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## Principles, Criteria and Guidelines

### The Overall Event

#### Schedule and Duration of the event

There are several things for the event organizers to consider when deciding the number of days that the championships should span. Distance from a major population centre, availability of accommodations near or on site, availability of volunteers, availability of facilities, and whether participants are likely to travel 3,000 km for two races on a Saturday or Sunday, are all points to ponder.

Over the years, the Canadian Masters Cross Country Ski Association “MCC” had tried many formats and has not yet settled on a single solution. What works for some people doesn’t work for others, so one could catch some people one year but not the next with any given format.

The championships have been held on a regular two day weekend, a three day weekend, over five days and for a full seven days and all have been successful to varying degrees.

Rest and recovery time must be built into the schedule. One has only to look at the schedule of Olympic racers to realize that we often try to schedule too many races for Masters in the belief that they want to get their money’s worth. Four races in seven days are taxing for even the fittest individuals.

Where the event is placed in the season’s competition calendar must also include consideration of when the World Masters Championships and the American Masters Nationals will be taking place. Where possible, conflict with these events should be avoided to afford everyone the opportunity to participate.

#### Techniques

It is important to schedule a balance between classical and free technique races. If it becomes necessary to schedule two races of one technique and only one of the other, the balance should be reversed the following year.

#### Start Types

The choice between mass starts by age group waves or individual starts is usually made based on a number of factors. These include; the number of competitors expected in a given race, the distance of the race, whether the race is on a weekday or weekend, and how many volunteers are needed to manage the start, the course and the finish.

Because each start type has its pros and cons and because some competitors favour one over the other, a balance should be achieved in this area. The organizers could offer shorter distance, weekday races as individual starts and the long distance, weekend races as mass starts by age category.

**Distances**

Standard Masters distances have been changing, and lately we have been successful with having everyone ski the same distances over the same course. It is possible to have races of different distances on the same course by adding or subtracting laps, but it is possible to confuse some racers, as it is sometimes difficult to count accurately in the heat of competition.

Race distances will be determined each year, depending on the type of format being used. Some events are scheduled to coincide with local loppets, in which case there could be some races of 50km, these are normally reserved for World Masters competitions, and not usually for the Canadian Masters Championships.

**Masters Age Groups**

Masters age groups start at 30 years of age as of December 31 of the calendar year prior to the event. For example, for Masters competition in 2009, racers must have been born in 1978 so that they are 30 years old sometime in 2008.

The Canadian Masters Championships must offer 5-year age groups for both men and women as follows: 30-34,35-39,40-44,45-49, etc., to and including 80 plus, If there is even one skier older than 85, that skier must be entered into the appropriate separate category( eg, 85-89 or 90-94 ). It may seem extreme but we are all getting older. Masters want to celebrate that fact not penalize the oldest skier.

When calculating results, categories must not be combined for lack of competition in the group, as it is not the fault of the racers who are present that more racers did not register in their category. When actually starting the races, appropriate age groups may be started at the same time, creating a wave of racers rather than a trickle (eg; 30-44 or 70-90 ), as long as they are actually competing within their 5-year category.

**Other age groups**

If the Canadian Masters Championships are part of an overall event that has other age groups racing, Masters racers must not be treated as secondary. This is not usually a problem if the event is a local one but could become an issue if Masters races are run in conjunction with a high profile group such as the Canadian seniors Championships.

**Courses****Trial selection**

Trails used for Masters races must not exceed the level of difficulty set by the World Masters Association. The general standard is no more than 50% of the difficulty of FIS courses.

If in doubt when choosing trails for Masters race courses, apply the philosophy that the best skiers will win whether the course is difficult or easy. Those skiers who are not as fit and or skilled will enjoy the experience much more on a moderate course and are more likely to come again.

Our goal is to encourage participation in these events, not limit it to a few skiers.

### **Course Marking**

In any race, whether for Masters or another group, the competitor is responsible for skiing the correct course. Course Marshals posted at intersections are not allowed to tell a specific racer to go in a given direction, in case it can be later argued that someone was given the wrong information.

That said, organizers bear the responsibility of ensuring that the course is marked in such a way as to eliminate, or reduce to the smallest chance, the possibility that a skier would follow the wrong course.

Working hard, head down, and tired, a racer can be easily confused by improper marked trail intersections. Whether closed off by flagged rope, by cones, or by signs, every decision point should be clearly marked. Concerns in this area tie into the suggestion that course choices should be kept as simple as possible.

Clear and easily interpreted distance markers are greatly appreciated by most competitors, whether they are calculating when to crank it up for their sprint to the finish or when their personal agony will end. Signs should indicate every kilometer, as well as identifying the “No Tracking” zone, 200 meters from the finish line.

To the greatest extent possible, courses for each race should be set up and marked the day before, for pre-skiing by the registered competitors.

### **Course Access**

Registered competitors must be given, at no extra charge, access to the marked course on the day before the first race and on other non-race days within the scheduled event. This access will allow them to pre-ski the course to become familiar with it and/or train, if that is their wish.

