-Understand Stuff

1.) If training is going really well and I am in good health, as I gain fitness over time my heart rate will often drop at least a few beats (sometimes a lot more) in my workouts as I cover the same distance in the same time or less. In general terms: higher fitness = lower HR (assuming all else is equal).



Photo: MWC2022 Canmore/CAN (John Gibson)

2.) For the performance-minded, the more fitness improves (or declines) relative to a lab test or other benchmark from which you established your original training zones -- the greater the importance of re-testing (lab or field) to make sure your zones are still accurate. This is less likely to apply if you are changing your fitness "seasons" more frequently (ex: run/bike in dry-land months, ski in winter). In those cases it is better to get zones matched to your most frequent activity as you enter that "season".

3.) Resting heart rate also tends to drop as I gain fitness, but this isn't always the case. What is more common is to see a great deal of consistency in a nice low resting heart rate range (how big a range is very individual) among skiers that are fit and healthy. This consistency then allows a skier to better see problem areas. For example, it is not uncommon for elite athletes that have a good handle on their "safe" morning heart rate to cancel or radically change planned workouts simply based on a sudden spike in that morning HR value. A spike can indicate your body is overly tired, you are fighting a low grade virus or there can be mental/emotional factors that drive up HR.

The Harder-to-Understand Stuff

4.) When I am in a really productive training rhythm, what I should see is a healthy variation in my heart rate as I encounter different terrain, altitude, etc.. Altitude can impact heart rates even for the very fit. Skiing uphill, technique issues, and snow conditions can also impact heart rate.

Maybe you won't see huge spikes, but heart rate will usually go up somewhat indicating the added stress on my body regardless of my baseline fitness level. As I get fitter I will see less of a HR increase to added stress -- but I will still see at least some rise in all these situations. That's the way it works.

5.) Remember that it's perfectly OK to see some drift out of zone 1 (basic endurance, easy distance effort)

Continued on the next page.

into zone 2 (speed endurance) as a part of many or even most distance sessions in a good XC training or fitness plan.

Over the decades, I've even developed a loose ratio in our XC Oregon plans for how much "drift" is appropriate given the length of specific workouts. The key for most folks is having the technical ability and discipline to limit the amount of zone 2 "drift" so that you don't end up with entire 1, 2 or even 3 hour ski sessions above true easy effort in zone 1. Typically the infamous "no man's land" refers to endurance athletes that don't develop the ability to control the amount of easy distance time above zone 1.

6.) It's perfectly normal to feel good or even great in many HR drift situations (i.e. altitude, uphill, etc.) and be frustrated that your HR is going up so high and sometimes at very low speeds. This is very common in XC skiing on snow where we have a murder's row of stress factors arguably greater than any other sport on the planet.

So if this is common, what's the problem with just pushing thru a workout at high HR's if you feel really good?

Nothing -- as long as it is a planned intensity session and you are targeting specific training zones. But if you intend to do an easy distance ski and you peg HR's well above optimal distance zones, the bottom line is that you are piling on more intensity, decreasing your true easy distance ratio, and if you keep it up too many times, you'll find yourself tired, sick, hurt, etc.. Guaranteed.

7.) The great irony is that when a skier says to me that they have not been able to get their HR to go up very much no matter how hard the effort. That exact situation is very often a big red flag something is amiss.

What I've found over the years is that a repeatedly "too low" or unresponsive HR -- especially in harder effort situations -- is a great indicator that a body is extremely tired or sick in some way. If we continue to hammer away and ignore these signs, all sorts of chronic problems can result. Your body is exceptionally good at sending out signals when it needs you to pay attention. The trick is being alert to the messages you are being sent internally and making the right adjustments as quickly as possible.

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Immediate rest is typically a prescription for this type of HR paradox. But if it's been going on a long time, some people respond better to simply cutting activity down to a level more common to someone rebuilding a total fitness paradigm after a long illness or injury. For example, spending 3-4 weeks slowly building up activity duration and effort from as little as 20-30 minutes easy walking effort.

-- End --



From Canada
**The Origin Story Of The
 Masters World Cup**

The following is an original essay by the World Masters Association founder **Bill Gairdner** exclusively for use by the XC World Digest.

**Cross-Country Skiing Changed Me
 and How I Changed the Sport**

When racing on skis began in my late thirties there were almost zero opportunities for an older skier to race. Sometimes a regular competition would offer a half-hearted event for what were pejoratively called "Old Boys" – skiers 40 and older. That name made us feel like rejects, so very few Old Boys came. I never saw more than six of various ages, and we competed almost as if we shouldn't be there. I was determined to change that.

Before fiberglass skis were invented we used gracefully-shaped, inexpensive birch-wood skis made by the Finnish company Jarvinen. Those bases had to be treated with a coat of pine-tar to prevent water getting into the wood. It had such a wonderful smell. Just a whiff would trigger memories of gliding past snow-laden pine-boughs along a lovely, lonely ski-trail. This sounds a little fanatical, perhaps? But ... I kept a tarred broken

ski-tip in my car so that in summer, whenever the longing for winter and skiing welled up, I could pick up that tip and inhale the smell of pine, and swoon for ski dancing.

But the term "Old Boys" upset me. I just knew there were lots of men and women over 30 like me, who would love to race again. But I could see the problem right away, and it linked to my growing interest in political philosophy. This was a chance to push back against big government in my own little way.

By the 1970s, the Government of Ontario had taken control of all amateur sports. "Sport Ontario", a government agency, had a collection of tax-funded offices and staff in Toronto from which every sport in the province was being administered. This was incredibly offensive to my sense of independence. Citizens who enjoy sports should be running their own damn sports. Why does any sportsman need government officials to control them? Here was an opportunity to create something new for skiers on the model of Masters Track and Field, which by then was highly organized in the USA.

So I grabbed an art pen, created a logo and letterhead, and opened a bank account for a new sporting Association to be called "The Canadian Masters Cross-Country Ski Association." Why not? And I named myself the President. That made my wife Jeanie laugh. "You made yourself President? That's funny." It was. But why not? Someone has to do it!

I also drafted a simple Constitution providing a Director for each Province of Canada. Our main function would be to organize an annual Canadian Masters Cross-Country Ski Championship, to be rotated among willing provinces, and each Director's job would be to stimulate Masters skiing within their own province. This was all prior to the internet, so it was done by word of mouth and snail mail. It worked wonders.

Continued on the next page.



