



Newsletter winter 2007

Here we are again in the depths of the ski season. Several provinces have experienced a difficult fall season with little white fluffy stuff to cheer about. In Québec we got off to a booming start with a first storm dumping 65 cm of snow at the Forêt Montmorency on 29 October. This gave us 18 days of excellent skiing – followed by torrential rain that washed away the snow. A rude awakening – we had to dig out our roller skis that we had so diligently stored away for the winter. However, snow returned on the first of December, but only just enough to allow us back on the trails to continue the season.

According to information provided by regional directors, only BC was blessed with good quantities of snow, and the ski conditions there are reported to be excellent.

In Ontario skiing got off to a good start in November but quickly came to an end. December has been the warmest ever with just a few days of skiing between New Years and Christmas.

In Alberta they have been skiing since the first day of November in Edmonton this year and they only had 4 or 5 cold days so far this winter which is a change, compared to past years.

Snow has been poor in the Southern part of Alberta this year

The snow came in late December in Newfoundland and Labrador.

In the Yukon, they have had good skiing but interest among masters is on the decline because the sport governing body changed the race categories in the province a few years ago and eliminated the masters categories. Now very few masters race.

In New Brunswick they only started skiing just before Christmas. Roger Levesque provincial director had to cancel a training camp that was scheduled to take place in the first part of January because of rain and warm weather.

Canadian Championships, Rossland

Because of the early date of the Canadian Championships this year, by the time you will be reading these lines the event will be almost upon us. All the details of the Rossland event (4-10 February 2007) were provided in the 2006 fall newsletter. Rossland is a charming little town in BC, near the US and Alberta borders. If you have not yet registered you can still do so through the web site: www.skiblackjack.ca, either by using Zone 4 or by downloading the registration form which you could send by mail. You will also find on this site all pertinent information on these championships. Rossland just hosted a very successful NorAm u23 & Jr World Trials event that was superb.

World Cup, Rovaniemi, Finland (3 to 10 March 2007)

I discussed this event at length in last fall's newsletter. As a reminder, and hoping you will receive this newsletter in time, the deadline for registration is 24 January. Nevertheless I could register you as long as I receive your form before my departure for Rossland on the first of February 2007. To register consult the World Association's website: <http://www.world-masters-xc-skiing.ch> . You can register electronically or by downloading the registration form and sending it to me at: Jean-Yves Babin, 1851 Ch. du Fleuve, St. Romuald Qc. G6W 1Z6 tel : 418-839-1621

I believe that lodging is still available at the Aakenus hotel where I had reserved rooms for 24 people. You can contact the hotel at: Risto Maijanen Hotelli Aakenus Koskikatu 4796100 Rovaniemi, Finland tel.+358 (0) 16 342 2051 Mobile. +358 (0) 40 536 6587 fax. +358 (0) 16 342 2021
email: risto.maijanen@pp.inet.fi

At last count, there were about 15 Canadians registered for the Rovaniemi World Cup.

Future World Cup

I will provide details on the World Cups at McCall, USA in 2008, and in Autrans, France in 2009, in the 2007 spring Newsletter. I will be getting updated information on these events at the World Association meeting in Rovaniemi, Finland, in March.

In last year's fall Newsletter I mentioned the possibility that Canada could be a candidate for the 2011 World Cup, if a host city could be found. Preliminary enquiries by BC director Dirk Tempelman-Kluit allowed us to identify several ski centres in that province that were interested. The subject will be discussed at the Canadian Masters annual meeting in Rossland in February, and a letter of intention should be presented at the World Association meeting in Rovaniemi in early March.

New internet site

Our new internet site is nearing completion. We are currently working on the final contents. The new address will be announced in the spring newsletter.

Invitation

Last fall, the president of the Québec Association of Master Cross Country Skiers (l'Association québécoise des Maîtres en ski de fond du Québec :AMSF), Léon Simard sent out a special invitation. Bruce Legros, director of the Master's association for Newfoundland/Labrador, along with Jack White, former national director, accepted the invitation. Here are their impressions.

Six Days In Paradise

Early in December I accepted an invitation from Leon Simard to attend the Quebec Masters camp at Foret Montmorency. I was accompanied by former National Director Jack White. While Jack will be writing an article outlining in detail our trip, I would like to make a few comments. They will be brief so as not to detract from Jack's article. This was the best ski camp I have ever attended. The snow conditions were great, weather was great, trails were great and the hospitality was superb. Thank you to Leon and the Quebec Masters. Hopefully I may have the opportunity to do it again.

