

BRITISH MASTERS CROSS COUNTRY SKI ASSOCIATION

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2018 'What a shocker!' edition

“Beauty fades, but ugliness lasts forever” – Anon



Is this the luckiest and/or proudest man in British cross-country skiing, or what? Alasdair Wilson, bronze medallist in the men's M07 20 km classic Masters World Championship. “But there is no such race” I hear you say. Well, you'd better read on to find out exactly what happened in Minneapolis back in January!

Editorial

Another snow season melts its way down into the water table, or into the streams and rivers and from there into the seas from where it will be evaporated back up into the sky and fall as snow once more for next season. Another Masters World Championships fades in the memory of those relatively few people who took part; the disappointing memories will be analysed and explained or, if this isn't possible, will simply be forgotten, while the positive and encouraging memories will spur us on, hopefully, to even greater efforts in the future.

He can't have another Newsletter assigned to him, but Roger Homyer came away from Minneapolis with four top-rate performances of which he should be proud. Our Canadian member, Jack White, came away with another medal after a break from Masters skiing for a while, while good and satisfying performances were posted by our US members Steve Smigiel and Patrick o'Connor, Patrick having threatened to give up the MWC for good after Klosters last year and having temporarily resigned from the BMCCSA.

I was content but not exactly happy; good races in the 30 km classic and classic relay leg, but I had a poor race in the 10 km (actually 6.5 km) classic race which should have been my best result, and a cold put paid to any hopes of a good performance in the longest classic race. But what is sport if not full of surprises? Who would have guessed, leading up to the Minneapolis event, that Britain would come away with a bronze medal in the M07 longest classic race? Certainly not Alasdair Wilson! Not, even, his Team Captain who, having seen the results but attended the Team Captains' meeting that evening and having heard the explanations given by the Jury, believed that his medal would be denied him. But I was wrong. Unless you've heard the story already, I doubt whether you would guess in a million years (not least of all because you'd be dead for about 999 925 of those years) what went on on that fateful day so, to find out, you are simply going to have to read the article about the MWC wherein all will become clear.

On a sad note, the news came out last summer of the death of Helen Charlton. Helen was a keen cross-country skier and roller skier in the 1980s and was a BMCCSA member for all of this time.

New members

Peter Drew: Peter writes "My sporting interests revolved around playing competitive football from age 17 to my late 30s, when a doctor told me I could play 30 minutes a week or play a full game and risk never being able to walk properly again. Having two young sons, my wife directed me to give up playing and take up coaching them and their teams. As a former player, I was never going to be able to stand still and quietly on the side-line and watch games, I had to be involved and active.

My interest in skiing, as opposed to just watching it on Ski Sunday, started at the age of 15, when my German pen-pal invited me to join him on a church youth-group ski holiday. We exchanged each Easter and that year the exchange coincided with the ski trip. He was a very good skier and wanted to ski, so my choice was ski or stay home. I was lent a pair of touring skis and over-sized boots and, after four days of falling over, I finally found my self-respect and managed to stay upright! Later that year his family invited me to their apartment in Davos for Christmas and that was my first experience of cross-country skiing.

The next chance I had to cross-country ski was following my marriage to my Norwegian wife. She lived in a town with both alpine slopes and cross-country ski tracks. It was there that I learnt the basics of classic style. Alpine skiing was still my preference as, with young children, cross-country ski trips were short in distance and at pedestrian pace, so it was cold with lots of moaning from the boys about wanting to go back home!

Over the years I began to find alpine skiing a bit repetitive, so I started to go cross-country skiing on my own, for longer distances. I enjoyed the challenge of pushing myself. I bought some classic roller skis and used to roller ski from Liverpool Street station to the office in Covent Garden. The response from passers-by was a mixture of laughter and abuse. I then found the Hyde Park club. It was there that I learned about technique and came to understand that Norwegians grow-up on skis but very few are taught to ski correctly. I attended the Tuesday club sessions in Hyde Park while I was working in London and for a while after I

'retired' (I had the opportunity to put an end to the 4-hour daily commute). I then joined the club in Cambridge, which was still a 75 minute drive each way but easier to get to.

With more time on my hands I started roller skiing on the roads in local villages. My wife cycled a 13.5 km circular route, which was fairly quiet and the tarmac wasn't too bad, and suggested I try this. I also bought myself a Ski-Erg, justifying the purchase on the bad English weather that would prevent me from training outside on roller skis!

My interest in cross-country ski racing grew, initially having heard club members discuss their training for the Vasaloppet. I started taking part in roller ski races, and two years ago I completed the Vasaloppet and, last year, the Marcialonga and Birkebeiner. I would like to get the stamps in my passport and become a World Loppet Master. My intention this year is to do at least 3 races, including Birkebeiner again, where I would like to improve my time and see if it is possible to get a medal for being amongst the fastest percentage in my age group. To achieve this I am going to have to train hard. I do train but I have little or no structure and no weekly training plan, which I must address in the short term.

My immediate objectives, even at the age of 54, are to improve my fitness level, endurance and strength, particularly to get me faster up those steep hills in races that we can't train for in this country!".

Katy Homyer: Many people will remember Katy from roller ski races a few years ago. University studies have kept her away from roller skiing recently but now, while still not quite old enough to race as a Master, she may be thinking of making her debut in the MWC in a few years' time.

Katy is a permanent student. After gaining a distinction in neuro-biology at Edinburgh, she moved to Glasgow to undertake a medical degree and is currently in the second of five years. She has been a cross-country skier all her life, but first gained an interest in racing at CBNSC. After becoming a member of the Nordic Development Squad, Katy joined Highland Nordic (proprietor: Dad!) and was selected for Team GB at the European Youth Olympics in Liberec (Czech Republic) in 2011. Katy then became a full-time athlete for a year and raced at the World Junior Championships in Erzurum (Turkey) in 2013. On the way, Katy has been British Cross-Country Ski Champion at girl, youth, and junior levels together with a number of roller ski national championships. Combining studying and racing proved difficult, but she continued to coach at both club and national levels with BNDS. In 2018 Katy raced at the Konig Ludwig Lauf in Germany and finished 8/151 in the 23 km free technique race. This also doubles as the World Medical Championships (for doctors, chemists and students) and Katy finished as World Championship runner-up! So if ever you have an accident or illness while out skiing and find yourself in need of medical assistance, the first one to reach you could be Katy, or it could be the World Medical Champion ☺.

Roller ski round-up 2017

Many people rate the LRNSC 1-hour matched classic roller ski race, at Olympic Park, London in November, as the best race of the British roller ski seasons, and who am I to disagree with many people? Just to remind you of the format, the Swenor factory provides 50 pairs of identical classic roller skis, straight out of the box and then, from a mass start, it's a question of how far people can ski in one hour. The cycle circuit at Olympic Park is an excellent roller ski venue; smooth tarmac and sufficiently varied terrain to require all classic techniques over the course of the 1.5 km lap. Probably these features mean that the event is sold out in advance, with people willing to travel long distances to compete. The only difference this year was that people with the same Swenor rollers were allowed to use them.

Living in Brussels, I made only a late decision to take part; too late to get the factory rollers so I had to be content with a second-hand pair from LRNSC. This, anyway, is my excuse! In dry, mild conditions, a good race developed at the front between Frank Kelly, down from Scotland, and Jordan Andrews, with another battle for third place between British Series champion Patrick Rodwell, Steve Perry and Iain Ballentine.

There were not so many BMCCSA members taking part this year, but the Men's 60+ category was won by Des Goff, one lap ahead of LRNSC's Mike Rendell, who used to be a regular roller skier but no longer is. The reason is bizarre; he drives a camper van which, these days, is not permitted into London's low emission zone, and the Hayes track is just inside this zone!

It was good to see BMCCSA member Jennifer Snowdon helping out at this event. Injury has kept her out of skiing for the whole of last year, but her ambition to participate in an MWC one day remains strong!