Photo: John Taylor, MWC2013

For January of 1980 I organized the first-ever "Masters Cross-Country Ski Championship" (no more "Old Boys") at Dagmar Ski Resort, northeast of Toronto, and over 120 men and women, showed up from across Canada to race in five-year age groups from 30 to 80. I also talked Carling-O'Keefe Brewery into sponsoring the meet, and they made a half-hour movie featuring many former champions who were all excited to be back in shape and racing again. This Association has been active now for over 40 years, and as one top national ski coach said recently, "you changed a lot of lives." You can see it as it is today, here: <http://canadian-masters-xc-ski.ca/about/>

Contemporaneous with this, The Viking Ski Club of Morin Heights north of Montreal was busy organizing a wonderful competition they called the "Gillette World Masters Cross-Country Ski Championship" for February of 1980. Skiers, 104 of them, came from nine nations, and we had a wonderful time. I have a photo of my 30 kilometre race at this meet, where I got beaten badly by Norwegians and Swedes.

Something new was happening. But what, exactly? At the banquet afterward I asked the organizers, "When, and where is the next one? We really loved this." That question drew mostly a blank look on exhausted faces. There were no plans for another event. Nothing at all. I could see the problem. Masters skiing, unlike track and field, had no organizing body. Something had to be done. Meanwhile, inspired by the meet at Morin Heights, Sweden arranged for a similar one-off Championship in Uppsala, in 1982. I skied there. Two hundred and forty skiers loved it. But again, no one had any idea what would be next, if anything.

***The World Masters Cross-Country Ski Association
and A Visit From the Ski Mafia***

A German friend once told me of an old German saying

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***Note: This is a hidden resource for
current AXCS members only!***

about anything that needed doing: "If it's not by me, it will not be."

After pondering this I decided to form a new international organization, to be called The World Masters Cross-Country Ski Association, or WMA. This would be an Association of National Directors, one from each nation wishing to join, and not an association of skiers. Not a democracy. Next, was to draft a simple Constitution, design a logo, and create letterhead and a business card. Oh, and I named myself the President, and a year later asked my friend, the German masters skier Dieter Heckmann, to serve as Vice-President.

Jeanie, with a terrific laugh: "You did it again? Now you've named yourself President of the world?" Something like that...

I talked a nearby design company into creating our logo for nothing, from which letterhead, cards, and eventually a super good-looking flag were made.

Next was the challenge of creating a World Masters Cross-Country Championship and developing a bidding process for other nations to do the same. I didn't know much about organizing such a world event, so I asked Tony Wise of Telemark Wisconsin to do it as part of his annual American Birkebeiner, a famous race in Wisconsin that draws about 8,000 competitors every year. He agreed, and we were in business for spring of 1983.

Except...

Late fall of 1982, I got a call from Ottawa. It was Marty Hall, an American coach recently hired by Cross-Country Canada. He was a talented and crusty fellow if there ever was one. But likeable, too, because if he wanted to stab you in the back, he would tell you first. He was coming to Toronto to see me with a couple of Canadian ski officials, because ...

"We got wind of this here World Masters thing you are trying to do. Forget it. You can't do it. Period! FIS [Fédération Internationale de Ski] is the goddamn world

Continued on the next page.

***To be what we are, and to become what we are
capable of becoming, is the only end of life.***

-- Baruch Spinoza

governing body, and you know that. See you tomorrow." And he hung up. He's 84 now, but even then was a legendary coach. Crusty Marty was coming to Toronto to scold us out.

Marty looks like he means business, and "don't get in my way." When he was hired by the USA, he coached Vermont's young Billy Koch to America's first-ever Olympic medal in cross-country skiing – a Silver in the 30km race at the 1984 Winter Olympics in Innsbruck. That feat was not achieved again by an American until for forty years later.

Anyway, FIS, with a membership of 118 nations, is based in Oberhofen am Thunersee in Switzerland, and it controls almost every Olympic skiing sport and World Championship: cross-country, alpine, ski jumping, freestyle, snowboarding, etc.; rules, regulations, facilities, course specs, infractions, penalties, the entire, rules-infested sport. It's a big deal. Marty was FIS's hired gun - priest and executioner - for Canada. I had some sympathy. I mean they do have to police their standards world-wide, and all that. So let's see what happened to You can't do it! Period.

Marty walked into my office with his two Cross-Country colleagues from Ottawa, who were just as concerned about usurpation of their authority in Canada, as he was for FIS' world authority. A sour beginning.



Photo: MWC2022 Bert Pschunder

Marty: "We heard about what you're tryin' to do and came down to see for ourselves. Like I told you, FIS is the sole world authority for all skiing competitions; so what the hell are you thinking?" You can't just up and create a new skiing organization!"

Me: "Why not?"

Marty: "Because it's not gonna fly."

Me: "Why not?"

Marty; "Because FIS is the sanctioning authority for every skiing competition in the world."

Me: "We don't need a sanction. We're just having a good time. Why do we need a sanction?"

Marty: A little disturbed, he began shifting in his seat. "Because of regulations. Those 'r the rules."

Me: "If you want to share your FIS rules with us, we'd be happy to look at them and see if they work for us older guys." [I was 40 at the time. Marty was 45].

Marty: "Sure. But you can't organize a world ski event without our sanction."

Me: "Like I said, Mr. Hall: we are all older skiers. We would be happy to co-operate with FIS. And if you want to give us a damn sanction, which we don't need, that's fine too, as long as it includes everything we want to do and you don't try to block us. We aren't going to be ordered around. We are going to run our own world championship, and our first one is set for spring of '83 in Telemark, Wisconsin. In four months. So you better get moving. Because we figure, if we have to wait for a huge bureaucracy like FIS to make up its mind, we'll all be dead before it gets done."

Familiar with sluggish bureaucracies, Marty allowed himself a bit of a knowing smirk.

Marty: "So what's this 'World Masters Association' about? Do you even have an office?"

Me: "You're sitting in it."

Marty raised his bushy eyebrows.

Continued on the next page.

WMA Origin Story continued from page 24.

Marty: "Do you have, like, a logo? A letterhead? Business cards?"

I was ready for that, and slapped a clean sheet of our handsome new WMA letterhead, and the business card of the President [me], on the table, right in front of him. He was a little startled, but also a little impressed.

Marty: "I see. Okay. So you aren't waitin'. Got it. We still can't allow it, like, on your own."

Me: "Gentlemen: if you want to help us, and maybe work out some kind of simple affiliation agreement between FIS and WMA, we'd be happy to cooperate on agreeable terms. But you're going to have to get moving. Our only activity will be one world championship every year, which we plan to rotate between the Scandinavian bloc, North America, and Europe. Our first World Masters Championship is going ahead in four months, in Telemark, Wisconsin, with, or without FIS."

