



HANDBOOK 6

Articles of Interest to Masters Skiers

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Manitoba Masters Skiing;

A New Way to Enjoy Winter by Skiing Here

Nestled away on the Prairies is an incredible program of ski education and fun aimed at the adult skier. What makes it unique in Canada is that while traditional Masters ski programs are organised around age centred racing (you ski on the same race courses regardless of your skills and results are divided into age groups) the program is learner centred. This has allowed the club to encourage all levels from the newest skier to the most competitive ex-racer to challenge themselves to reach their maximum potential. Two different styles of courses are set for competition and classes of coaching and instruction are divided into 5 separate ability groups.

The club program offers over 39 hours of on hill ski education and indoor seminars on topics of interest as well as a full 9-race schedule. The program focuses on skill improvement as well as race specific tactics, techniques and drills at the level appropriate for the individual. This innovative program design was the product of the club's head coach, Glenn Allen (Level 3 CSIA, Level 2 CSCF) and is entering its 4th year of refinement. Glenn is a long time and extremely active member of the CSIA in Manitoba having been first certified in 1972. He also coaches for the Summit Ski Club MASS Team and has been a full time member of the ski industry since 1976. He currently works as the Sales Manager in Sporting Goods for Sport Chek's Polo Park store in Winnipeg. In addition to regular evening sessions at Springhill Winter Park (the area closest to Winnipeg) the club regularly travels to train and compete at other Manitoba sites such as Holiday Mtn. and Asessippi Winter Park. The enthusiasm and experience that the members visibly share has even prompted one local ski area (Holiday Mtn.) to start its own chapter of Manitoba Masters.

Why the departure from the traditional format? As Glenn relates it: "In 2003 the club was looking for new ideas and a new direction for the club. It had a long and proud history of participation in the province but was trapped in the conventional thinking of the time as to how Masters programs operated. The executive recognised that the vast majority of their members came from a non racing background and that some members were often not progressing in their skills from one year to the next or were intimidated by the experience. For the first time in its history the position of Head Coach was awarded on the basis of a competitive selection process. In addition to recognising that the newest members were often intimidated by their exposure to the race format of the time I also saw that the most highly skilled members were underchallenged. My experience in coaching had shown me that ski racing had evolved significantly because of new technology and techniques. The simple course sets that the club was forced to use so that all members could have a reasonable expectation of completing had trapped the program in a time warp. Once I recognised that we needed to separate the courses into two levels of challenge the program designs evolved from there. Though I had coached for the club in the past it was my outside experiences as a coach that helped me recognise that just as in youth and junior racing programs (think Nancy Greene and Provincial Series) there are benefits from some separation. Now all members can get what they need from the experience whether that is a technique improvement in preparation for their trip to the mountains or the physical challenges of modern racing. The underlying goal is that skiing should be fun for everyone and the guiding principle is that skill improvement should always add to the enjoyment. The staff for this program are drawn from local members of the CSIA and CSCF who share this vision."

- Reprinted from CSIA Central Canada Newsletter

THE HISTORY OF MANITOBA MASTERS PROGRAMS

The Masters program in Manitoba has changed considerably over the last 4 years from its original format. In its earlier years it primarily afforded the means by which ex-racers could continue getting the adrenaline rush that they associated with racing well after their competitive career ended. It also offered a meeting point for like-minded people who enjoyed skiing locally to participate in the sport. It focussed almost entirely on age category event management. Coaching was at best focussed on a middle ground between the ability levels. Skiers regardless of competence raced on the same courses but within their age group. This resulted in under-challenging as well as over-challenging most skiers though as there was no great technical difference in equipment this was not identified as a limiting factor at the time.

MANITOBA MASTERS TODAY

With the radical change of ski technology and the resulting evolution in technique due to shaped skis skiing and racing had changed dramatically. The potential for new experiences and also much higher performance became possible. With this change though it became also identifiable that the risk factors inherent in skiing had also changed. Truly carving a turn became not only an elusive goal or a description of an experience that few people other than the athletically gifted experienced but a very real possibility for everyone. In 2003 the executive of the club opened the position of Head Coach up to a competitive selection process where the long term vision as well as the more technical credentials of the candidates for this role were part of the criteria. This helped accelerate the changes that are now the cornerstones of the club's program.