Name	Club	Laps	Time	Distance (km)	Position
Frank Kelly	RAF	13	59:46.7	19.5	1st senior male
Jordan Andrews	Hyde Park	13	59:48.3	19.5	2nd senior male
Patrick Rodwell	Hyde Park	13	1.00:20.8	19.5	3rd senior male
Steve Perry	RAF	13	1.00:22.5	19.5	1st male 40+
Iain Ballentine	Hyde Park/BM	13	1.02:58.7	19.5	4th senior male
Charlie Harrigan	LRNSC	13	1.04:11.9	19.5	5th senior male
Joseph Rosefeld	Hyde Park	13	1.04:12.0	19.5	6th senior male
Koen Pouwels	Hyde Park	13	1.04:21.8	19.5	7th senior male
Jason James	RAF	13	1.04:36.4	19.5	8th senior male
Tobias Rose	RAF	13	1.04:48.3	19.5	9th senior male
David Williams	LRNSC	12	1.01:09.3	18.0	10th senior male
Gergely Samogyi	Cambridge	12	1.01:25.3	18.0	11th senior male
Egil Giertsen	Hyde Park	12	1.02:58.7	18.0	2nd male 40+
Ragnhild Camilla Schreiner	Hyde Park	12	1.03:05.0	18.0	1st senior lady
Jason Davies	RAF	12	1.03:57.8	18.0	12th senior male
Luke Tyler	RAF	12	1.04:09.5	18.0	13th senior male
James McMillan	Hyde Park	12	1.04:28.0	18.0	14th senior male
Adam Pinney	Yorks. Dales/BM	12	1.04:39.5	18.0	3rd male 40+
Peter Drew	LRNSC/BM	12	1.04:56.9	18.0	4th male 40+
Jim Freer	LRNSC	12	1.05:33.6	18.0	15th senior male
Vincent Begin	Unaffiliated	12	1.06:11.0	18.0	5th male 40+
Carsten Uth	Hyde Park	11	1.01:56.2	16.5	6th male 40+
Beth Ireland	LRNSC	11	1.03:05.7	16.5	2nd senior lady
Andy Goodwin	RAF	11	1.04:22.8	16.5	7th male 40+
Sophie Townend	RAF	11	1.04:28.7	16.5	3rd senior lady
Bjarne Tofte	LRNSC	11	1.04:35.8	16.5	8th male 40+
David Palmer	LRNSC	11	1.05:20.5	16.5	9th male 40+
Scott Thompson	Hyde Park	11	1.06:12.8	16.5	10th male 40+
Andre Moa	Hyde Park	10	1.01:25.5	15.0	16th senior male
Alasdair Henson	RAF	10	1.01:47.0	15.0	17th senior male
Mari Murumets	Hyde Park	10	1.02:03.6	15.0	4th senior lady
Anders Soderback	LRNSC	10	1.05:19.1	15.0	11th male 40+
Andrzej Bojarski	LRNSC	10	1.06:03.6	15.0	12th male 40+
Ulrika Rosedale	Unaffiliated	10	1.06:15.9	15.0	1st lady 40+
Neil Salmons	LRNSC	10	1.06:54.2	15.0	13th male 40+
Greg Barnes	LRNSC	10	1.07:03.1	15.0	14th male 40+
Thea Wates	Skifit	10	1.07:53.3	15.0	2nd lady 40+
Torhalla Metsniin	Hyde Park	10	1.08:03.3	15.0	5th senior lady
Robyn Hackwell	RAF	10	1.08:23.6	15.0	6th senior lady
Alison McKinlay	LRNSC	9	1.02:06.2	13.5	3rd lady 40+
Mary Wray	LRNSC/BM	9	1.02:37.7	13.5	4th lady 40+
Leah Middlewick	RAF	9	1.02:52.1	13.5	5th lady 40+
Carol James	Hyde Park	9	1.05:21.3	13.5	6th lady 40+
Rebecca Anderson	RAF	9	1.07:11.0	13.5	7th senior lady
Ewa Pogodowska	Hyde Park	9	1.09:36.7	13.5	8th senior lady
Richard Long	Hyde Park	9	1.09:57.4	13.5	15th male 40+
Claire Godwin	Hyde Park	8	1.03:27.0	12.0	7th lady 40+
Megan Campbell	LRNSC	8	1.03:56.6	12.0	8th lady 40+
Des Goff	LRNSC/BM	8	1.05:52.0	12.0	1st male 60+
Melanie Long	LRNSC	8	1.09:22.5	12.0	9th lady 40+
Andrea Elizabeth Aires	LRNSC	7	1.08:02.8	10.5	10th lady 40+
Emma Brant	Hyde Park	7	1.08:09.4	10.5	11th lady 40+
Mike Rendell	LRNSC	7	1.10:55.4	10.5	16th male 40+
Zona Cooke	Hyde Park	6	1.07:10.8	9.0	12th lady 40+
Robert Griffiths	Skifit	6	1.10:56.9	9.0	17th male 40+
Fiona Pitcher	Hyde Park	5	1.08:10.6	7.5	13th lady 40+

GB Roller Ski Race Calendar 2018

DATE	EVENT	GB Series	SCOTS Series	London Series	VENUE	ORGANISER	NOTES
Sun 6 May	15 km – FT	GB 1		LON 1	Hayes	LRNSC	Starts at 2 p.m. Any type of roller ski under F.I.S. rules (7.5 km junior/novice race).
Sat 26 May	Huntly Sprints – FT	GB 2	SCOT 1		Huntly	HUNTLY	GB Series race will be combined time of two time trials. K.O. sprints in afternoon. Races start 10 a.m. Organiser will supply Marwe roller skis.
Sun 27 May	Clashindarroch Hill Climb – CT	GB 3	SCOT 2		Huntly/Rhynie A941	HUNTLY	Minimum age 11. Any type of classic ski, must have ratchet. 8.05/4.85 km climbs.
Sun 25 June	Team Sprints – FT			LON 2	Hayes	LRNSC	Starts at 2:00 p.m. 2 per team 3 x 1.5 km each, alternating. Any type of roller ski under F.I.S. rules.
Sat 7 July	1 Hour Race – FT	GB 4		LON 3	Hayes	LRNSC	Starts at 2 p.m. Distance travelled in 1 hour (30 minute junior/novice race). Any type of roller ski under F.I.S. rules.
TBC.	10 km – CT	GB 5			Hetton Lyons	TYNESIDE	Starts 4 p.m. Any type of classic ski, must have ratchet (shorter event for under 18s).
Sat 8 Sept.	3.5/5.4/7.1 km – FT	GB 6	SCOT 3		Huntly	HUNTLY	Registration from 9 a.m. Relays follow main races. Organiser will supply Marwe roller skis.
Sun 9 Sept.	Glenmore Time Trial (a.m.) – FT Cairngorm Hill Climb (p.m.) – FT		SCOT 4? SCOT 5?		Glenmore Lodge Cairngorm Ski Road	CBNSC	3.2 km (10 laps) – any type of roller skis under FIS rules. Any type of roller ski under FIS rules.
Sun 23 Sept.	10 km time trial (starts at 15 sec. intervals) – FT	GB 7		LON 4	Hayes	LRNSC	Starts at 2 p.m. (5 km FT junior/novice option). Any type of roller ski under F.I.S. rules.
TBC	9/6/3 km – FT	GB 8			Castle Coombe	WESSEX	Roller skis provided by organisers. Plus 4 x 3 km men's and 3 x 3 km ladies relays.
Sat 20 Oct.	4 Hour Race – FT			LON 5	Hayes	LRNSC	Starts at 1:30 p.m. Any type of roller ski under F.I.S. rules.

CT = Classic technique. FT = Free technique.

VENUES

HAYES: Hillindon Cycle Circuit, Hayes, Middlesex
HUNTLY: Huntly Nordic and Outdoor Centre, Aberdeenshire
HETTON LYONS: Hetton Lyons Cycle Track, Durham
CASTLE COOMBE: Castle Coombe Motor Circuit, Wiltshire
GLENMORE LODGE: Glenmore Roller Ski Track, Aviemore
CAIRNGORM: Ski Road, Aviemore

NOTES

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

GB SERIES DIRECTORS: Fiona Crossley fiona1crossley@yahoo.co.uk and Gerard Evans gerard_evans@hotmail.com

SCOTTISH SERIES COORDINATOR: Frank Musgrave frank.musgrave@btinternet.com

RACE ORGANISERS:

HUNTLY: Huntly Nordic SC – Peter Thorn (Tel.: 01464 831 429; E-mail: huntlynordicsc@yahoo.co.uk), www.nordicski.co.uk

LRNSC: London Region Nordic SC – Gerard Evans (Tel.: 07732 038 587; E-mail: gerard_evans@hotmail.com), www.londonnordic.org.uk

WESSEX: Wessex Biathlon & Nordic SC – Bob Anderson (E-mail: bob@wessexbiathlon.org), www.wessexbiathlon.org

CBNSC: Cairngorm Biathlon & Nordic SC – (E-mail: cairngormbiathlonnordicskiclub@outlook.com), www.cbnsco.co.uk

TYNESIDE: Tyneside Loipers – Alasdair Wilson (E-mail: awilson.craw@blueyonder.co.uk), <http://tynesideloipers.org.uk>

The key to high intensity training found outside the comfort zone

NEW YORK (Reuters): with High Intensity Interval Training (HIIT), which consists of short bursts of intensive activity followed by short periods of recovery, fitness experts say the harder the push, the greater the reward. HIIT can blast calories, build muscle and boost endurance with impressive efficiency in just 20 minutes a day, but the catch is finding the right level of intensity outside the comfort zone.