Bruce LeGrow
Provincial Director
NL

AMSF Camp at Montmorency Forest in Quebec.

Earlier this year, the President of the AMSF and Quebec Masters Provincial Director Leon Simard sent invitations to Provincial Directors to attend the annual snow camp at Montmorency Forest north of Quebec City. The camp is held each year during early December and has been on going for 16 years. This year, it ran from December 7th to 10th and was attended by more than 130 Masters, mostly from Quebec, but I know of one from Ottawa and two Newfs, Newfoundland Provincial Director Bruce LeGrow and some other guy called Jack White.

The following is a tale of our trip...

Anyone who has traveled to or from our island via automobile will invariably have a story or two to relate about the ferry crossing between Port aux Basques and North Sydney, NS. This trip was no different. We departed Port aux Basques on Tuesday, December 5th at 11:30 PM on the good ship Caribou. Winds in the gulf were the usual for this time of year, blowing 60-70- kms per hour, making for lots of bouncing, rolling and loud creaking noises from the poor old ship. We had booked a cabin so we did manage a

few hours sleep during the six hour crossing, right up until “THE CAPTAIN ADVISES”, which blares mercilessly over the PA system at a volume controlled only by the person making the announcement. “THE SHIP WILL BE DOCKING IN ONE HOUR” and to everyone’s delight, “MARINE ATLANTICS GOURMET BREAKFAST IS NOW BEING SERVED IN THE CAFETERIA”. (I added the “gourmet”.) Thirty minutes later, there is a second jolt of 150 decibels reminding us that the ship will be docking in one half hour. I won’t go through the list of various announcements about picking up cats/dogs from the below decks kennels, foot passengers making ready for the bus, etc, etc. Suffice to say this is always an interesting voyage!

Marine Atlantic’s motto proudly hanging in the North Sydney passenger terminal states: “We strive for excellence”. I thought about that for a few moments before telling Bruce my comeback “but they wallow in mediocrity”! Bruce had a much stronger retort which can’t be mentioned in print. Enough said about our ferry service.

Wednesday approximately eight hours of driving, with an overnight at a hotel in Edmunston, NB.

Thursday morning....back on the road and after five minutes driving we are in “La Belle Province”! I would wager Quebec has more towns named after Saints than the rest of Canada combined. We passed by many of these enroute to Quebec City in rain and drizzle and a temperature of plus four degrees. Over the Pierre La Porte bridge and up highway 73, changing into 175 north, and excitement strikes as the temperature gauge in Bruce’s truck starts dropping and snow depth along the highway starts increasing. When we made Jean-Yves Babin’s left turn to Montmorency Forest, it was minus 4 and a skier’s paradise. J-Y’s left is actually a right!

Luggage and ski bags were dragged into the lobby of the University of Laval dormitory. Personal bell hops Leon and Richard assisted Bruce and me through a maze of stairways and corridors to our cozy room, which just happened to be approximately thirty feet from the exit to the ski track. A quick change, through the hallway, out the door, down six steps, on with the skis and off into glorious sunshine on perfectly groomed tracks.

Friday.... Skiing until the body said “enough”!

Let it not be said “they do not eat well in Quebec”! We were served three huge meals each day, with the noon meal being as large as the one at suppertime, all prepared by friendly chefs and staff. For us the daily routine became breakfast, ski, lunch, nap, ski, shower, a wee drop of screech or wine, and supper. It was really hard to take!

The AMSF had many events planned for the camp including waxing clinics, technique instruction, and stretching exercises. There was also an evening with Louis Blais who enlightened a packed room of Masters on the art of wine and gave us an opportunity to taste and evaluate three white and three red wines. This session was not only entertaining but a lot of fun.

Saturday morning saw a 9 kilometer race for brave souls who felt themselves fit enough to avoid heart attacks. There was one long wicked climb on the race course that I would not wish on anyone (other than world cup skiers) regardless of their degree of fitness.

My favorite event was the “funny race” Saturday afternoon. Teams consisted of four persons. Dave from Forestville and Marco from Montreal invited me on their “Aerosmith” team, along with a lady whose name escapes me. The race format was to maneuver around flags in zigzag or slalom like fashion, up a hill then descend using telemark technique (ha-ha), through the finish and hand-off the tape to the next team

member, and so on! At some point someone suggested “no poles” so poles were tossed aside. Technique and sensibility then deteriorated, with some skiers taking off in straight lines totally ignoring slalom flags, others bumping into each other, and on it went. The race was called when competitors were getting sore stomachs from laughing so much. The main instigators of the “funny race”, Louis B., Richard and Leon are to be commended. Every race should be this much fun! To be continued next year.