Marty and his gang conferred worriedly, but briefly.

Marty: "First problem is: You can't call it "World Masters Championship," because we already use a name like that in Europe, in German. It's Weltmeisterschaft, which means exactly like the title you want to use! You see what I mean? Already you're a problem for us."

Me: "Right. So, what about we call it Masters World Cup, instead?" That name just leapt into my head.

To make a fun story short, they liked that, and liked our immediate willingness to change, and left our WMA head office (!) moderately happy, promising to draft an Affiliation agreement between our two organizations.

There was further pushback at a meeting in Seefeld, where Gianfranco Kasper also objected to the existence of WMA on the same grounds as Marty. But we told him we could manage our own affairs very well, and eventually he accepted our proposal for an affiliation agreement FIS. That was concluded a year a half later in Zurich and negotiated for us by our Vice-President, Dieter Heckmann (who would go on to lead the WMA for many decades).

By 1985, for our Master World Cup in Hirschau, Bavaria, 1,012 competitors paraded through that charming village in the dark of evening, singing, and celebrating this great sport, candles burning in the windows of every

home and shop. It was so charming.

An observer from FIS, Bengt-Eric Bengtsson came to check it out, at first a little wary, but by the end, in a state of deep approval. On that night, he stood up with a microphone in the public square, and said, "This is the way all sport should be."

I just loved doing all this. Today, forty years after that meeting, the WMA has 30 member nations, and every Masters World Cup, rotated between those three regions of the world as originally planned, regularly draws about 1,000 international competitors. Take a look at the WMA website and the individual Masters World Cup websites. You will see a lot of happy faces!

-- End --

Future Master World Cups continued from page 17.

2025 – (maybe) La Feclaz, France

Strong interest has been made by this famous Savoie resort roughly 75 kilometers to the north-east of Grenoble/FRA. Should this early bid develop and be officially accepted, La Feclaz would become only the second French venue to ever host the MWC (MWC2009 in Autrans being the first). The Fall 2022 WMA Meeting will be the first chance to really dive in deep to the full bid. Anticipation is high for this exciting opportunity!

2026 – (maybe) Sappada, Italy

With a bid headed up by former Italian ski legend Silvio Fauner, Sappada (165km north of Venice) has expressed a desire to host the MWC2026 in the week prior to the relatively nearby 2026 Milan/Cortina Winter Olympic venues. If this all comes together, this will be a near repeat scenario to the incredible pairing of the Brusson MWC2006 and the 2006 Torino Winter Olympics as well as the Asiago MWC2013 paired with the 2013 Nordic World Championships in Val di Fiemme -- both absolute hits with many AXCS members. Cross your fingers!

Look for more detailed information on all these upcoming MWC events in future AXCS membership media!



From Norway

5 Hours A Week For A Faster Ski Marathon?

The following is an original article by **Inge Scheve** originally appearing on **Birkebeiner.no**. This piece was previously featured in the AXCS Spring Digest 2016.

In 2010, Erlend Damon Stokke skied the 54-kilometer classic Norwegian Birkebeiner in 5 hours and 8 minutes. In 2015, he finished on 3:13:13, putting in an average of five hours of training per week.

"You don't have to spend every waking hour training in order to see progress and results. Training works, even if you are talking five hours a week," says the 34-year-old, who works full-time as a business manager, is a father of two and married to a full-time working wife. For Stokke, the 54-kilometer classic race from Rena to Lillehammer is the main season goal, regardless of season. In addition to the ski race in March, Stokke also competes in the Birkebeiner half marathon trail run in June and the 94-kilometer Birkebeiner mountain bike race in the end of August.

Stokke believes a lot of masters grind themselves into a pulp trying to put in too many workouts per week in a hectic lifestyle.

"I think a lot of people believe that they have to put in a huge amount of training hours to race fast at the Birkie.

But I think I am a good example that it's not necessarily how many hours you put in that matters the most. I've managed to post what I consider good results in relatively few hours per week. The clue is to be consistent with the plan throughout the year," says Stokke, who races for the Oslo-based masters team Raske Gutter ("Fast Boys").

In Stokke's experience, the key to progress on five hours a week is being organized, follow a structured training plan that covers all the bases and making each workout count.

Three workouts per week

Stokke usually manages to get three workouts per week, two of which are fairly intense intervals and one is a longer, semi-easy distance workout that generally lasts from two to three hours.

For one of the intensity workouts he does shorter to medium long intervals, such as 5x4 minutes or 4x4 minutes. The other intensity workout tends to be longer intervals, such as 4x10 minutes, 3x15 minutes or 2x20 minutes.

Additionally, Stokke tries to do some strength each week.

"My strength routine is as simple as they come. It consists of just situps, pushups, hangups and other standard core drills in my own living room, entirely free form and depending on whatever I can squeeze in," Stokke says. "I suppose I should do more strength and follow a more systematic approach, but I just don't have time. The few minutes I can squeeze in is more aimed at injury prevention than building strength," he explains.

In Stokke's experience, he can afford to do even the distance workouts fairly hard when his weekly hours are as low as five hours "I'm not sure it's absolutely crucial that the easy distance workouts are super easy all the

Continued on page 33 right column.

Photo: Charles Martin, MWC2011





From USA

Workouts of the Week Spring Season

AXCS Editor: Longtime AXCS members will remember a half decade period in the early 2000s when AXCS produced a "Workouts of the Week" print booklet as part of the benefit package. This booklet was nothing super fancy in layout, but it contained a treasurer trove of interesting workout ideas applicable to masters from across the XC ski world and other ideas direct from master skiers and coaches around North America.

As printing and postal costs increased, the booklet proved too expensive to continue as a separate membership benefit. But it's beyond time to take a peek at some of the content within those most excellent pages.

If any AXCS members have interesting workout ideas for any time in the training year that you'd like to contribute to the AXCS archive, please send them in whenever you wish to jd@xcskiworld.com

The workouts featured in this issue have been specifically selected for the spring and early summer months.

Workout: Bounding With Ropes

Contributor: Steve Thatcher (Ride and Glide Ski Club)

Introduction: We found that people are better able to simulate the proper lean and timing if they have some resistance holding them as they go up the hill. It also helps if another (optional) long rope is laid on the ground up the hill for people to concentrate on. Without the rope, just tell people to visualize a ditch running up the hill and to jump over it making sure to not fall in.