Sean Bartram, author of the book “High Intensity Interval Training for Women,” says that to find the level, people should think about what it is like being chased by a rabid dog. “It’s just below that,” he says. “To gain maximum benefits you have to push your body to a place that’s almost uncomfortable.” Bartram says people are drawn to HIIT for its efficiency and almost endless variety of exercises.

The bursts can be sprinting or spot jumps and the recovery can be rests or slower paced movements, he explains. “You could alternate 30 seconds of sprinting with 30 seconds of walking, or you could engage in a series of bodyweight exercises, such as push-ups, doing each for 30 seconds with 10 seconds of rest in between,” he adds. Dr. Michele Olson, a professor of exercise science at Auburn University at Montgomery, Alabama, says that it’s not high intensity unless the heart rate is elevated to near 90-plus percentage of its maximum. “Many people think they are engaging in HIIT but they are really doing traditional interval training, where the heart rate is around 75 to 85 percent of maximum,” she points out.

Olson says that, if done properly, HIIT can increase the effectiveness of losing abdominal fat and prompt favourable changes in cholesterol and insulin levels. “There is research showing that you can cut your exercise time nearly in half,” she says. About 20 minutes of HIIT can reap similar benefits of doing 35 to 40 minutes of moderate, steady-state cardio, she adds, noting that the training level must be intense.

Hayley Zawadzki, personal training manager at New York Health and Racquet Club fitness centres, suggests that anyone starting HIIT should have a fitness analysis. “If you have a history of high blood pressure or medication, you cannot push to the absolute max,” she says. So what does that word “Demanding” mean? Two conventional definitions exist: 1) requiring or claiming more than is generally felt by others to be due: e.g. a demanding teacher and 2) calling for intensive effort or attention; or taxing, e.g. a demanding job.

In keeping with this dual definition, a demanding workout contains both an external component, the work and the external numbers like pace and power, and an internal component, the cognitive focus and effort to maintain the work rate in the face of ever-growing sensations of pain and exertion. Eight-time gold medallist Norwegian XC skier Bjørn Dæhlie wrote that he needed two days to mentally prepare for his hardest interval sessions. You cannot mentally detach yourself from the task at hand during these workouts. They cannot be run while on auto-pilot with your headphones on, or while observing the turtles lined up on a log in order of size as you row by. You enter the HIIT tunnel. The focus turns inward, not outward.

At some level, all HIIT sessions are demanding by definition. Untrained people can be taken totally unaware with the discomfort of exercising “in the red zone”. But athletes are used to it, thrive on it even. So a really demanding HIIT session for well-accustomed, well-trained athletes feels more like a manifestation of “hell” than “health”. But it is a journey they choose in the hope of coming across to the other side.

Along these lines, a good point comes from Dr. Michael Joyner. He suggests that perhaps really hard HIIT sessions are a form of “meditation”. The cognitive juxtaposition between two seemingly unrelated situations is interesting, like sitting in a dark room with your legs crossed staring at a candle flame versus running 400 m repeats 20 times on a hot day at a local high school track. Meditation or not, mind and body engage in a deep sensory conversation during very demanding HIIT sessions.

The key elements making the difference between HIIT and conventional interval training appear to be duration and effort. HIIT sessions should be shorter (10-30 seconds) and harder than interval sessions (1-5 minutes). However, this article says nothing about how quickly a heart rate of 90 % should be reached. Do you have experience of HIIT sessions and are willing to share it? Please do!

Masters World Championships, Minneapolis, USA, 2018

Most people, at least those who would claim to know about these things, would probably consider Minneapolis to be in the American mid-west. The north-east mid-west, it's true, but the mid-west, no less. As we were told by the former mayor at the opening ceremony, it isn't mid-west at all, though but is, instead, north North America, not far from Canada and just south-west of the Great Lakes. The importance of it being in the north is that it has all four seasons, when compared with other parts of the mid-west although, as we discovered, its winters have been pretty snow-free recently.

Right from when this event and venue were announced, a couple of years ago, I confess that I had my doubts! Minneapolis is hardly a conventional, or indeed well-known, ski venue; it has a poor snow record for the last few years and was being billed as the first-ever 'no natural snow' Masters; mid-January is a poor time of year, because it meant a lot of time off during this month, time for on-snow training and then for the event itself; and in mid-January it could be f*****g freezing! Perhaps these reasons help explain why so few (just three) skiers from GB signed up.

Early indications seemed to validate some of these concerns. I turned up at Heathrow, well in advance of the flight, at Terminal 3 for the American Airlines flight to Philadelphia. It transpired out that the flight was operated by BA, so I had to transfer to Terminal 5 – no real challenge here, I had loads of time, but it was an annoyance – why don't Expedia show the terminal on their E-tickets? and I would have been in trouble had I arrive at the airport a 'normal' time before the flight. The flight to Philadelphia was uneventful, and I landed with plenty of time to transfer onto the internal flight to Minneapolis. At least, I had plenty of time when I joined the end of the passport queue; one and a half hours later, when I had still not got into the US, I was beginning to panic a bit. Our jumbo jet had just arrived from the UK containing maybe 200 people, and there were just 4 passport officers on duty!

Arriving in Minneapolis with a heavy ski bag, I was disappointed to learn that trolleys had to be paid for. I *hate* this! It gives such a bad impression to visitors. I struggled, though, through the terminal to my Super Shuttle departure desk, for which I'd paid \$19 in advance for the transfer to my hotel. Spotting my ski bag, though, the kind lady from Super Shuttle said "Ah, you have a ski bag. This takes up the whole of the minibus so you can't travel with anyone else. You will need to hire a minibus for yourself – that will be \$44, thanks". Me, "What?", she "It's all shown on our website", me "No it *expletive deleted* isn't, at least not in a way that anyone can see it, because otherwise I wouldn't have booked you", she "Take it or leave it, darling." As we pulled in to the Ramada Plaza Minneapolis, I delicately asked, knowingly, whether this was the Ramada Golden Valley and was not entirely surprised by the answer. It was another \$20 to ferry me to the correct hotel!

Sunday dawned, as I'd anticipated, pretty cold, -16 °C! It took a very long time, though, to sort out transport to Theodore Wirth Park. There's no sensible public transport (even less so on a Sunday), I couldn't use Uber because I don't have a cell phone, I couldn't book a hire car because either they refused to pick me up from the hotel or the price was up around \$130, ridiculous for three days when, basically, I needed only to drive the 3 miles to the Park and back again so, in the end, I went for a normal taxi, €14 each way. Expensive (what else could I do?), but this was nothing compared to the \$20 I had to pay, every day, to use the tracks which, in total, amounted to not much more than 7.5 km. Grrr. So, for three days, it was going to cost me \$50 a day for one and a half to two hours skiing. I accept that it was my choice to come to the venue a few days early but, to me, these sorts of costs indicate a place not really adjusted to cross-country skiing!

Leading up to the event, messages coming from the US had indicated that 11 km of track had been prepared using machine snow, and that we would therefore be racing on just one 10 km loop. It was difficult to verify this on Sunday, partly because, with fairly heavy snow falling, it was difficult to see exactly where the tracks were, and partly because some of the tracks were closed off for a huskie event. It was cold, at between about -16 and -10 °C, and the tracks were not in great condition; a little new snow on top of a hard, icy base. If you ever had the chance to ski at the Telford indoor track, snow conditions reminded me a lot of that!

The following day, Monday, stayed cold, at about -16°C . The tracks were in a slightly better condition, and a combination of Swix -10 to -20°C and Rex Green, -8 to -15°C worked fairly well. Despite claims from the organisers that there was 10 km of tracks open, I was only able to find about 6 km and, in my judgement, this 6 km loop was about half of the normal difficulty of a Masters course. Tuesday confirmed this; I could only find the 6 km loop, although one addition up-and-down loop had been added, which increased the difficulty but only made the track length up to about 6.5 km. The taxi I'd booked to take me to the track didn't turn up, so I had to return to my hotel room for half an hour, awaiting the replacement and, when it came, I set off, confident that my gloves and hat were in my pocket. When I got to the track, they were not in my pocket after all but, instead, they were sitting on the table of my hotel room! Skiing at -14°C with only a thin balaclava and no gloves was a new experience, but I was doing sprints that day which made things bearable. The same grip wax combination of the day before didn't work quite as well, but the tracks had been better prepared and were hard with not much soft snow in the grooves, so probably something a little warmer would have done the trick.

