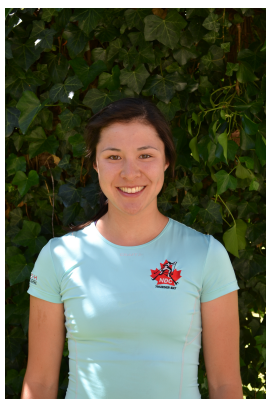


# NDC Thunder Bay Athlete Interest Article: “Double Poling” By: Jenn Jackson



Cross country skiing is in the midst of a revolution.

Over the past half decade, the prevalence of double poling has been the topic of much discussion and debate throughout the racing community. As the general style and technique of cross country skiing has become more dynamic and powerful, more and more skiers are favouring the high-speed classic technique over the traditional kick-and-glide of diagonal striding.

In 2013, Norwegian Jørgen Aukland became the first skier to win the prestigious Vasaloppet with no kickwax, the following year Laila Kveli, also of Norway, became the first women to do so. This was one of the events that signalled a new era in the cross country ski world.

The Vasaloppet is one of the greatest ski events in the world and a staple in the Ski Classic’s series – the premier long distance ski race circuit. Every year, nearly 20,000 people complete the 90km journey from to Sälen to Mora in Sweden. The course is net downhill, which gives favour to fast gliding skis over grippy kick-wax for the trained professional. Improvements in ski and pole technology have aided the rise of double poling – with quicker skis and stiffer poles giving favour to more powerful, high-speed technique.



On the World Cup, we are seeing an increasing number of athletes also competing in classic races without grip wax – particularly in sprint races with proven success on courses such as Drammen (NOR), Asiago (ITA), and Stockholm (SWE) that have less aggressive climbs than other venues. This past winter, Kazakh skier Alexey Poltoranin set a milestone by winning the 10km classic World Cup in Toblach (ITA), becoming the first skier to win a World Cup distance race by only double poling.



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These are all interesting facts and details (to me at least), but what does it mean for the everyday skier, the junior racer, and the aspiring Olympian? Well, I’m not exactly sure... it certainly does provide a clear direction and opportunity for skiers of all levels to improve their technique, speed, and efficiency out on the trails!

Of all the skiing techniques, double poling is arguably the most basic technique – you’re just pushing yourself along with just your arms. But as with most things, there is far more than meets the eye. Although double poling is considered an upper body technique, when done correctly it incorporates your arms, upper body, core, and legs – so everything, more or less.

Double poling is a cyclical motion; there isn’t a true beginning or end. But for the sake of a clear explanation, let us consider the beginning the point where you are standing most upright. In this position, you should feel your weight primarily on the balls of your feet and have your arms extended in front of you at about face level – your hands shoulder width apart, and equal distance away from your head and torso. You should feel relatively relaxed at this point in the double poling motion.

From there, you will create tension through your core as you crunch forward to apply weight through your poles. It is important to have a solid connection from your shoulders through to your arms without becoming stiff and rigid. The poling motion should come primary from crunching through your torso, and as this happens your hands and arms should also follow down and through. As you do so, your weight will come back off your toes slightly, and your legs will naturally flex to accommodate the poling motion. Make sure you don’t squat down too much - you want to maintain a neutral to forward body position throughout.

Now, from the bottom of your poling motion, you will swing your arms up and forward to the “start” position, your weight shifting forward onto your toes as your legs straighten to bring your hips forward. Ideally, your arms will travel up in-time with your head and torso, all reaching the top at the same time.



*The Double Poling technique in stop-motion!*



COMMUNICATIONS

Alignment  
CHIROPRACTIC  
& REHAB



RUDY  
PROJECT



LAPPE  
NORDIC  
CENTRE



Thunder Bay  
NORDIC TRAILS



Muloin  
THINK AND JOIN  
AT THE END OF THE LINE  
ON THE 101 LINE



Rev



SKI\*GO



CROSS COUNTRY  
SKI  
DE FOND



CROSS COUNTRY  
SKI  
DE FOND

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Writing about technique in a general sense is quite challenging, as everyone has a slightly different style of skiing, although the key principals are all the same. How a World Cup racer skis is somewhat different from someone who, say, is pinning the Sleeping Giant Loppet as their main event of the year – but both will benefit from investing a little extra time of this technique when they go out to classic ski. During my time on the training centre, the amount of time and focus spent on double poling has increased with each season, soon enough it may be all we do (just kidding, that is very unlikely)!

So while the migration towards double pole as the preferred classic technique in racing has caused traditionalists and technical delegates alike a lot of headaches, it does raise questions on what this evolution means for the diagonal stride and kick double pole techniques – will they become obsolete?

Should rules be made, or should races courses be made more difficult to force people to use gripwax? Personally, I don't think there is any real risk of diagonal stride and kick double pole falling by the wayside. People may try to do away with it and muscle their way through even the most challenging terrain, but there are limits to what humans are capable of, and diagonal striding up hills like Pilon and The Grunt (for those who have skied at Lappe) is certainly the more prudent choice.



Well, thank you for reading. I hope you have learned something new about double poling and are excited to be getting on snow soon to perfect your technique! If you see myself or anyone else from the team out on the trails this winter, be sure to say “hello!” and yell your best technique tips at us – we're always keen to get feedback on our technique. If you'd like to spend some time and get technique advice from us, or the team coaches, we will be auctioning off “Ski Lessons” at our NordicFest fundraiser on November 21st, so be sure to put a bid down if you can attend!

See you on the trails!  
Jenn