Bruce thought the “funny race” was by invitation, so he went skiing on the trails while it was in progress. He saw some skiers out there who said to him, “oh, you must be the other Newf!” He’s still uncertain of how to interpret that remark??

Saturday evening brought dining, dancing and socializing. Music was provided by professional DJ Richard and free refreshments were served up by semi-professional bartender Paul J. and friends, capping off another extremely successful AMSF ski camp. Sunday morning saw most of the attendees back on the ski trails for a last ski, then a final noontime lunch, farewells bade, bags and skis loaded on vehicles and off home to various parts of the province.

Bruce and I stayed a few extra days. The solitude was quite a contrast from the previous four days, but ski conditions remained excellent.

We departed Tuesday afternoon to retrace our route through New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, another night crossing on the “friendly ferry” and home to the west coast of Newfoundland. From Quebec City eastward we noticed a steady decrease in amounts of snow, all the time thinking what a fortunate group are those who live near the “little winter wonderland” called Montmorency Forest.

A few personal highlights.....It was wonderful to sit and reminisce about old times (mid-eighties) with Alfred Fortier (now retired) and to meet his friend Danielle. Always a pleasure to see my Whitehorse can-can dancing partner Paul Junique. Likewise long time friend Gaetan Beaulieu, one of the few (Bernard Carre was another) who several years ago witnessed four Newfs skiing on a lake in North Bay wearing only swim trunks at a Canadian Masters event. A few lengthy conversations with a legendary gentleman from Beauport, I think his name was George!

Thanks again to Leon, Jean-Yves and the AMSF executive for their kind and generous invitation.

Here’s wishing Masters in Quebec and all throughout the country a successful and healthy season of skiing

Jack

Evolution of cross country ski performance at the Olympic Games

Benoît Roy

Specialist in Biomechanics

Professor (retired), Université Laval

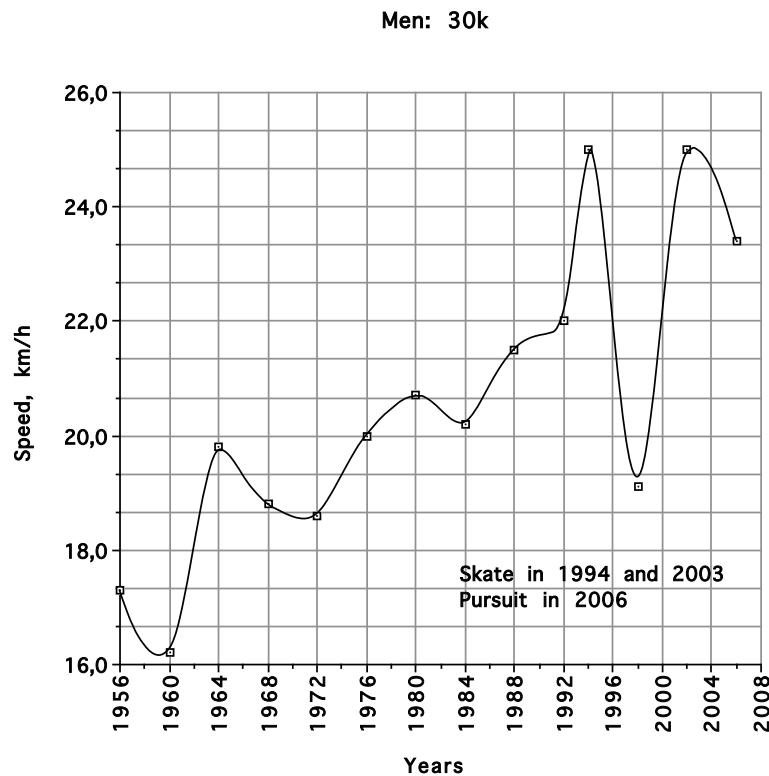
This report was inspired by « **The Complete Book of the Winter Olympics** » by David Wallechinsky and Jaime Loucky, as well as by information published on the Turin Olympic Games web site. The information has been selected, interpreted, and presented in the form of graphs.

The first Olympic cross country ski events occurred at the 1924 Olympic Games. At that time it was strictly a masculine event. It was not until 1952 that it was expanded to include feminine events.