I could not get a taxi to collect me after training and, at -14°C and no warm clothing, hat or gloves, I was cooling down rapidly. Luckily, I approached a stranger in the car park and he kindly agreed to drive me, free, back to the hotel; the chalet was shut that day so I didn't have to pay the \$20 track fee either! An E-mail that evening once more confirmed the availability of both a 7.5 and a 10 km loop, but I certainly couldn't find the longer track.

Despite their reduced length, I certainly wasn't complaining about the tracks; they were nice, much more like roller skiing in the UK than your normal Masters tracks. There were many fairly flat sections, none of the downhill were tricky (either runnable in the tracks or with the tracks removed), no snow-ploughing was needed at any point, and the only two substantial uphill were just 150-200 metres long, with the third, steeper, hill being just 50 metres long. Good, too, that the start involved about 500 metres of gentle descent, followed by about 500 metres of gentle uphill then by a fairly flat section of a further 500 metres or so – plenty of chance to get warmed up early in the races before any of the difficulty started.



A good example of how the course wound its way around the golf course. Note the date printed in the snow!

Wednesday was a non-skiing day as I planned to move from one hotel to the other and, in any case, I was fed up of paying the \$20 track pass for an hour or two's skiing. The taxi ride between hotels seemed to be about 4-5 miles and cost me \$20 but, because the vehicle had no taximeter, I got the impression that this was a tentative "Can I get away with it?" rather than a true reflection of the actual price. Roger arrived that afternoon and we installed ourselves in our room at the Millennium Hotel, which suffered from a lack of storage space (only one drawer each and a few coat hangers) but was otherwise comfortable. They also had no objection (although perhaps they had no idea) to us keeping skis in the room, even though a ski room was provided, with tables but without clamps or forms, down in the basement.

On Thursday morning, Roger and I set off for the stadium, using the free shuttle bus (the typical American yellow school buses) this time, which took only 11-12 minutes from hotel to venue. The temperature was about -3 °C when we arrived, but was anticipated to rise to about +2 °C early in the afternoon. For me, this meant Swix VR 55, 0 to -3 °C, while Roger opted to skate. The first lap resulted in my first fall of the trip, a silly tumble where, at full speed downhill in the tracks, I found that the corner had been cut rather sharply and I shot out and down – no harm done, apart from my pride, which was a little bruised. With the accuracy of his watch, our first lap appeared to extend to only 6,09 km which, given the claims of 7,5 km, was *shurely shum mishtake, Ed.* After a nice free cup of coffee in the tent back at the start, and a free fig roll each, we set off again, now with the entire Australian team (Zac) joining us and, this time, we spotted the two additional loops, both with initial drops and then climbs back up to re-join the main track, one of about 200 metres in poor condition because it had been cut into the thin natural snow with no artificial base, the other of maybe 500 metres which, after a nice, fast, drop, climbed up with the only section of the track which needed herring-boning, this being the last 20 metres or so of the climb. This time the track length was about right, a little over 7,5 km. We were told at the end of this lap that the first little loop would not, in fact, be used (and was subsequently coned off).

Friday was not a skiing day for me, because I wanted to be well rested before the first race. This was the first day for a long time that the temperature went above zero and, as a consequence, the conditions changed from stick wax to klister. Up at the stadium, I invested in what was reckoned to be the wax for the following day, Guruwax Extreme 39, -2 to +7 °C (rather expensive at \$32) and then, that evening, I made a further, more reasonable, investment in Rode Chola as a klister binder. The neighbouring hotel to ours, which served as race headquarters, had a market of local ski shops, although I felt that the selection of things was poor.

First race at last, Saturday, 30 km for me, 10 km for Patrick. The temperature was -3 °C at 09:00, rising to about +2 °C at race end, and a high of +5 °C at 17:00. I'd gone for a medium Kuzmin scrape, then the Chola, ironed in, with the Guruwax on top, also ironed in. I had to wait until I'd completed my extensive half hour warm up, running along the nearby road, before I could test the skis but, when I finally did so, they worked extremely well and stayed that way throughout the four laps of the race.

Following Roger's advice, I tried to start quite fast, and was just at the back of the large group as we headed down the gentle start. It was good to notice that although the fastest guys were pulling ahead, they were not whizzing away and I had plenty of people around and behind me. As the first lap progressed, I was being overtaken on the downhills by one person then overtaking him on the uphills, until the second lap when I pulled ahead. I felt that my skis seemed slightly slow on the first lap but, on the last lap, I was passing M08s and M07s, including e.g. Swedes who I imagined were on good skis, so this was, in fact, exactly what Dr Kuzmin predicts. It was good that tracks had been taken out on the first tricky downhill where I'd fallen two days ago, and on the long downhill, but had been put in on the shorter drops; this actually made the course very pleasant to ski on, although the total track length was just 6.52 km/per lap, so 26.1 km for me, the distance for which the speeds below are calculated.

Men's M01-M06 30 km classic technique, Saturday 20th January

Fastest	Tommy Gustafsson	SWE	M05	1.13:28.2	21.3 km/h		
1)	Jon Arne Enevoldsen	NOR	M06	1.18:29.9	19.9 km/h		
17)	Adam Pinney	GBR	M06	1.41:34.5	15.4 km/h	29.4 %	(30 starters)

Men's M10-M13 10 km classic technique, Saturday 20th January

Fastest	Richard Kringhaug	NOR	M10	29:12.9	18.5 km/h		
15)	Patrick o'Connor	USA	M10	52:40.4	10.3 km/h	80.3 %	(18 starters)



Not long after the start, and going well!

The following day, Sunday, the temperature was much the same as the previous day, around -1 °C at about 09:00, peaking at about +4 °C in later afternoon. Much of the free-lying snow had melted, but the race tracks remained in very good condition, fairly hard packed and better to stay on the edge where there was less soft snow, the tactic adopted by Roger as he powered his way round his 13.05 km race to record an excellent 17.4 WMA points, his best Masters performance by far and one which puts him comfortably on the front page of the Best British Men of All Time list. Alasdair looked strong, too, with plenty of people behind him, and this was his first-ever Masters score below 30 % of the winner's time.

Always reliable, our man from Michigan, Steve was happy, this was his fourth-best ever Masters performance. Jack White, though, showed the benefits of taking a rest from Masters racing (he'd not raced since Pillerseetal in 2014), to come home with a very strong 6.9 %, his best performance ever and just one place away from a medal. A satisfactory end, then, to the first two days of racing!

Men's M07-M09 15 km free technique, Sunday 21st January

Fastest	John Petter Harila	NOR	M07	37:03.9	21.1 km/h		
24)	Roger Homyer	GBR	M07	43:32.3	18.0 km/h	17.4 %	
40)	Alasdair Wilson	GBR	M07	48:06.2	16.3 km/h	29.8 %	(52 starters)
1)	Paul Graber	CH	M09	39:38.7	19.7 km/h		
15)	Steve Smigiel	USA	M09	49:14.8	15.9 km/h	24.2 %	(25 starters)

Men's M10-M13 10 km free technique, Sunday 21st January

Fastest	Finn Magnar Hagen	NOR	M10	27:15.8	19.8 km/h		
4)	Jack White	CAN	M10	29:08.9	18.5 km/h	6.9 %	(12 starters)



Roger, just ahead of Australian Zac, about 3 km into his race, before pulled easily ahead!

The 10 km classic race was going to be *my* race; it was the race I'd trained for, hysterically it has also been my best distance and, this year, with it being just 7.5 km, I was going to give it my all! First, though, we had to get past Sunday evening, which was a worrying time especially for classic skiing. The weather forecast was around zero centigrade for race start, at which point there was a chance that it would start snowing. Oh for a pair of carpet skis! I opted to scrape both pairs of classic skis with the medium Kuzmin scraper (-3 to +3 °C) with fine rilling over this, and had planned to leave things at that until the morning. Luckily, though, I checked the start list and found that I was starting at 09:20 instead of 09:40 as I'd thought, so some grip waxing had to be done in advance. With Roger's advice, I opted for the "Jim Davidson" system, which is stick wax (VR55, 0 to +2 °C for new snow, 0 to -3 °C for old snow) topped with klister, then ironed in to mix the two. Would this work? I wondered. Well, read on to the next paragraph, where you will find out.