The drill: This is a two person drill. The first person bounds up a reasonably steep hill using V1 timing (legs and arms but without poles). The second person holds on to a rope around the other person's waist and provides resistance for motion and support for a good forward lean. The one required item is a piece of rope about 6 feet long. Tie a loop in one end and then wrap it around one persons waist and through the loop. The second person resists while the first bounds up the hill

concentrating on forward lean and a good side to side motion as they jump back and forth over the rope laid up the hill.

Technique points:

- 1) Aggressively lean into the hill.
- 2) Bound with abandon with full arm swings.
- 3) Push hard from side to side with the entire foot.
- 4) Provide enough resistance on the rope to hold the person up.

Duration: This is bounding so we always make sure we have a good warm-up before we start. Then we review the aspects of V1 technique and then demonstrate. We've got a bag of about 10 or 12 ropes. We pick partners and hand out ropes. We usually do 3 passes up a hill that takes 30 seconds to cover and then change places. Then repeat again giving each person at least 2 turns at bounding and resisting. Once you get the hang of it you can attempt the other techniques (V2 and Field Skate) They don't work quiet as well but it's something different to do.

When teaching beginners we find that they seem better able to master the V1 timing when they have a rope

Continued on the next page.



Photo: Connie Meek

Workouts continued from page 27.

around their waist with some resistance. We usually do this as just one part of a multi drill workout. Credit for the rope idea goes to Bjorn Lasserud. He uses them in his Minneapolis Ski Club workouts.

Workout: Strength/Cardio Relay

Contributor: Dr. Julie Downing, PhD, ACSM

Overview:

This is a good indoor workout for spring and fall/winter months when weather or light is a problem. It can also be modified to be a fun and interesting summer session.

Location:

Gym or Outside Circuit Location

What to do:

This session is best dryland training with a group (or at least it will require a partner). One person starts doing some form of cardio at a certain heart rate/pre-determined intensity level while the other person does 20 push-ups, 20 crunchers, 20 leg-lifts, then you switch and the person on the bike, stairmaster, whatever moves to the strength station and the mat person moves to the cardio exercise.

Each person does 4 set groups (all three stations) with cardio in between. It's a relay (even if you aren't "competing" against other teams), so you want to hustle on the switch.

If you are outside, the cardio requires more room so you may need to agree upon a set time or just use the time it takes the cardio person to get around a defined



Photo: MWC2017

loop on a bike or foot.

page 28

Workout: Sloppy Goopy Mess

Overview:

Nearly everyone in areas that get even periodic snow has experienced a wacky wet snowfall in the very late spring or very early fall. These out-of-season storms are generally teases in the fall and can be annoying in the spring (if you have a dryland sport). Either way, an interesting workout is to take full advantage of the late/early snowfall and get yourself out the door with your skis in hand.

Location:

Unless you really have a bizarre storm, usually late spring/early fall storms will be 1-6 inches at most. Since the ground is rarely frozen for these storms, timing is critical otherwise the snow will melt before you can get out there. The safest place to ski in these early/late situations will be anywhere with a nice smooth (ideally soft) carpet. Grass parks are the most obvious choice but you can also consider beaches, woodchip paths, and even a multi-user path if you are patient enough to pack the snow first before trying to glide.

What To Do:

This is one of those workouts where the situation is the key rather than the design. In the spring months, sometimes just a half hour of goofing around on skis can be a great break from the early dryland season. Just tour around enjoying yourself. Glide probably won't be great so it'll be a good workout even if you are only out for a short bit. In the fall, you might want to try and pack some kind of track on a short loop so you can actually get in some semblance of skiing. With a big group, even skating is possible on a wet goopy mess if everyone puts in some stomping time. Either way it'll be a lot cheaper than a plane ticket to the southern hemisphere or to a glacier in terms of shortening your time off snow!

Training Project:

The Ski Year Begins!: Goals and Objectives

Every skier needs goals and objectives whether we consider ourselves geared for performance or simply enjoying the sport recreationally. But performance skiers can particularly benefit from taking the time early in the ski

Continued on the next page.

year to establish goals and objectives that will set the tone for all the weeks and months of work yet to come.

Often skiers find it useful to treat goals as broad targets that impact the entire ski year and life itself (i.e. "have my healthiest year in the past decade"). Then objectives can be more specific targets often directly attached to specific sets of performances (i.e. "ski within 10% of the top 3 age group in the Malibu Marathon"). There are many ways of determining valid goals and objectives so don't feel constrained by any particular "rules", rather focus on simply getting this task done in whatever way makes sense to you.

One useful caution is to avoid setting any goal or objective based exclusively on place or time. You have no control over the performances of your competition (nor who will or won't show up to any given event). A better solution is to use percentage back and often it is best to use several events so that you can average performances rather than depend exclusively on one day where things may or may not go perfectly. Same goes with performance times where weather/snow can totally control ski speed independent of how well you personally ski.

Goals and objectives MUST be written down to have any impact. Use this space to get started and then put a more detailed copy in your training log, on your refrigerator, in your bathroom, wherever you'll see it all year long and be motivated to follow through!

You can use any written format you like. This might take you two weeks or two minutes. Just make it happen!



Photo: MWC2015

Workout: An Early Summer Roller Ski (or Ski!) II

Overview:

A simple workout to get the kinks out and get you started towards next season.

Location:

If on snow...anywhere you can find with late spring or early summer white to ride. If roller skiing, a favorite spot that will take 30-60 minutes to ski. Nothing super difficult.

What To Do:

The point of this workout is to simply get you back out thinking about skiing and feeling the ski motions at a time of year most masters have everything except skiing on the brain.

This isn't intended to be one of a hundreds of ski specific workouts for April-June. After all, even high level masters can do just fine with only an occasional (i.e. 1-2x per week) ski specificity in this time period.

Start with easy skiing for 10-30 minutes. Follow with 1 x 10 minutes double pole only (better if rolling) or skate legs only (better if crust cruising on late snow). If you are lucky enough to have late season groomed trails, split the time into 2 x 5mins with both double pole only and skate legs only.

Follow with another 5-10 minutes easy skiing. Then add 5 x 30 seconds of "play speed". If rolling, do these speeds in a parking lot or other fun section of pavement where you can get lots of turns in. Crust cruising on snow this should be really easy to add to the mix.

Finish up with 5-15 minutes of easy distance.

-- End --

What doesn't need be the case is how we treat ourselves badly. I completely forgot to appreciate what I did and what I accomplished, to give myself a pat on the back. To be proud of my achievements. Do not forget why you're doing what you're doing.