### **Trail Grooming**

An important but often overlooked aspect of hosting Master Championships is the ability of the organizers to groom the trails to an acceptable condition. Should icy conditions occur, the grooming equipment should be capable of providing a safe skiing surface.

Most Masters have day jobs to go back to after a competition and a broken leg or arm is not conducive to income flow. As we get older, falls can become more serious so we should strive to provide safe conditions, even if it means shorting the course to do so.

### **On-course and Stadium Feed Stations**

Organizers must plan for appropriate energy drinks and water to be available for competitors, even though some may carry their own. The distance of the race, the length of the laps, the ease of access and the availability of volunteers, will determine the number and locations of the feed stations.

A station in the bib collection area beyond the finish line is an important recovery and social place. In addition to the usual drinks, high energy, easy to eat snacks, such as orange wedges, banana chunks and granola bars or cookies are greatly appreciated by the participants.

**Altitude**

An additional consideration when choosing trails and setting courses for Masters competitions is the altitude of the site.

**ADMINISTRATION****Race notices and Entry Forms**

The organizers must design the race notice/entry form and send it to the National Director for approval, by the end of November. Once approved, the National director will include it in the Fall newsletter to all members of the association.

The entry form must have space to identify membership. All participants in Canadian masters must be members of the MCC to be eligible for medals.

**Fees**

Entry fees should be reasonable to cover expenses but not so high as to deter participation by people on fixed income, such as retirees. Charges for the closing banquet should also be reasonable.

There should be no additional fee for competitors to pre-ski the course or to train on non-race days.

**Second language**

At all times, organizers must be aware of the existence of the two official languages within the MCC and race notices and entry forms must be bilingual. Wherever possible, other services and announcements should be provided in both official languages.

**Technical Delegate**

The organizers are responsible for recruiting a Technical Delegate for the event who is certified by Cross Country Canada and are responsible for the expenses of the TD. The TD should not be from the hosting club but in order to keep expenses to a minimum, the TD can be from the area or province.

**Rules of Competition**

In general, the Cross Country Canada rules of competition will apply, especially in the area of participant safety. This means that temperature and wind chill measurements at the appropriate points on the course must be planned for and made available so that decisions about shortening or calling off the race can be made.

It would be a good idea to publish the rules of competition with the entry information or provide them in the registration package to each competitor upon arrival. Some of the participants may not have participated in a major competition before and therefore be unaware of the restrictions. Others could use a timely reminder.

**First Aid**

At each race the organizers must provide first aid facilities and personnel, possibly through the auspices of the Ski Patrol or other such body of qualified people.

**Results**

The organizers must produce prompt and accurate results lists at the earliest possible opportunity after each race. Provide sufficient copies of all categories to give each participant. One of the greatest pleasures for Masters is to see how their friends and competitors did and how they compare. It may be friendly, but it is still a competition so results are important.

**Awards; Medals**

The MCC has established a standard set of medals to be awarded to first, second and third place finishers in each age group category of each gender in each race. The medals can be used from year to year as the location and year of each championship event is printed on the ribbons and not engraved on the medals.

Organizers must purchase a sufficient number of medals and ribbons to cover all possible winners. Check with the National Director for medals remaining from the previous year and for information on the supplier of the additional medals and the full complement of ribbons.

**Mementos**

If “fun” events are scheduled and winners are recognized, the awards will not be championship medals. It is suggested that the organizers provide some local mementos as awards. One example would be locally made pottery mugs. Another would be something unique to that particular part of the country.

**Coaches’ or Captains’ Meetings**

For a Canadian Masters event these meetings are not required. Most of the competitors are individuals and are not represented by a coach or team captain.

Meetings to outline course changes, stadium concerns or any other matters should be open to all participants. Depending on the nature of the social event preceding the race, such information could be imparted there, however that would be no guarantee that the information had reached all participants.

**Disqualification and Other Concerns**

The current policy of the Canadian Masters should be consulted in the event of accusations of cheating or other misdeeds.

It is usually our hope that no one would be disqualified in a Masters event by doing something wrong, inadvertently. One example would be finishing in the lap lane instead of in the finish lane or skiing through the finish line when there is another lap to complete.

The benefit of the doubt should be granted in all but the most blatant and obviously intentional cases. For example, except on corners, skating in a classic race is not allowed.

**Social Activities**

A major aspect of the Canadian Masters Championships is the camaraderie of the participants. These are people who look forward to seeing each other, sometimes year after year. Every opportunity should be taken to provide social interaction.

**Closing Banquet**

It is expected that the event will conclude with a sit down meal, whether served or buffet style. The fee for the closing banquet must be reasonable. Consider that there will be spouses and friends attending.

Local dignitaries are often invited and as the banquet usually follows the longest race of the event, medals for that race are sometimes awarded as part of the evening's ceremonies.

Consideration must be given in all instances of food and beverage presentation to the fact that a large number of Masters participants are reasonably health conscious. Menus must allow for healthy choices and hearty servings.

**Post Race Lunch**

The organizers are expected to provide complimentary lunches after every race to all participants. This is normally comprised of soup/chili, roll, tea/coffee and some form of sweet.