The JD system, intended to prevent new snow from sticking to the skis was not, in the end, needed at all, because the new snow didn't arrive until about 10 a.m., i.e. more or less at the end of my 7.5 (really 6.5) km classic race. The tracks remained hard and klister alone was probably needed and, at -2 °C, maybe the Guruwax was a bit too warm. I felt that I was lacking the very positive grip I'd had earlier in the 30 km race, and this wasn't helped by the fact that skiers in front of me had churned the tracks up with, in my view, unnecessary herring-boning. Without the positive grip, I just couldn't get fully into the race, and the result was disappointing. Things weren't really helped by the fact that there were a lot of leaves in and on the tracks and, at one point, my skis stuck to a leaf and I went down, albeit not for long. Oh well, at least I didn't have to race in the afternoon!

BMCCSA had two other participants in the classic races, though: our two American members, unusually because he doesn't often race classic, Steve Smigiel and Patrick o'Connor who, having moved up an age category, was racing over 5 km. Starting at 10:50 and 10:55 respectively, Steve and Patrick certainly had the worst of the classic conditions, the snow which had been promised for earlier was in full force by now, falling heavily. I don't know what grip system either of them were on, but it certainly wasn't klister! Steve, at 28 % of the winner's time, was some way down on his normal free technique performance but, for Patrick, his percentage was only slightly down on his first race. Watching people skiing in the afternoon, I notice one thing about the venue; the trees, although they looked it, were not actually full size, and this made skiers look a lot bigger than normal!

Men's M01-M06 7.5 km classic technique, Monday 22nd January

Fastest	Matthew Liebsch	USA	M01	17:25.3	25.8 km/h		
1)	Jon Arne Enevoldsen	NOR	M06	19:07.0	23.5 km/h		
20)	Adam Pinney	GBR	M06	26:00.6	17.3 km/h	36.1 %	(26 starters)

Men's M07-M09 7.5 km classic technique, Monday 22nd January

Fastest	Daniele Vuerich	ITA	M07	21:04.5	21.4 km/h		
1)	Veikko Piirainen	FIN	M09	24:13.5	18.6 km/h		
20)	Steve Smigiel	USA	M09	31:02.2	14.5 km/h	28.1 %	(30 starters)

Men's M10-M13 5 km classic technique, Monday 22nd January

Fastest	Alpo Virtanen	FIN	M10	15:09.0	19.8 km/h		
13)	Patrick o'Connor	USA	M10	27:45.0	10.8 km/h	83.2 %	(16 starters)



Patrick enjoying his time in the snow!

The afternoon races were, to say the least, a struggle! It had been snowing hard since the morning and, as a consequence, there were several inches of new, soft snow lying on the tracks. This was, in fact, the heaviest snowfall in Minneapolis since 2011. There was also a strong, cold, wind, which didn't help matters. Roger and Alasdair found the conditions challenging, partly because there was only ever one line through the snow, and partly because it was difficult to see the edges of the track. Anyone diverging from the one line risked catching a tip, and this caused the crash of several skiers right in front of Alasdair within a few hundred metres of the start. Alasdair, swerving to avoid them, skied off the track and into the soft stuff at the side, and down he went, too. Ahead, though, Roger was making strong progress and working hard, to record a fine 22nd place but not quite matching his FIS points of earlier.

Star of the show on this snowy afternoon, though, from a BMCCSA point of view, was Jack White. In his best result of the event (but, ironically, not his best percentage), he skied strongly to pick up a fine bronze medal, just 10 seconds off silver!

Men's M07-M09 7.5 km free technique, Monday 22nd January

Fastest	Einar Vikingstad	NOR	M08	24:12.2	18.6 km/h		
1)	Alto Pennanen	FIN	M07	24:25.1	18.4 km/h		
22)	Roger Homyer	GBR	M07	28:53.0	15.6 km/h	18.3 %	
41)	Alasdair Wilson	GBR	M07	35:08.6	12.8 km/h	43.9 %	(44 starters)

Men's M10-M13 5 km free technique, Monday 22nd January

Fastest	Finn Magnar Hagen	NOR	M10	17:21.2	17.3 km/h		
3)	Jack White	CAN	M10	18:56.7	15.8 km/h	14.9 %	(11 starters)



A good idea of what conditions were like for the 7.5 km free technique race!

Tuesday was the rest day, which involved some very gentle skiing in the park, enjoying the new snow and testing grip waxes and, for me, an MWA meeting in the afternoon, about which you can read more later in this Newsletter. I also walked up to see the Mississippi (no idea that it came so far north) and the Mississippi saw me, which seemed about fair. So, on Wednesday, we arrived at the relays. Various changes have been made to relay rules over the years so, now, we were allowed to enter an X team (only one person in the age category) *and* a mixed team (not everyone from the same country). Putting aside previous Commonwealth rivalries, therefore, the entire British team was combined with the entire Australian team.

It was cold at the start, -7 °C, rising to about -3 °C at the end. This made grip waxing very easy, Swix blue layered with Swix purple, and this worked well. Alasdair, second classic leg, chose to race on hairies which, in the conditions, might not have been optimum. Right from the start, I established our team in a solid 5th position although, with various age groups starting together, I had skiers with me: an M09 Frenchman who I beat, and an M08 Swiss who I didn't. I'd been preparing for the climb after about 3.5 km and my heroic passing of my Swiss rival, only to find that that section of track had been cut out. My heroics would have to wait for another year!

4 x 5 km relay, Wednesday 24th January

Fastest	M01	USA	45:57.2				
1)	M06	USA	48:48.3				
5)	M06	GBR	1.05:24.9	Adam Pinney	16:12.9	Alasdair Wilson	18:46.9
				Roger Homyer	15:02.3	Zac Zaharias	15:22.6 34.0 % (5 starters)

After the relay, Roger and I went to investigate some of the new parts of the track which the fresh snow had allowed the organisers to cut. After 3 km or so, a new loop had been added, introducing an initial long, fast downhill (runnable in the tracks, though), followed by three fairly steep but short herring-bone sections, one further long downhill (again in the tracks) until a final climb of 250 metres or so brought us back up to the original tracks. A further loop, of 5 km and this, almost all pretty flat, had been added on the other side of the road, but I didn't try it. All of this brought the track up to somewhere near a full 15 km, and the new climbs made it up to Masters standard.

Thursday was the final race for most of us, 45/30/15 km classic. I woke, after not sleeping very well, with a cold which was just about to break and, as they say in America, "That was all he wrote". It was about -4 °C at the start, rising to -1 °C at race end (and +1 °C later in the day), so grip was a combination (layers) of Swix blue and Swix violet, and this seemed to work adequately but, luckily, I added two additional layers of violet just before the start. Light fog made the weather cool, and it was lucky that I'd seen this from the hotel and decided to dress warmly, putting on a second thermal top, because my hands were cold on both the third and fourth laps. My cold left me with very little energy; I got slower and slower as the race went on, I had to stop for a pee on the third lap and, on the last lap, I stopped again to change my skis over from one foot to the other, hoping to improve grip. Each time I stopped I was overtaken by an M06; disappointing!

If only the organisers had followed the advice given on Minneapolis metro trains, "See tracks? Think train"! Half way round my first lap, John Downing, WMA director, told me that, because of a train, the 5 km new, flat loop had been cut off and my race was changed to four laps of about 9 km each. Patrick had no problems (he was on different tracks anyway), but things were not so good for Roger and Alasdair, starting 40 minutes before me. To get to this 5 km loop, the track went over a railway line which, unfortunately, had a train parked on it by a driver who then refused to move, and this happened only just after Roger had crossed it. So Alasdair, coming a little later, was prevented from crossing and sent back, after quite a long wait, to the main tracks, while Roger ended up skiing a further 3 km or so.

There is no section in the MWA rules which deals with "Train blocks track" and, in the immediate aftermath, there was chaos, at least for the M07s. Walkie-talkie messages were flying around and, for a while, instructions given to skiers were varied! So Roger and Alasdair's 30 km race ended up as either one 15 km lap and one 10 km lap (Roger and most others), two 10 km laps (Alasdair and three others), three 10 km laps (four skiers) or one 15 km lap and two 10 km laps (a further four skiers). The organisers were very apologetic at the Team Captains' meeting afterwards, explaining that they'd run 80 previous events over the same tracks with no problem. One of the jury members, Italian national director Giacomo Gamozzini, announced that it had been decided that only the large group of 23 skiers who covered 25 km would be considered as 'official' results but, at the medal ceremony later that evening, all four groups were considered as official and this is how Alasdair, having finished third of the four who completed about 20 km, received his bronze medal!

