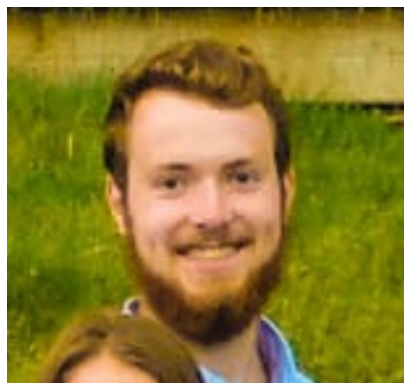


NDC Thunder Bay Athlete Interest Article “The Canadian XC Skiing Scene” By: Angus Foster



This season marks my first on NDC Thunder Bay, and when I announced to my friends and family that I had been accepted to the team, I got a lot of congratulations that went sort of like this: “Congrats on making that skiing thing” or “You’re on the national team now, right?”. I know that cross country skiing is a fairly unknown sport to a lot of people, but I was surprised about how few of my close friends and family actually understood what I had achieved or could appreciate how it fit in in the big picture of ski racing (i.e. I am definitely NOT on the National Team). Now I know that most people reading this article are probably more familiar with cross country skiing than most of my friends, but I think that maybe this is an area that a lot of people don’t have an understanding of. So if

there are some aspects of the competitive side of skiing that you still don’t understand, like what exactly the National Team is or how NDC Thunder Bay fits into the racing landscape, consider this your quick and dirty guide to the Canadian cross country skiing scene!

FIS

Let’s start right at the top, with the International Ski Federation, or FIS, as it’s usually referred to. FIS is the international governing body for cross country skiing, in exactly the same way that FIFA governs soccer, or hockey has the IIHF. As the international governing body, FIS sets the rules for cross country skiing, organizes international competitions like the World Cup, and sets regulations around the sport. It’s also FIS’s job to promote the sport and try to grow cross country skiing.



Cross Country Canada

One step below FIS is the national governing body, Cross Country Canada, or CCC as most people call it. Cross Country Canada’s role is very similar to the role of FIS, but on a national scale instead of internationally. CCC is the head of cross country skiing in Canada and does things like set the national race schedule, provide development programs for racers, and set criteria to decide who makes the National Team. CCC is based out of Canmore, Alberta, which is often considered the unofficial home of Canadian cross country ski racing.



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The National Team

The National Team is sort of a blanket term that is used to describe a few different teams that CCC picks to represent Canada. There are actually 3 different national teams that CCC picks, based on criteria that they set each year. There are two teams for senior athletes: the Senior World Cup Team, which is made up of the top Canadian skiers who represents Canada internationally on the World Cup, and the Senior Development Team, which is made up of the best domestic skiers that CCC wants to develop into international stars. There's also the Junior National Team, which is made up of talented younger skiers who show the potential to develop into international calibre athletes later in their careers.

Training Centres

Somewhere between CCC and the Provincial Sport Organizations, you have us, the training centres. Training centres are development programs that CCC helps to fund as part their effort to produce international calibre athletes. Training centres are for athletes who want to pursue cross country ski racing at a high level and are striving for national and international success. At the end of each season, the training centres sit down with CCC to decide which athletes get named to which centres. Each of the teams have met criteria defined by CCC as to what their program needs to deliver, and how the organization has to be run. Currently there are 3 training centres in Canada: the Alberta World Cup Academy, based in Canmore, the Centre Nationale d'Entrainement Pierre Harvey, based in Quebec City, and NDC Thunder Bay (that's us!) based out of Thunder Bay, Ontario.



A group photo at a joint training camp between NDC Thunder Bay, AWCA, CNEPH and the National Team. (Photo Credit: CCC/Noel Rogers)



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Provincial Sport Organizations

Yes, there's even more levels of regulation and organization to cross country skiing. Provincial Sport Organizations (or PSO's as they're called) do much the same sort of job as FIS and CCC except (you guessed it)... at the provincial level. Here in Ontario, our PSO is Cross Country Ontario, or CCO for short (are there enough acronyms for you?). CCO promotes cross country skiing in Ontario and organizes the provincial racing circuit. They also organize and run the Ontario Ski Team and other development programs, to help athletes progress into national calibre athletes.



Club Teams

Local club teams form the base of the competitive skiing scene in Canada. For anyone looking to get more involved in cross country skiing, local club teams provide development programs and support from qualified coaches. Club coaches are sometimes paid, but more often are unpaid and the organizations are often run by volunteers. The focus is generally on learning and enjoying the sport, and to compete at local and provincial races. The best club skiers generally feed into the training centres system, who can generally provide more support. That being said, there is a huge variation: some clubs offer really high performance programs, while others focus on recreational participation. The biggest clubs have in the country have 800+ members, while other small ones can have just a handful. No matter their size or goal, clubs serve as the base of the competitive cross country skiing pool, by developing people into capable skiers.

So there you have it, a (very) quick and dirty look at all the big players in the Canadian cross country ski racing scene! Check back next month for another interest article our team update for August!