In 1924, the 50 km and 18 km (reduced to 15 km in 1956) races were presented. The 30 km event appeared in 1956. The following graphs show the progression in performances (in km/h) for these events. For the 50 km race, the average speed increased by more than 80 % between 1924 and 1988, the date on which ski-skating was introduced in this event. Since the 1990s the performances have begun to level off. This event was run in classical style in 2002 and in ski-skating in 2006; however, the average speed was the same. It should be remembered, however, that it was a mass start in 2006 but individual starts at 30 second intervals in 2002. In the latter case one might speculate that each racer gives it his maximum, whereas in mass starts, strategies play an important role within the pack. It is interesting to note that 80 % of the winners in the 50 km event were from the Scandinavian countries. Only a few skiers from the ex-Soviet Union succeeded occasionally in finishing among the winners.

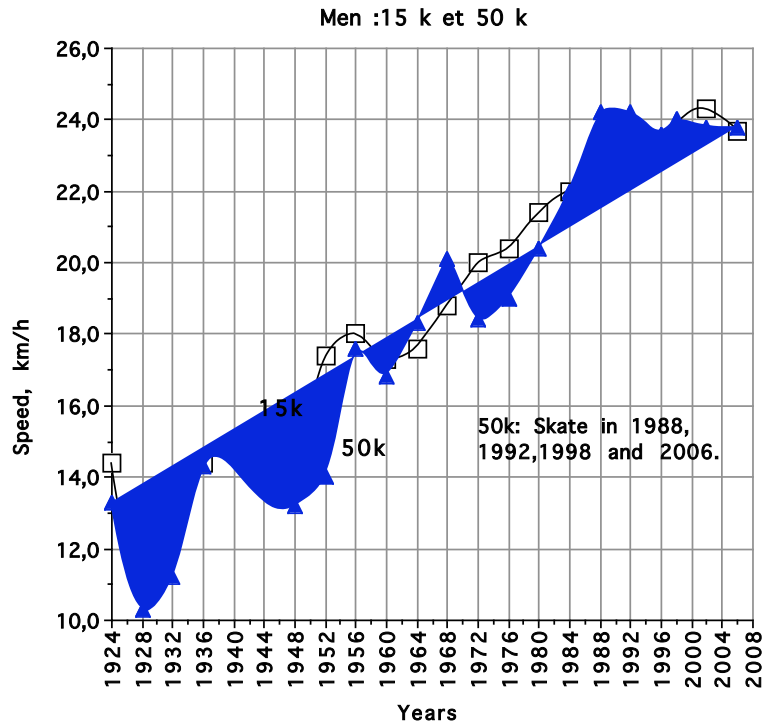
The 15 km (18 km until 1952) was also on the agenda in 1924. This distance has always been run using the classical style. Although the average speed in 1924 was 14.5 km/h, the 2006 winner registered 23.7 km/h, an increase of 63 %. Scandinavian skiers (Sweden, Finland, Norway) were the winners in more than 75% of the races.

In 1956 a new distance was introduced: the 30 km. The slowest average speed, in



Nagano 1988, can be explained by the combined effects of the use of the classical style and the presence of thick, wet snow conditions. In 1956, the average speed was 17.3 km/h and 23.4 km/h in 2006: an increase of 35 %. It is notable that for this distance athletes from Scandinavia and Russia shared the winning honours in 43 % of the time.

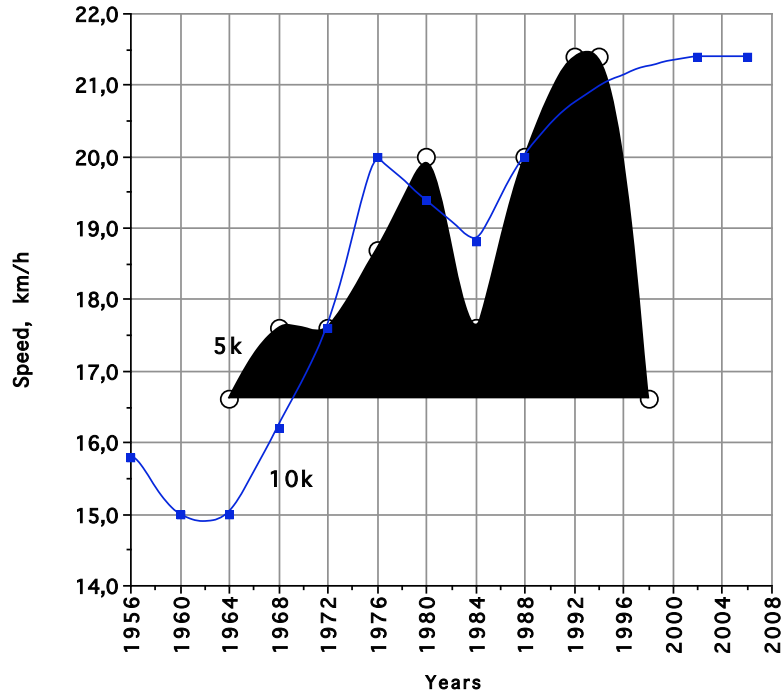
In 1924 the average speed of the winners of the 50km and 15km was about 13-14 km/h; for the 30km, which appeared in 1956 it was 17.3 km/h. Today, the racers maintain very similar speeds for the three events, that is between 23 and 24 km/h.