Men's M01-M06 40 km classic, Thursday 25th January

Fastest	Truls Valmestad	NOR	M05	1.48:24.1	19.9 km/h		
1)	Jon Arne Enevoldsen	NOR	M06	1.51:26.5	19.4 km/h		
16)	Adam Pinney	GBR	M06	2.47:18.4	12.9 km/h	50.1 %	(19 starters)

Men's M07-M09 30 km classic, Thursday 25th January

Fastest	Daniele Vuerich	ITA	M07	1.12:52.8	18.2 km/h		
16)	Roger Homyer	GBR	M07	1.35:05.7	13.9 km/h	30.5 %	(35 starters)

Men's M07-M09 20 km classic, Thursday 25th January

Fastest	Carl Hoerger	USA	M07	1.35:32.0	11.3 km/h		
3)	Alasdair Wilson	GBR	M07	1.43:17.1	10.5 km/h		(4 finishers)

Men's M10-M13 15 km classic technique, Thursday 25th January

Fastest	Alpo Virtanen	FIN	M10	45:48.8	17.1 km/h		
12)	Patrick o'Connor	USA	M10	1.20:17.7	9.8 km/h	75.3 %	(14 starters)



Roger leads a fair sized group towards the end of the first additional loop



Alasdair on his way to an unexpected bronze medal

There were no equivalent dramas for the final Masters race on Friday, as Steve and Jack completed their competitions, because the organisers had decided not to attempt to cross the railway line again. It was, though, the warmest race of the event, with a temperature of +5 °C at race start. For Steve it was a good final effort, his best result of the event. For Jack, though, he wasn't quite able to match his best percentage of the week, 6.9 %, which brought him 4th place, nor his bronze medal which had come from 14.9 %. Peu importe, three results on Page 1 of the Best BMCCSA Members of All Time sound pretty good to me!

Men's M07-M09 30 km free technique, Friday 26th January

Fastest	Einer B. Vikinstad	NOR	M08	1.26:12.0	18.8 km/h		
1)	Paul Graber	CH	M09	1.36:36.7	16.8 km/h		
11)	Steve Smigiel	USA	M09	1.59:04.1	13.6 km/h	23.2 %	(16 starters)

Men's M10-M13 15 km free technique, Friday 26th January

Fastest	Finn Magnar Hagen	NOR	M10	43:02.7	18.2 km/h		
6)	Jack White	CAN	M10	47:10.8	16.5 km/h	9.6 %	(9 starters)



Steve powers his way to yet another fine performance

Racing over, the only thing remaining was the second of the two parties (the first one having taken place on Monday), both replacing the banquet. These parties proved successful; there wasn't quite as much food as in the banquets, but there was enough to avoid the need to eat anything else on either night. Prior to the party, I went to watch Minneapolis kids, Zac and a few other Masters sprinting on the short snow track which had been laid down in the middle of the city, and which turned up one week later on the BBC's coverage of the Super Bowl which was the main sporting attraction in town.

The following day, Saturday, we had been encouraged to race in the loppets which were taking place in Minneapolis, me entering the 21 km classic, Alasdair the 42 km. My race was always going to be tight, time-wise, starting at 10:00 and with my flight scheduled for 16:00. The warm temperatures of the day before played havoc with the tracks, though (which should have started in Theodore Wirth Park and made their way towards the city), and led to my start being delayed until 11:00. This, combined with my cold and the fact that the organisers hadn't laid on any sensible transport from city to venue, led to me scratching – rather a waste of the \$80 entry fee! Alasdair, on a later flight, took part, though, on the same tracks as used by the Masters but over the shortened distance of 30 km, finishing 120th of 204 in a time of 1.58:54.

In summary, the event as a whole had some good things and some not quite such good things, recognising, of course, that any ski venue is going to look rather shabby without snow! I got the impression that Minneapolis isn't really a ski resort because, outside of the park facilities, there seemed to be very little. Public transport was a disaster, as was the very high cost of using the tracks outside of the event.



Jack (foreground), downtown Minneapolis (background)

Quite a few skiers, I believe, shared this opinion, with the total number of participants, at about 850, well down on what had been expected. There were only 11 Russians but this, we were told, was due to Russia closing a lot of visa centres, meaning that anyone wanting to travel to the US had first to go to Moscow. There were no Dutch, only one Australian, and so on. In addition, the large influx of American skiers who live within a 3 hour drive or so of Minneapolis never really materialised, mainly because of a lack of snow in the general area. Beitostolen next year is going to be 'crunch time' for the Masters; if it can't, with all its advantages, attract more than 1 000 skiers, then some serious rethinking of the whole Masters is likely.

On the plus side, the tracks were, I think, excellent; always well prepared and great fun to ski on. The event transportation worked pretty well (apart from Monday, when the very heavy snow meant that it took us an hour to get back from the venue instead of the usual 15 minutes). Facilities at the stadium were pretty good. It was a short walk from the bus stop to the storage building where the national cages were, then another short walk to the start area with a warm tent to wait in or recover in (sometimes with free drinks).

I liked the hotel arrangements and, at just £50 a night B+B, this was not very expensive. There were adequate waxing facilities (tables) in the basement, and Alasdair's vices allowed us to wax whenever we wanted. I liked, too, that they had no objection (but then they probably never knew) to us grip waxing in our bedroom. The breakfast (we had a choice of two, but only the style of eggs varied with one of the breakfasts) became a little samey after 10 days and a buffet might have worked better. The randomness of delivery by the stone deaf waiter added amusement on some days, though. But we were a short walk from a large supermarket, and access to the gym in the neighbouring Hyatt Regency Hotel (race headquarters), which had two microwaves, meant that it was easy to buy porridge, ready-meals, etc. and heat them up there. I was disappointed with the cost of eating out (difficult to find much for less than \$20), and Roger in particular was very disappointed at not being able to find breakfast cereal which didn't contain 20 % or more sugar!

Catching cold before the 40 km race and panicking the night before the 10 km race rather compromised the sporting aspects of the event but, as is always the case in America, everyone was very friendly and easy to talk to, and it was nice to have a lot of skiers (mainly Americans) around me. Would I return to Minneapolis and should we have another similar event in the future? I think probably not, because it proved rather unattractive for many people, although the design of the tracks should be repeated at all future Masters!

News from the WMA directors meeting

Next year's MWC will, as many people know, take place in Beitostolen, Norway, from the 6th to the 15th March. Although this should be a 'free technique' year (i.e. the free technique middle and long distance races come before their classic equivalents), the organisers are proposing a one-off change. The medium distance classic races will start the event on Friday (instead of Saturday), so moving the whole event forward by one day. The last race will be the long distance free technique race on Thursday, allowing people to race the Classic Birkebeiner on the Saturday immediately after the Masters. The Masters tracks will be fully prepared by the Sunday before the event, should you be planning a full two-week trip.

Another new aspect for Beitostolen, corresponding to the updated FIS rules, will be the designation of certain parts of the classic track where double poling will not be allowed; I doubt that this will have much of an effect on us Brits, though!

I have already booked accommodation for Beitostolen: 6 twin rooms in the Stølstunet apartment, which works out at about £90 per person per night half board. This is a little expensive, I accept, but Norway is always expensive and part of the high cost has been caused by the fall in the value of the pound against the kronor, following Brexit. If you're interested in participating, let me know and I will allocate you a bed.

MWC 2020 moves to Cogne, Italy, in the popular Aosta Valley. Unusually, it hasn't been possible to buy the website www.mwc2020.com so, for that year, the website will be www.mwc-2020.com. The year after that, the event probably moves to Canmore, Canada, on the 25th February to the 7th March when the temperature should be in the range -8 to +1 °C. The slightly controversial proposal for this venue, partly because of limited access to the trails for the whole day, is to hold the short distance races on consecutive days. Because of our new 'any three races' provision, this will make life a lot easier for people who want to do two short races (a few people in Minneapolis did both short races on the same day).

The final decision of the meeting, because the mid-January dates of Minneapolis were not particularly popular, was that, from now on, the strongly-preferred dates for all Masters events will be between the 10th February and the 20th March.

Shocking news from Dr Kuzmin!

Some weeks ago, I was doing some research on the Kuzmin website, of whose scrapers, you know, I'm a big fan. Since I last looked, the following question and answer has appeared on the site:

Question: How long does a scraper stay sharp. How long you can use them and can you e.g. regrind them?