Do not forget what makes you happy.

-- Vibeke Skofterud, Norwegian Olympic & World Championship medalist, Swedish Vasaloppet champion.



From Norway **Hydrate. Hydrate. Hydrate.**

*The following is a vintage translated and summarized version of an article by **Ellen Aabech** originally appearing on **Norsk Skisport**, no. 6, 2002.*

This piece was previously featured in the AXCS Spring Digest 2003.

Translation and summary by Inge Scheve exclusively for the XC World Digest.

Regardless of sport, the need to hydrate during training and racing cannot be repeated often enough. There are no excuses for not drinking enough. Staying hydrated contributes to increased performance, wellness and beauty. In other words, by drinking up, you cash in on several levels. But although a well-hydrated body performs better, has more endurance and a higher output, athletes typically drink too little, especially during and after workouts or competitions.

Skimping on fluids during endurance events leads to dehydration (the body dries out). The body is almost 70 percent water. If only 1 percent dehydrated, performance drops by 10 percent. To maximize the effects training and to perform at the top during races, all fluid lost must be replaced. Drinking should happen before, during and after workouts and races. And hydration should be an ongoing effort. Pay special attention to



Photo: Kathie Culhane-Pera

drinking habits during the days leading up to competition. Keep in mind that the body can only absorb about 1 liter of liquids per hour, so drinking needs to be a sustained effort.

A properly hydrated body clears lactic acid more efficiently, which enables the muscles to perform at a higher intensity. Dehydration forces the body to extract water from the blood stream to feed the cells resulting in reduced oxygen uptake and increased heart rate.

Water

It may be the simplest and most convenient source of fluids. Water drives the chemical processes in the body, and water repairs, renews and maintains cells. Water flushes toxins and waste products from the body, which contributes to overall wellness. Finally, water helps the body absorb minerals the body does not produce itself.

When suffering from fevers, GI distress or colds, water and hydration is crucial. Water also alleviates headaches caused by mild dehydration. Make sure to drink enough with meals as well, as this helps with digestion. Finally, staying properly hydrated helps keeping skin soft and radiant and contributes to keep wrinkles at bay.

Drink enough and drink soon enough

Drink early, especially during exercise. While in a regular day, most aim for a drink every hour to hour and a half, every 10 to 15 minutes is a good rule of thumb during workouts. But don't use thirst as a guideline. The body can be up to a half-gallon dehydrated before thirst appears. At this point, it can be hard to replace enough fluids to regain liquid balance.

Energy and sports drinks

Those who train or race for prolonged periods of time need to replace minerals, salts and energy (carbohydrates) in addition to just fluids. This is where sports and energy drinks come into play.

But several products claiming to be energy drinks are

Continued on the next page.

Hydrate continued from page 32.

less than suited for athletes, and some will even produce a positive a doping test. In a Danish study testing more than 20 products, 15 were unsuited as sports drinks. The study is supported by the Norwegian Olympic Committee's nutritional expert Christine Helle. The failing products were too high in caffeine and sugar, and some had incomplete listings of ingredients. But even if the ingredient list is incomplete, do take the time to read labels.

Sports drinks generally fall into two categories: those that supply carbohydrates and those that contain caffeine to deliver a boost. According to Helle, some of these have concentration of caffeine high enough for athletes to test positive on a doping test. Helle recommends athletes use only carbohydrate-based energy drinks. Among the drinks that failed the Danish study were Battery + and Red Bull. The latter fails the Norwegian FDA's high limit for caffeine concentration (no more than 150 mg/ L) and is with it's 320 mg/L not legally for sale in Norway.

Although winter athletes don't sweat as much due to air temperature during their competitive seasons, water in large amounts is still lost during physical work. Whether you prefer water, sports drinks or energy drinks or a combination of the two, make sure to guzzle enough to maintain a properly hydrated body so you can maximize the effects of training and perform at your very best.

-- End --



Photo: Kris Dobie

5 Hours continued from page 26.

page 33

time. Of course, for national team skiers who put in more than 900 training hours per year, the bulk of their volume has to be easy distance. They still get a lot more high-intensity hours. But when I put in five hours per week, I can't do four of them at easy distance intensity," Stokke argues.

Hit the wall hard

"This fall, I think life is slowly catching up to me: a full-time job, wife, kids and other commitments. I put in the time I can, and on average five hours a week is what I manage without running myself ragged and sacrificing my marriage," explains Stokke, who has a 2 1/2-year-old boy and an 8-month-old daughter.

Stokke personally paid the price of burning the candle at both ends.

"If the overall load on your body is too much, your body complains – loud and clear. For me it was like hitting a wall," says Stokke, who has gained a lot of respect for his body's subtle signs to cut back.

This fall, he pulled a muscle in his calf during a run commuting home from work. The result was several weeks of rehab and only light exercise before he could return to his regular training plan. He did what he could, swapping out running and bounding with alternative training methods. But Stokke recognized that fitness comes with a fairly short expiration date. "Your fitness drops fast when you can't stick to your training plan, so it's important to avoid injuries that derail your routine," Stokke says.

Nothing beats the Birkie

For Stokke, the Norwegian Birkebeiner events are one of a kind.

"Only the Birkie is the Birkie, and I have a very special relationship to the Birkie. It was the first ski marathon I did, and there is something very unique about the Birkie atmosphere. When you approach the finish, and you hear the music, the stadium speaker and the cheering, it gives me goose bumps. It doesn't matter how tired you are. There is no other event like it," Stokke says.

-- End --



From Norway **Creative Summer Training**

The following is a vintage translated and summarized version of an article by **Emil Søbak Gundersen**, Team Norgeshus and coach for the summer ski school originally appearing on **Norsk Skisport**, No. 4, 2011.

This piece was previously featured in the AXCS Spring Digest 2012.

Translation and summary by Inge Scheve exclusively for the XC World Digest.

Summer is the most important base-building period in the training year for cross-country skiers. Most skiers start their training year May 1, and spend the following months collecting hours for the training log.

What are the most important elements to include during the summer months? And what pitfalls to avoid? For starters, summer training is less about 3-4 hour over-distance roller ski tours, intensity sessions at your lactic acid threshold and how many tons of weights that get moved around in strength workouts. It's also not really about how many hours of sub-threshold workouts that get completed. Rather, the key to summer training is variety.

Why focus on variety?



