

SKI COACHING AND INSTRUCTION

by Lise Meloche and David McMahon, xczone.tv

PART 1 - Student seeks Instructor

Masters ski camps offer the opportunity to tune-up and learn the most progressive nordic skiing technique. Let us share some of our thoughts on nordic skiing instruction in general, and our offerings, to help you make an informed choice this season.

"Fast-track your skiing development, this season !"

Having returned from years of racing internationally, we were discouraged to find skiers still being taught technique, which elite racers had discarded years previously.

During our own early development phases, we learnt pragmatic lessons that lead to outstanding results, but we also spend many years floundering, doing things wrong and following paths that lead nowhere; practicing contrived drills created for their own sake, just wasting time and developing bad habits. Ski skating evolved while we were on the circuit. Then, the athletes taught themselves simply because there were no teachers - and it took a long time. Nowadays, you don't need to go it alone.

An athletic person is only able to fully apply their fitness attributes once they can master the basics of technique. First they must be shown, otherwise, skiing can be an exercise in creative snow removal.

You can spend a life time observing and never catch-on, unless someone, who has been there, can recreate the right experience with you.

"When you don't know the way, you'll spend most of your time lost."

Like many instructors, we are looking for good students, as much as you may be looking for a good teacher. If you are not serious about learning to ski proficiently, or you just want a novelty winter outing, then you don't need instructors like us.

Many students seek certified instructors at a given level, or coaches that have the performances of athletes on their resume by proxy.

Formal qualifications give a measure of assurance that your instructor meets a certain *minimal*, whereas post-secondary education gives someone some theory. For example, David is a practicing bio-mechanical engineer, and Lise is an exercise physiologist and professional educator.

But a discerning student, with clear performance goals, would look further:

The real teaching advantage is derived from a combination of elite personal skiing attributes, streamlined pedagogy, well articulated methods, supporting published documentation, kinesthetic empathy, demonstrable performance and superior communications skills.

Good teachers are not passive observers, but active participants and mentors in nordic skiing. When they are not teaching, they are studying, playing, training or racing.

I cannot believe that students would pay coaches to stand at a bottom of a hill and count out intervals. That is what a stop-watch is for! A coach needs to be skiing with you - demonstrating not pontificating.

"Choose the coach who you would prefer to ski like."

An instructor/coach should have the courage of their convictions to: contribute to ski manuals, published books, and produce materials for the sport. As an example, xczone has a line of products that have withstood public scrutiny for a decade and achieved best consensus to date, on a unified approach to nordic skiing technique. Too often coaches voice outlandish options that are undemonstrable and unarticulated.

An instructor should be confident but not arrogant or dismissive. They need to fully understand alternative views on technique, training or pedagogy, and be able to explain the nuances, in all fairness, to their students. And remain open-minded.

The Nordic Skiing Project www.xcskiing.tv is an excellent example of cooperation. The project's mission is to arbitrate an unified approach to Nordic Skiing Technique by bringing together recognized experts in the field, generating discussion, consolidating ideas and arriving at an clear approach to instruction.

An instructor should be intimately familiar with the learning process and understand what stages each student has to go through. They ought to know the answers before the questions are asked, because they have been there, done that. There is no problem that they should not have seen resolved; first for themselves and then for their students.

Between them, Dave and Lise have 50 years of skiing experience, 17 years of which is racing at a World Cup Level. Lise Meloche has nine (9) National Championship titles, third place ranking placing on the World Cup circuit in 1986, leading to the 92 and 94 Olympics, and a World Cup Gold Medal. Lise has done over 200 World Cup races, finishing top-ten 21 times (including 7 World Cup Medals.) David McMahon was National Biathlon Champion in 1993, twice overall Canada Cup winner and 5 National Championship medals and finished third at the World Summer Biathlon Championships. We have since taught over 7000 people to ski and coached athletes at the Olympic Level. Several of the athletes with whom we have personally worked, have won World Loppets, World Cup, World Championship and Olympic Medals ! We have dynamic range of leadership skills from grass root coaching of children to preparing master skiers for racing, or working-out, and performing, high-risk stunts for feature films. Look us up in Who's Who in Canadian Sport, Volume 3 1999 by Bob Ferguson ISBN 1-894282-00-0.

Our *Unlimited Nordic Skiing* DVD is quoted as "the most complete instructional and motivational package for nordic skiing, ever produced!" It is every skier's user's manual and an enduring product-in-a-box, for the price of a ski lesson. Endorsed by the National Coaching Program, Biathlon Canada and Cross-Country Canada.

"Cross-Country Canada enthusiastically endorses XCZONE.TV's new DVD as a key resource for beginning and experienced skiers or coaches looking for clear, correct and easily-understood guidance for improving their skiing technique. As the National Ski Team coaches collaborated on the technical narrative, we can confirm that the theory and practice as depicted in "Unlimited" are carefully aligned with current and evolving doctrine."

XCZONE.TV worked with the Canadian Association of Nordic Ski Instructors (CANSI) to produce their manual on the learn-to-ski DVD.

PART 2 - XC SKI CAMP BENEFITS

XCZONE is offering a series of Master's Nordic Skiing camps this season. The camps cater to fast tracking the technical development of novice to expert skiers. There is plenty of individualized attention. We specialize in high-quality instruction by strictly limiting the size our camps to 20 serious students. There are many camps that take a large quantity of students and hand them over to average instructors to process, and charge thousands of dollars. Similarly, city recreation programs are good enough for beginners.