Answer: Normally you can scrape away stone grinding from 1-3 pairs of skis per scraper's edge. But there are factors that can impair scraper's sharpness considerably – abrasive particles (sand, gravel) from dirty snow (snow in poor winters) can stick to ski base. After sandpaper treatment of the middle, a lot of abrasive particles from the sandpaper (especially from very cheap sandpaper) is in the ski base. Dropping the scraper on a stone floor makes it less sharp. Unfortunately, because of low demand, we have no regrinding service. You have to regard the ski scraper as a consumable item.

Well, when I invested my £240 in three scrapers, I wasn't regarding them as a 'consumable item'! Actually I find this answer rather difficult to believe. After all, hardened steel is, as its name suggests, hard, while ski bases are relatively soft. Nonetheless, with four sides on a scraper, if Kuzmin is right then we should scrape only 12 pairs of skis (or one pair of skis twelve times) before replacing the scraper. I have, it's true, noticed my scrapers cutting less easily and might, now, be regretting letting so many people use them in Klosters!

I suppose that £5 per scrape, given the length of time between scrapes, is still pretty cheap when compared to fluoro powder, but I will be monitoring this situation a bit more closely from now on!

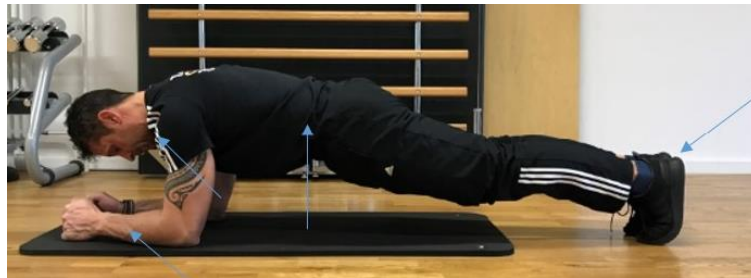
Strengthen that core!

This could be an article for apple farmers, but it isn't. Instead, it is about the need to strengthen our midriff as a key to good skiing. We've written about this before but, watching people skiing at the Winter Olympics, I noticed how 'locked' the good guys look in the core area. So here is a series of simple exercises which you can do just about anywhere and which will help strengthen your middle.

For all of the exercises, set aside 20 to 30 minutes two times a week and stick to the following:

- Each individual exercise is to be performed for 45 to 60 seconds and repeated twice. It is then followed by three series of the next exercise.
- The rest periods last between 15 to 30 seconds.
- Aim to do them as accurately as you can. The exercises only fulfil their purpose when done properly.
- Only make the exercises more difficult, by doing the variations, once you have totally mastered the basic exercise.

Exercise 1 – Front support



Focus:

- Pull in your navel for a natural lordosis (normal inward curvature of the lumbar and cervical regions of the human spine).
- A double chin gives you the optimum head position.
- Press your heels together to activate your buttocks.
- Rotate your forearms outwards to open the chest area.

Variations:

- Place your forearms further forwards.
- Alternately lift your toes from the floor (*surely not all of them. Ed*).

Most common mistakes:

- Letting your body hang passively instead of activating the muscles.
- Holding your pelvis lower than the shoulders and tilting it forwards (hollow back).
- Looking forwards instead of downwards.

Exercise 2 – Side support



Focus:

- Make sure the back of your head, the entire shoulder girdle, and both buttocks come into contact with the wall for a perfect diagonal.
- Activate the lower side of your waist to fix your pelvis in the correct position.
- Press your heels together to activate your buttocks.
- Place your elbow under your shoulder to ensure an optimum load on the shoulder.
- Look directly ahead to straighten the upper body.

Variations:

- Slowly lower and raise your pelvis.
- Slowly brace your upper leg.

Most common mistakes:

- Twisting the upper body instead of actively stabilising it.
- Making the angle in the shoulder area too big and thus placing an unnecessary strain on the joint.
- Looking towards your feet instead of directly ahead.

Exercise 3 – Horizontal handstand**Focus:**

- Lay your chest on the floor, press your heels together, and lift your stretched arms and legs slightly off the floor to activate the supporting muscles.
- Pull your navel in towards your spine to create a space between your abdomen and the floor for a natural lordosis.
- Lift your head up slightly with a double chin to get the optimum head position.

Variation:

- Do the same exercise in the supine position, but look towards the ceiling.

Most common mistakes:

- Insufficiently activating the buttocks.
- Losing tension in the abdomen, whereby it or the navel rests on the floor.

Exercise 4 – Rear support

Focus:

- Lift your navel towards the ceiling to activate all areas (hamstrings, buttocks, lower back).
- Pull your shoulders and arms down to focus on activating the dorsal chain.
- Make sure you have a double chin to get an optimum head position.

Variations:

- Alternately lift each foot off the floor in 1-second intervals without tilting the pelvis.
- Lower your navel/pelvis all the way down and raise them again.
- Perform the three options on one leg.

Most common mistakes:

- Hunching your shoulders instead of pulling your shoulders and arms down.
- Insufficiently activating the lower back.

Exercise 5 – Shoulder support**Focus:**

- Support yourself on your fists to relieve your wrists.
- Keep your wrists, elbows and shoulders in line to ensure the joints are placed under an even load.
- Pull in your navel for a natural lordosis.
- Stretch your arms and legs to the maximum to activate your muscles.
- A double chin gives you the optimum head position.
- Press your heels together to activate your buttocks.

Variation:

- Alternately lift each foot off the floor in 2-second intervals without losing the original position.

Most common mistakes:

- The arms and legs are not fully stretched.
- Looking forwards instead of downwards.
- The muscles are insufficiently activated, creating a hollow back.

Exercise 6 – Rotational stability

Focus:

- Your knee and hips, as well as wrist and shoulders, should be at the same height to prevent the pelvis from swerving.
- Bring the elbow and knee in to touch each other and apply slight pressure, which will simultaneously activate the abdominal muscles.
- Pull in your navel for a natural lordosis.
- A double chin gives you the optimum head position.
- Fully stretch your arms and legs diagonally to activate your rotational stability.
- Apply maximum control, pressure, and stretch as far as you can to improve your rotational stability.

Variation:

- The basic position is the same, but this time place your toes behind one another in line with your arm. Now stretch your “free” arm forwards without tilting your pelvis.

Most common mistakes:

- The movements are not being performed consistently, and the muscles aren't activated.
- Looking forwards instead of downwards.

A supplementary article – by Roger Homyer

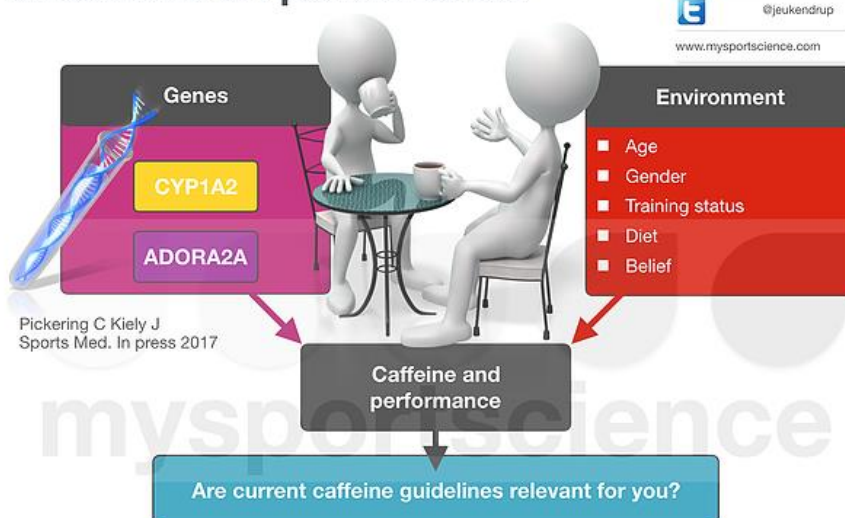
When you seek ways to improve your race results, you should consider all aspects of performance. These are set out in the “Multiple Periodisation Model” of Frade (2003) and are summed up as “PPTTEE”, short for physical, psychological, technical, tactical, environmental and equipment. Much of your training will probably focus upon the physical and technical aspects of skiing. But would more secure boots, a choice of flex and grind patterns of your skis, or challenging training partners/environments achieve greater benefits? Nutrition also falls into the lifestyle environment of an athlete. Perhaps by making relatively small changes to your diet you can improve performance.

Athletes are drawn towards supplementing their diets. The Australian Institute of Sport found 39 elite swimmers took an *average* of 9 dietary supplements, most of which were either sports foods or which gave an ergogenic effect (Shaw et al. 2016). Careless supplementation can be fraught with risk. UK Anti-Doping (www.ukad.org.uk) strongly advises athletes to assess their needs (is it better to eat a balanced diet?), and the risks of consuming contaminated or counterfeit supplements, or supplements with incorrectly labelled ingredients. UKAD's programme (www.informed-sport.com) includes “batch-testing” commonly used supplements to show that they do not contain banned substances. Substances and medicines can also be checked on the internet (www.globaldro.com/uk).