The above-mentioned options are all useful and beneficial workouts that help prepare skiers for the racing and rigor to come. And skiers love to love them. But this is part of the reason there are so many burned-out skiers in the tracks of the stars. To love something can be a scary passion. Some skiers love the hard stuff at the expense of the basics. They forget to build a foundation. This can lead to two scenarios: 1. Injuries because the body doesn't handle the rigor over time, and 2. A lack of sufficient base to complete for the hard workouts needed to reach their goals, because the foundation simply was never laid. And an insufficient base is nearly impossible to make up later. Hence, coaches of all stripes keep preaching the importance of general strength and basic training.

The foundation

Fitness is like a ladder. You climb it step by step. But you have to start in the right end – on the bottom. That's the prerequisite for handling the tough volume and intensity of the fall, and avoiding overuse injuries. Make sure to include strength, coordination, flexibility and plyometrics, in addition to the regular endurance training, so be creative and seek out new challenges, even if it's not ski-specific. The idea is to build a solid foundation based on variety. Basic training can easily be non-specific and include purely recreational activities, especially early in the spring and summer.

Once the initial weeks of the new training year are in the log, it's time to look at the training aspects that might not be your favorites. There is no better time to work on your weaknesses than the summer.

Variety, hard work and play

Summer is the perfect time to think outside the box and come up with activities that can help improve your weaknesses. This is also the time to add some extra strength. A lot of racers include a period of heavy weight training in the spring/early summer. However, it's

Continued on the next page.

important to consider carefully if doing just that in reality is the same as skipping the kind of training that allows you to handle the heavy, intensity of the fall – the kind of training that prepares the body for heavy weight training too.

Maybe the better solution is to try the local climbing wall, do gymnastics, try to turn over some trees during a distance run, or challenge your training partners to plank/push-up/sit-up marathon during the abovementioned run... Is there a rope line you can try balance? Or a tree log? Waterskiing, wakeboarding, wind surfing? These are all activities that really challenge your strength and coordination. Or simply spend at least an hour per week doing hard circuits in the gym with body resistance exercises and medicine balls. Just get it done.

And finally, if you're going on vacation – why not pack some resistance bands, ropes and a medicine ball, and you'll be set to build your own gym no matter where you go. There is more to summer than long roller ski workouts, biking and running.

-- End --

True Grit

AXCS Editor: The night of Saturday, February 19 Jessie Diggins was hoping she had recovered enough from food poisoning to simply start the 2022 30km freestyle Olympic finale the next day. When dawn arrived, the world witnessed one of the grittiest performances ever.

What do I think about the night before a race?

This is not the time to think about all the technique adjustments you think you need to make, how you would have trained differently, or how you wish you could ski like someone else.

After the races, write it all down and think back on what worked for you, and what you can do to improve.

But right before the race? This is the time to reflect on all the things you kick ass at. Know your strengths. Be ready to use them. Focus on the things you can do, and believe that you have the power to do them well!

-- Jessie Diggins, 3x Olympic medalist



From the XC Ski World New MWC Pricing

Effective with the 2023 Masters World Cup, the WMA Board has approved a new pricing structure that will raise MWC entry fees for the first time in many years while also implementing the first-ever early bird discounts for MWC events.

MWC2023 Seefeld entry fees will begin at 220 Euro from opening of registration (roughly mid-October 2022) until December 31. This will be an increase of 20 Euro over previous MWC pricing.

For skiers that elect to wait to register, MWC2023 entry fees will then go up to 250 Euro from New Years until the close of registration (roughly the beginning of March for MWC2023).

MWC organizers have been battling the same types of inflationary pressures as many other industries due to the pandemic and the ongoing war in Eastern European. The new MWC event entry pricing reflects these added costs, while also still representing excellent value compared to not only other ski events, but just about any comparable outdoor endurance event for master athletes.

Included in MWC entry fees are up to three individual race entries plus the chance to represent your nation in the MWC relay as a bonus 4th event. Also included is a week of free local shuttle buses for registered participants, a week of ceremonies and cultural performances, and an organizer's choice of either a closing banquet dinner or two MWC parties.

Also part of every Masters World Cup event is discounted pricing MWC official lodging (via your national masters association) plus a variety of MWC registration gifts as well as exclusive discounted excursions and adventures throughout the event week.

-- End --



From Minnesota, USA

A Septuagenarian's Trek Over The Border Route Trail

*The following is an original essay contributed by AXCS member **Peter J. Dorsen**, M.D., LADC exclusively for the XC World Digest.*

AXCS welcomes original pieces like this from our members that paint a picture of different parts of the nation and world and/or feature you and others outside doing interesting stuff large and small.

To contribute something for future AXCS media projects, email the AXCS Office at jd@xcskiworld.com

Since Covid, there has been an understandable escape into the out of doors. So many have clamored for any natural escape hatch that the allure of the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness has screamed like Odysseus' Sirens to so many of us after two years of mandated confinement. So much so that entry from one of many access points along the Gunflint trail out of Grand Marais that the U.S. Forest Service has capped the number fortunate enough to hear our state bird, the loon, happen on a humungous moose dining among wild rice grass, or experience of an unexpected slapping tail of a

fun-loving beaver warning, "Stay away from my beaver den."

A few Minnesota Rovers, a Minnesota out of doors club, in 1970 began solving what they considered a paucity of backpacking trails in the Midwest by collaborating with the U.S Forest Service to create and maintain the Border Route Trail (BRT) from Magnetic Rock to Otter Lake Road as another way to savor the BWCA. What is astounding is that the BWCA, memorialized by Sigurd Olson's pen is that the BRT along with the Kekekabic ("The Keke") Trail to the west and the Superior Hiking trail to the east, the BRT will become a continuation of the North Country National Scenic Trail, an over 4,000-mile long-distance hiking trail stretching from New York to North Dakota."

Another way to savor a pristine BWCA is by hiking through the 65-mile wilderness Border Route Trail from just above Gunflint Lodge and Outfitters, mostly in the wilderness area. Sounds like a pushover. Not so. My solo, six-day adventure in mid-June was hot, dry, and rugged. The experience went well, er, except for running out of water twice and getting embarrassingly lost (for ego's sake, let's call it misdirected).

My own walk in the-woods started where the Kekekabic Trail sails off westward to Ely, skirts the south end of Gunflint Lake, goes north of Loon Lake, and what becomes the beginning of never-ending, breath-taking overlooks followed by such magical surprises as Bridal Falls sequestered a tad off this trail for a first glimpse of a boreal forest as water plunges at an unsuspecting visitor to a sacred place.