Will you be empowered to ski significantly faster immediately after a Camp ? -not likely.

The reality is, that there needs to be a serious commitment to practice on your part. But what we will promise is:

We will teach our students key aspects of Nordic Skiing that are guaranteed to shorten their learning curve and give them the edge.

First and foremost, we can save you years of development effort in one lesson, by steering you clear of what not to do, and point your skiing in the right direction. We guarantee superior results.

Although, residual old-school rhetoric persists, as it did in the early days of skate skiing, we are not bound to a particular doctrine. You'll learn the most progressive nordic skiing technique.

You will know how to train technique in the most optimal fashion, with a few key, purposeful and high-value drills. You will become "ruthlessly efficient" in your methods. We know your time is valuable. So is ours. There will little standing around. We will make the best use of your time; telling you precisely what you want and need to know, and bringing you a significant step forward. We will help you make the connection between solid bio-mechanical principles and a holistic approach to skiing technique.

We will not only tell you how it should look, we will show you; using imagery to provoke the correct

feeling and impart the secrets of execution drawn from real experience; knowledge that you will simply cannot get from a passive observer (relying on and critiquing taped race footage).

The explanations will be tailored to what interests you. We will explain precisely how you can get there from here, using clear progressions and meaningful exercises in an open learning approach.

You will be shown how to achieve: perfect form, weight-shift, increased dynamic range, balance; to apply your force, create power and move efficiently.

Video analysis and professional bio-mechanical analysis will provide objective and immediate feedback, supported by expert commentary and side-by-side visual comparison with elite skiers.

All this knowledge is already captured and recorded for you. Technical materials (Video,DVD,CD-ROM) will be available at a substantially reduced price to students at the camp.

You will gain confidence in skiing, understand the universal truths, knowing a clear path,opening your eyes to possibilities and steering clear of pitfalls.

Students can choose to gain a whole-skiing experience that includes: skate classic, nordic, telemark, norpine, and back-country.

The camps offer an ideal social setting for meeting people with common interests, and connecting with "kindred spirits" or future training partners.

Bottom line - You will see a clear return on your investment.

TESTIMONIALS

"My first encounter with the xczone ski camps was as a novice trying to master the intricacies of skate skiing. Over the course of two days, we were slowly transformed from awkward, inefficient machines into a group of athletes who could begin to feel the fluidity and force behind true technique. This was accomplished with precise instruction, specific drills and excellent snow conditions. Dave McMahon and Lise Meloche have been wonderful ambassadors for the sport of XCskiing. Their camps will appeal to a range of athletes, from both the novice to the competitive skier. Their dedication and love of the sport shines through not only in their technical knowledge, which is second to none, but also in their " Thank you for the incredible day on the XCZone camp. I can honestly say that it was one of the finest days of instruction I have ever received, and will be sure to pass onto everyone I run into. Your patience, understanding of the technique, enthusiasm, and attention to detail was superb, and it showed in the results by the end of the day with the majority of skiers. Compared to downhill skiing I used to teach, you have a far tougher task at hand with X-Country. I only congratulate those who surpass my expectations, like you both did ! Dave staying with me until dark is just a small example of that. Thanks again" - GrantT., a rookie but loving the Clean Oxygen Fed Sport!!

PART 3 - VALUE

How much is your time worth? Add up all the hours of spent trying to figure skiing out on your own. We have all seen people who have been skiing 30 years never get past a novice level. What is the value of having one of the top specialists in the sport personally address your needs? This is far more valuable than a typical personal trainer consultation or average ski lesson. Good quality advice is worth the price.

PART 4 - DETAILS OF XC SKI CAMPS

SCHEDULE 2007-2008

TBD

All camps begin at the parking lot of MacKenzie King Estate, Chelsea, Quebec, Canada at 0900 hrs. There may be a small parking fee. The first part of the camp will address fundamentals in a more sophisticated manner. We will also be taking video. We will be breaking for lunch, and Chelsea is not far away. Ski classes restart at 1400hrs at the same place as in the morning, and we will apply what we have learnt. Classes go until 16:00hrs, at which time we plan to go for coffee and video analysis in Chelsea.

Dress warmly and we can always shed clothes beside the trail where we are skiing. We will not be going too far from the parking lot. Bring water and a small snack because there is going to be a lot of skiing.

And yes, we will be skiing if it is snowing and cold so don't even ask.

DIRECTIONS

How to Get to Gatineau Park from Hull and Ottawa: Cross the Macdonald-Cartier Bridge, take Highway 5 north to exit 12 (Old Chelsea). Turn left onto Old Chelsea Road, and continue for almost 1 kilometre (0.63 mile) through Old Chelsea. Turn left onto Kingsmire Rd. Follow Kingsmire road as it climbs for several kilometers. Near the top, turn left onto Swamp Rd. Follow Swamp Rd. to the intersection or Barnes Rd and turn Right onto Barnes. Rd. The entrance to Mackenzie King Estate Parking Lot will be on your left.

For a detailed map download:

http://www.canadascapital.gc.ca/data/2/rec_docs/261_map_winter.pdf

IMPORTANT NOTICE

We have been running these camps for over a decade, and, in a way, we became a victim of our own success. We have had people just showing up by the droves, unannounced and hoping to get in. This detracted from the high-quality experience that set us apart. So, we now enforce pre-registration and limit each camp to a maximum of 20 students. Needless to say, the camps fill up quickly once the snow falls. Register on-line by visiting www.xczone.tv

For more information please visit www.xczone.tv