Masters skiers should note that any member of a sports governing body can be tested, that World Masters Championships can have doping control, and that the principal of “strict liability” means that even inadvertent consumption of banned substances constitutes an anti-doping rule violation (ADRV) with the prospect of a ban from the sport. Not a problem here in the UK? Even at local cycle races, there has been a disturbing rise in the number of competitors found positive with reconstituted erythropoietin (rEPO). So what evidence is there for performance enhancement and which supplements should be considered?

Morton and Fell (2016) and Close et al. (2016) suggest that some supplements have strong evidence for enhancing endurance performance. But it is important that you “trial run” any supplement before taking it prior to racing. Individual responses to a supplement vary considerably. For example, there are slow and fast responders to caffeine. As a slow responder I cannot drink coffee after around midday or I will not sleep well at night. Fast responders are able to drink coffee after their evening meal with no effect upon their sleep quality. This means that I might need to take caffeine earlier before a race than a fast responder and be careful to avoid “overdosing”, see <http://www.mysportscience.com/single-post/2017/09/22/Is-caffeine-responsiveness-in-your-genes>.

Factors that influence the effect of caffeine on performance



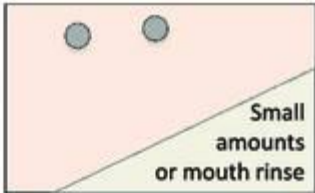
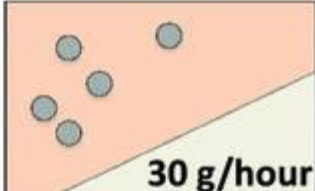
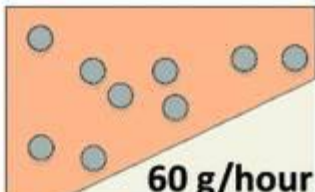
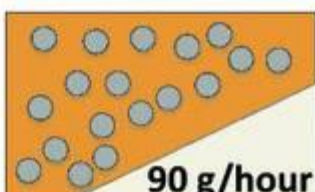
Beetroot juice, and leafy green vegetables such as spinach, are a source of dietary nitrate. Andy “Beetroot” Jones (Jones, 2014) suggests that this provides an ergogenic effect which boosts performance in events up to around 30 minutes in duration by reducing the oxygen cost of sub-maximal exercise. There is also some evidence for an ergogenic effect in longer events. Athletes should consume around 0.5 litres of beetroot juice a day for several days before an event to increase nitrate levels to around 0.5 ml. It is possible to buy beetroot juice shots which are very convenient but expensive, so the alternative is to drink standard beetroot juice and acquire a taste or liking for its earthy flavour.



Caffeine has been on WADA’s list of banned substances in competition (if exceeding an amount equivalent to more than about 6 cups of strong coffee) but since January 2004 has been permitted both in and out of competition. A relatively small amount of 2-3 mg/kg body mass should be ingested 30-60 minutes prior to performance. This is about 1.5-2 small cups of filter coffee. Caffeine has been thought to have an ergogenic effect but it may reduce perceived effort of exercise. Caffeine has a similar chemical structure to adenosine (which affects arousal) which is released in the anterior cingulate cortex (ACC, a part of the brain) during exercise, with the intention of telling you to back off effort. Caffeine seems to bind on to the adenosine receptors in the ACC and so reduce the perception of effort during prolonged exercise (Parker, Human Kinetics Blog, 2018). So the effect of caffeine is more upon central fatigue than peripheral fatigue.

Bicarbonate of soda has also been shown to boost endurance performance. A recommended dose of 0.3-0.5 g/kg of body mass should be taken 90 minutes before performance. This acts as a buffer to reduce acidosis in muscles. Beware! Large quantities of sodium bicarbonate can have unwanted gastro-intestinal effects. During a recent trial of athletes taking bicarbonate, a large number of the sample group were forced to withdraw from the experiment. It has been suggested that taking a smaller dose over a longer period may also be effective without the dire side-effects of taking large quantities.

Carbohydrate in the form of sports bars, gels and drinks has become a favourite supplement for many. Without entering the low carb versus high carb debate, the ability to store and metabolise carbohydrate (CHO) may be the deciding factor between elite and other athletes, at least for racers up to about 42 km. Asker Jeukendrup has produced guidelines on what CHO to ingest, how much and how often (Jeukendrup, 2014). Note that, for shorter events, ingesting CHO during the race is unnecessary, although rinsing with a sugary drink may be beneficial. It is also beneficial to include several types of CHO where larger amounts are required. Again, whatever you choose, practice before the race. My own personal choice of gels prior to and during racing are Gu gels and High 5 isogels. Some other gels, and some energy drinks given out at race feed stations, do not agree with me. Practice should also include actually accessing and consuming the gel when you have long poles strapped to your hands. During the Friday skate Birkebeiner last year, I finished (4 h 6 m) with a large bruise under my chin caused by my pole striking the ground as I took a gel at Mijdfjellet. Ouch!

Duration of exercise	Amount of carbohydrate needed	Recommended type of carbohydrate	Additional recommendation
30–75 minutes	 Small amounts or mouth rinse	Single or multiple transportable carbohydrates	Nutritional training recommended
1–2 hours	 30 g/hour	Single or multiple transportable carbohydrates	Nutritional training recommended
2–3 hours	 60 g/hour	Single or multiple transportable carbohydrates	Nutritional training highly recommended
> 2.5 hours	 90 g/hour	ONLY multiple transportable carbohydrates	Nutritional training essential

Other supplements may also lead to performance gains. Beta-alanine is an amino-acid used in the production of carnosine, a buffer to prevent muscle acidosis during exercise. Vitamin D, although essential for health for those living in regions with short winter days, has also been suggested as a performance enhancer.

A laugh a minute, or a minute of laughing?

After 20 years of thinking up funny stories to try to amuse and entertain you, ladies and gentlemen, I've temporarily run out of ideas. So, instead, I went onto the internet to find some skiing one-liners which I hope will keep you going until my inspiration returns, hopefully in time for the next Newsletter!

If you are going to try cross-country skiing, start with a small country.

Skiing; the only sport where you can spend an arm and a leg to break an arm and a leg.

Skiing may be a winter activity, but some think of it as a fall sport.

Skiing combines outdoor fun with knocking down trees with your face.

"Doctor, doctor, I slipped on my way to the race start". Doctor: "Icy".

"You kicked snow in a reindeer's face? How Rudolf you."

For the health and safety teams, with great powder comes great responsibility.

Linda cut a hole just above the arm of Derek's race suit. She was giving him the cold shoulder.

We need to prevent a massive snow landslide, but I'm too hungry just now. Let's avalanche first.

How can you make a small fortune teaching skiing? *Start with a big one!*

What's the difference between a snowboard beginner and a snowboard instructor? *About a week!*

What do ski instructors and snowboard instructors have in common? *They both can't snowboard!*

How many ski instructors does it take to change a light bulb? *A dozen. One to unscrew the bulb and the rest to analyse the turns.*

Avalanche: One of the few actual perils skiers face that needlessly frighten timid individuals away from the sport. See also: blizzard, fracture, frostbite, hypothermia, hard work, cost.

Gloves: Designed to be tight enough around the wrist to restrict circulation, but not so close-fitting as to allow any manual dexterity; they should also admit moisture from the outside without permitting any dampness within to escape.

Inertia: Tendency of a skier's body to resist changes in direction or speed due to Newton's First Law of Motion. Goes along with these other physical laws: matter can neither be created nor destroyed, but if it drops out of your jacket pocket, don't expect to encounter it again in our universe, and when an irresistible force meets an immovable object, an unethical lawyer will immediately appear.

Telemarking: Half the binding, half the speed!

Snowplough: One of two quick and simple methods of reducing speed. **Tree:** The other method.

What do you get when you cross a vampire and a snowman? *Frostbite!*

What is blue and smells like green kick wax? *Blue kick wax!*

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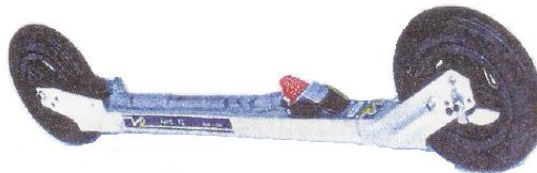


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