With the support of the executive and the membership at large the Head Coach was able to move the program to the point it is at today. This required not only a change in coaching methods but also the adoption of a program designed to allow coaches to train and challenge people at the ability they possessed. This new ability centred rather than age divided method is unique to Manitoba Masters in Canada and allows entry level members as well as elite to gain experience and enjoy the unique experiences as a group that skiing provides.

At the time the general membership of the club were at ability levels that could benefit significantly from a more instructional approach where the initial goal was skill improvement rather than purely race results. There was also a key cadre of enthusiastic racers for whom the thrill of victory and the agony of defeat was the primary motivation and modern training methods as well as course design allowed for a significant increase in potential challenge.

We use certified members of the Canadian Ski Instructors Alliance and the Canadian Ski Coaches Federation. In addition to the regular Wednesday evening sessions at Springhill we travel to out of town locations such as Holiday Mt. and Asessippi. We continue to offer a senior racing circuit that is divided into ability centred racing categories. This is so that all members from the newest skier to the most aggressive ex-racer can test themselves and challenge and encourage their progress in primarily separate racecourses. This underlying principle allows for more rapid personal development and allows the flexibility to accommodate all motivations (skill driven, social, race focussed). As well program needs to respect the individual goals of members while working within a group format.

Most of our member's goals could be summarised as:

I want to get better every year and enjoy every day that I can. Skiing needs to be fun not just physical and I want to enjoy my time doing it.

MMSC PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS FOR 06-07

- New goal setting survey to maximise results and coach focus at all levels
- New chapter formed at Holiday Mt. and increased use of clubroom facilities
- New early season information seminars to better prepare and assist members in their understanding of the factors affecting performance (Physical/Psychological/Equipment/Environment/Technical/Tactical)
- Return of the 2 day Winnipeg Christmas Camp (Registration Required)
- Improved sequence of technical/tactical training for improved race experiences for all levels (scheduled session content)
- early category selection process (the 1st race allows club to combine results of all levels and provide guidance in category selection if required)
- 2nd year of the season finale Springhill Dual Slalom Challenge
- additional out of province opportunities for ski improvement (optional mtn trip)
- increased club coach development opportunities provided through the MASD (Provincial Team Coach visit Dec 30,31) and club (Head Coach has taken additional training from the CSCF and NCCP as mentor evaluator)
- New High Performance Preparation opportunities through the MASD Provincial Finals and Masters Nationals (optional)

COACHING MISSION

Our mission statement as coaches is as follows:

"To provide the maximum enjoyment and improvement to the members at the minimum risk and to draw the hidden potential as skiers & racers out of every one."

To do so we require up to date knowledge, the technical ability to be demonstration models of what we expect and the skill to create situations where technical and tactical improvements will result both on and off the racecourse. We must personally see life long learning as a part of the coaching role. We must strive to be the best examples of what a Masters skier can be and put the needs of the member athletes ahead of our personal goals while they are in our charge.

(Further material to be found in the Canadian Ski Coaches Federation Code of Ethics)

COACHING STAFF

The core staff is drawn from members who have the experience, training and focus to meet these expectations as well as the understanding of what it means to be a Masters skier. Member coaches often sacrifice their personal training time to help others and while expected to exhibit a high degree of professionalism primarily coach for the love of the sport and ski for the fun of it. When necessary guest coaches at the highest possible level of certification and practical experience in the other provincial programs assist with teaching and training. This blend of coaches who can empathise with their students and athletes and the experience of coaching brought from outside the club helps reinforce the high level of product.

EXPERIENCE THE DIFFERENCE

We provide the most affordable adult ski program of this quality in the country. It is a way to get set for skiing out west as well as enjoy the winter by skiing locally. [Come Ski With Us.](#)

By Glenn Allen, Head Coach MMSC (L3, CSIA; L2 CSCF)