Women's cross country events began in the 1952 Olympics with a 10km race. Since 2002 performance levels seem to have leveled off. In 2006 the average speed was 50% higher than in 1954. A 5km race was run from 1964 to 1998. The average speed remained relatively stable at around 16-17 km/h, but peaked at more than 20km/h in the late 1980s and early 1990s, and dropped drastically in 1998 because of wet snow conditions. Russia and the Scandinavian countries took equal shares of the gold medals for this event over the 10 Olympic Games in which this event was held.

A 30 km race was introduced in the Olympics in 1992. In years when it was run under ski-skating rules, 1992, 1994 and 2006, the speed was clearly faster. The 15 km was also introduced in 1992. Note the effect of Nagano 1998! Italian racers dominated the 30k in three of the five latest Olympic Games, whereas racers from the Eastern countries monopolized the podium of the 15k in three of the five.

Women : 5k and 10k



Several factors can help explain the phenomenal increase in performance of both male and female athletes. Without attempting an exhaustive analysis, we can explore a few of these factors.

Training programs have been improved considerably as a result of increased knowledge in the fields of physiology of exercise, nutrition, the scheduling of training through the year, the selection of athletes, and the monitoring of their progression. Supervision of athletes by qualified coaches, technicians, and medical and paramedical teams leads to a higher level of excellence. Skiing techniques have also progressed since the earliest Olympic Games, driven by improved knowledge of biomechanics and by innovations introduced by certain athletes, such as ski-skating techniques developed by Bill Koch in the 1980s.

The introduction of new events, such as the sprint, has contributed to profound changes in cross country skiing since its beginnings as an Olympic sport.

New and improved technologies have influenced the making of equipment : skis, harnesses, boots, poles and garments. This equipment is now lighter and better adapted to the demands of the sport. Waxing has also seen major improvements in choice and efficiency under different snow conditions and temperatures.

Improved machinery has facilitated track maintenance. Vehicles such as the BR400 have brought on marked improvements in packing and tracking the trails for both classical and skating events.

The topography of the trails is now regulated by international standards that specify the percentage of hilly terrain, the width and lengths of the trails, etc.

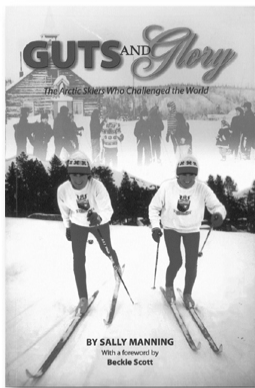
The detection of drugs and other illegal substances has become an important issue in recent decades, for sports in general and for cross country skiing in particular. As early as 1964 a Finnish skier, Eero Mantyranta, was suspected of doping when a blood test showed a level of red blood cells 20% higher than average. At that time, detection techniques were poorly developed. Thirty years later, new and improved techniques in molecular biology showed that

among the 200 members of his family, 50 had a genetic mutation favouring a natural production of red blood cells. Today, international control agencies are better equipped to detect cheaters. For example, Johann Mühleg was disqualified in the 30k and 50k, and Olga Danilova in the 30k and Larissa Lazutina in the 15k, all at Salt Lake City in 2002.

Will performances continue to improve through better training strategies? Will new developments lead to ski equipment that is better adapted to snow conditions? Will new events be introduced in competitions? Will we succeed in better detecting the use of doping substances? Will climate change have a measurable influence on winter sports in general and cross country skiing in particular?

Here in lies a series of hot questions to be debated among ourselves over the coming cold months.

Advertising



Guts and Glory: The Arctic Skiers Who Challenged the World

This book brings to life the amazing saga of Canada's cross-country skiing pioneers - the talented young Aboriginal racers from Inuvik, Northwest Territories who skied to international glory in the late 1960's and 1970's. When these kids blazed their way to the Olympics, they set the stage for today's Canadian stars.

Packed with photos, exciting action and colourful anecdotes, Guts and Glory was written by Sally Manning, a cross-country skier who has competed in three World Masters Championships.

To order a copy visit the online store at:

www.uphere.ca or call 1-800-661-0861

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