Everywhere, the trails climb and plunges to or from one overpowering glimpse of Canada and the Quetico and unspoiled lakes. Soaring raptors and colossal eagles ride the air waves as I savored the cool drafts, a welcome relief from hiking across valleys where mosquitos or, worse yet, black flies and ticks make quick work of any exposed flesh. As the BRT is mostly within the BWCA

Continued on the next page.

Photo: Peter J. Dorsen



I had to purchase a permit from an outfitter or from a U.S. Forest ranger station. Day passes are available at all spur entries.

The trail is divided into three sections: The Gunflint Lake Section is extremely popular in winter for its maze of cross-country ski trails maintained for and by the Gunflint and other lodges. Along the way, there are plenty of bailout opportunities onto enjoyable one or two day-hike spurs to Crab Lake, Mucker Lake, Caribou Rock Trailhead, Clearwater Lodge, and McFarland Lake conveniently accessible from the Gunflint Trail (a paved road).

Next, is the BWCA Wilderness Section, a backpackers dream and the most rugged and with the area around Rose Lake with its high cliffs and Portage Falls (sorry canoeists...the portage is 2.1 miles between Daniels, Rove, and Duncan Lakes). I was so close to Canada I felt like I could hit it with a stone. Way off in the distance from the last of vistas on the trail are East Pike, John, North and South Fowl, and Arrow Lakes. The third, the least used Pigeon River Section---quite flat---winds south along the Pidgeon River and Canada, and anticlimactically out of the BWCA into Grand Portage State Forest to the BRT Eastern Lake Road Terminus joining the SHT.

Founders of the trail are committed to a wilderness experience. There are no tree blazes as there were on my earlier 365-mile trek over the Superior Hiking trail from Jay Cooke State Park to the end of the BRT at Otter Lake Road where the BRT begins. This can present a problem to someone like myself who is directionally impaired...even with a compass.

There are a few twists of woe to my tale along the BRT. I didn't make it to my expected end of the trail. Keep in mind that, thanks to our friends, the Rovers, and the Border Route Trail Association, marking is minimal. If lucky, I spotted tiny blue ribbons occasionally hanging from a branch above the often-overgrown trail. Yogi Berra's advice, "If you come to a fork in the road, take it," became applicable on my last day.

For someone like myself who rejoices in the quiet so intense I can hear previous fall oak leaves landing, I encountered only five other hikers and six men carrying canoes on a male-bonding adventure at a portage between West Pike and Gogebic Lakes.

I had ignored topping my two-liter water bottle and with

the temperature in the mid 80's, and a path so dry it crackled, my engine began to overheat. It was getting toward six and I was at a perfect vista with a flat spot for my tent. I made some freeze-dried soup with two of the three cups of water I had left and headed for my sleeping bag.

Gradually, after nine my view of what I thought was North Fowl Lake was John and East Pike and where I had planned to find water at a bridge and stream described on the map never appeared. At last, I spotted a swampy area by the side of the trail and felt like the desperate survivor on the desert with his head at last buried in an oasis. The water was tannin stained but after a few drops of an iodine solution was better than any cola on ice I had ever experienced.

Now, here's the zinger. I believed I was an hour from the prearranged pick-up point by a beloved cross-country ski friend, Dick Swanson. Wrong. Unexpectedly, I spilled out onto a road and a BRT trail sign pointing to my left. My thoughts: "This just can't be right?" Guess what? It wasn't. Where was I? At that moment, an upscale pickup came to a stop in front of me. I signaled I needed some help. He said, "Follow me." I did. He had stopped his truck where other cars were parked and learned I realized was eight hiking miles from my anticipated destination. So what, I had completed the equivalent of 65 miles over five and a half days although a tad lost.

We both did a double take: "My name is Myron Bursheim," he said looking at me kind of funny. "Myron! It's Peter. I haven't seen you since we raced against each

Continued on page 39, right column.



Photo: Connie Meek



From Norway **Don't Think, Just Train!**

The following is a translated and summarized version of an article by Petter Soleng Skinstad originally appearing on Langrenn.com, Sept 20, 2011 with a translated and summarized version appearing in the Spring 2014 AXCS Digest.

Translation and summary by Inge Scheve exclusively for the XC World Digest.

AXCS Editor's 2022 Notes:

Although few AXCS members will train in ski tunnels this summer, there are salient lessons to be learned in the overall approach to both training and staying healthy in this vintage article. For example, many masters can learn from the elite team's restricted approach to doing only "short and efficient" workouts in ski tunnels. If you are limited on snow time or abundant snow terrain, the comparison to ski tunnel workouts will make a lot of sense. Also note the mention about gum or candy after workouts to reduce infections -- interesting stuff!

"If you spend too much time thinking about getting sick, you might just think yourself sick," says ski marathon superstar Anders Aukland.

This article discusses how to get the most out of a trip to the ski tunnel in Torsby, Sweden, but the advice given applies universally to both the dryland and on-snow periods for XC skiers.



Photo: Kathie Culhane-Pera

Many of the negative effects people experience in the ski tunnel are tied to getting sick. Some skiers get sick while they are at the ski tunnel camp, while others get sick as soon as they get home. Langrenn.com wanted to present some tips on how to avoid getting sick connected to recovery and prevention.

Kjell Vegard Mykland is the head physician for the Norwegian National team men and has extensive experience with recovery and preventing illness in peculiar environments. These are some of his best advice.

Dress the part

Mykland explains that in extremely humid conditions with lots of moving air, such as a ski tunnel, athletes need to dress warmer than they otherwise would for the same temperature in dryer conditions. A thorough warm-up is also important, especially when coming from a warmer environment to a cooler environment. This will help prepare your lungs for exercise in a cool, damp environment.

"During the workout, there are also a number of things you can do to stay healthy. And after the workout, make sure you change into dry clothes, including underwear and socks and wear a dry hat. A lot of skiers change their shirt, socks and hats during distance workouts lasting more than two hours in the tunnel or in damp conditions," Mykland says.

Mykland emphasizes the importance of efficiency. "Stick to your own program, change, eat and get in the shower," he says.

Mykland also points out that for most skiers, one cool and damp workout in the tunnel per day is sufficient. The overall toll of the cool and damp environment increases the risk of sickness.

Be efficient after the workouts

"Change every piece of clothing, from underwear and socks, even if you think you will be showering within 10-

Don't Think, Just Train continued from page 38.

15 minutes. There is a good chance it will take longer, especially if you are with a big group," the doctor says. Furthermore, Mykland recommends filling up with carbs and rehydrate well immediately after the workout, sharing a nugget of weird science:

"Chewing gum or sucking on hard candy on the way home from the workout will help moisten your nose and throat and reduce the risk of infection," he says, emphasizing that every measure taken to reduce the risk of sickness matters.

Finally, Mykland harps on skiers to stay on track and stick to their plan. "Be mindful about intensity, and keep a positive attitude. That helps in preventing sickness."

Anders Aukland shares his tips

Anders Aukland and his Team Xtra Personell have become frequent yers in the Torsby Tunnel, training there several times each fall. Neither Aukland nor the other athletes on the team have been bothered by sickness during or after their tunnel camps. Aukland believes this is because they don't spend much time thinking about the added risk.

"We mostly train like we otherwise would, and we take the usual precautions to prevent sickness, no more and no less. If you spend a lot of time worrying about getting sick, I think there is a good chance you will get sick," the marathon racer says.

The Vasaloppet champion also says they only do short and efficient workouts in the tunnel. Although they sometimes do two workouts per day in the tunnel, they have kept their tunnel camps fairly short.

"Most of our ski tunnel camps in Torsby have been three to four days long, but every workout has been fairly short and efficient. We have mostly had an intensity session in the morning, and focused on technique and/or speed for the second workout. I have never done a distance workout in the tunnel," Aukland says. Aukland thinks there main problem is that skiers try to make the tunnel into something special physiologically, just like altitude training.

"Don't think about it, just train. That is the main thing no matter where you are, and what time of the year," Aukland concludes.

-- End --

Border Route Trail continued from page 37. page 39

each other in the 80's." "Peter, you don't look in very good shape." After we got over that our meeting or, rather, his saving me—was a one in a million chance. We laughed all the way over the back roads to my waiting friend.

Moral of the story. If you are brave enough to take on the Border Route Trail (especially alone), carry a GPS and rent an emergency beacon should something unexpected happen to you and you need to get help. Also, bring someone along who has a better sense of direction, can make dehydrated food taste palatable, and have some good jokes, especially when the going gets tough. Always carry more than two liters of water despite that it is heavy (One liter = eight pounds)) and top it off at available streams or ponds throughout the day.

Despite the negatives, I would, or should I say am, about to do it again: over the "Keke," to complete my trek through the BWCA to Ely, Minnesota. Walking the BRT rather than canoeing through the BWCA provides a hard but gratifying challenge through boreal forests, views of miles and miles of lakes, and forests without motorized boats, ATV's, planes, or cars. Despite risks and dangers, every man or woman should still take on challenges that help define who we are and what we are still capable of accomplishing---even at 77.

Dr. Peter Dorsen is a retired internist and alcohol and drug counselor who has written Dr. D's Handbook for Men Over 40: A Guide to Health, Fitness, Living, and Loving in the Prime of Life (Wylie & Sons, 2000), Up from the Ashes: One Doc's Struggle with Drugs and Mental Illness (Ingram Spark, 2018). His current book, Men Over 60: Don't Quit Now! is soon to be published. Dorsen lives with Nada, Samantha, and their standard poodle, Saindie, in Eagan, Minnesota.

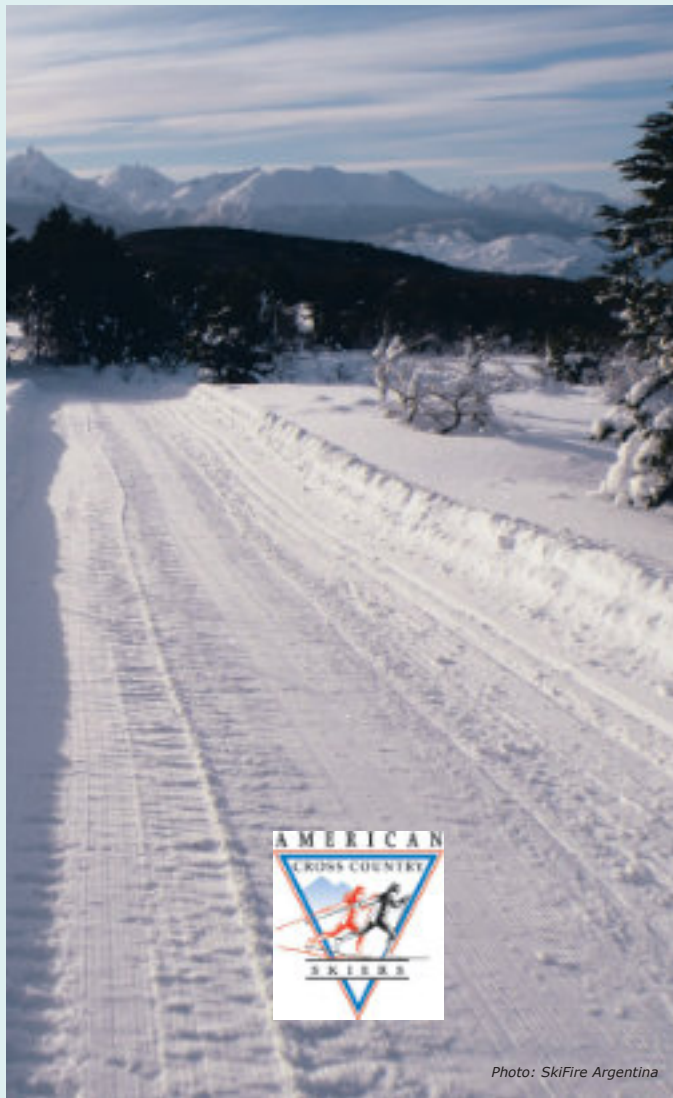
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It's Time To Get To Work

The renewal and rebirth that comes with every spring is not a given. Mother Nature does a remarkable job wherever and whenever possible. But between climate chaos and other impacts of the Anthropocene, life finding a way is hardly a guarantee. It takes work, adaptability, determination, and infinite patience.

For master skiers, we also enter spring with promise and also a lot of work ahead of us. We look back on glorious days out on the snow. The lucky get to play out on the white stuff for awhile to come. Next season beckons with the exciting possibility of a healthier world.

But we must also earn our dreams.

If we have learned nothing else in the past two years, it is to never again take health and well-being for granted. This means doing the everyday chores that we know need to be done to take care of ourselves and those we care about.

Beyond the person in the mirror, the entire XC ski world needs our care and attention.

There are the big challenges facing our winters and our outdoor playgrounds. There are the more pedestrian challenges facing our sport from youth programs to big events.

Spring is here. It's time to get to work.