



# new england NORDIC NEWS

MIDWINTER 2002 VOL. 7, NO. 2

## The New England Marathon Series, 2002

Classic or freestyle, 25km or 50km, touring class or racing class, gourmet feeding stations, stunning vistas including a ski around the northern half of Mt. Washington, perfectly groomed trails, loaded prize tables not geared to winners but giving every participant an equal chance... talk about something for everyone!

Let's start with the Craftsbury Marathon 21st annual Race and Tour on Feb. 2, 2002. Several years ago John Brodhead, race director, sat down and brainstormed how to draw more people into this event during a time of dwindling numbers of participants and dwindling numbers of ski events that appealed to the citizens racer crowd. He came up with the brilliant ideas of having a touring (non-timed) class, gourmet feeding stations instead of the hard-core racing crowd's sports drink and sawdust granola bar stops, and making it a point to point ski event where crowds of people could ski along and enjoy the scenery and the heritage of cross country skiing -- getting from Greensboro, Vermont to Craftsbury Common by skis. John Brodhead succeeded in a big way. Over four hundred tourers and two hundred racers turned out to participate in last year's Craftsbury Marathon, skiing either 25km or 50km.

There's a wonderful article with photos of the Craftsbury event in the Winter 2001 issue of Vermont Life, and because of the article and word-of-mouth testimony from last year's participants, John says, "The response has been fantastic. Registrations are pouring in. We will likely reach our maximum of 600 well before race day. Former Olympians in any sport are being given complimentary entries this year in honor of the Olympics in Salt Lake City. We have gotten entries from former Olympic kayakers, rowers, and skiers so far. Be sure to send in your entries soon!"

And what was that about gourmet food stations? Really? Yes! Food cooked by local restaurants and actually served up along the trail! Andrew Nemethy's article in Vermont Life gives us a tantalizing description of what

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participants enjoyed along the way last year: lemon sunshine bars, warm pesto turnovers and mushroom turnovers, hot split pea soup and spicy sausage-lentil soup. Food to eat as you stand around and enjoy conversation with people who have been skiing with you along the trail. Food to make a person in the touring class devoutly grateful not to be racing! Haven't we all longed for an experience like this?

Seeing what John Brodhead had going so successfully over at Craftsbury, Jeff Foltz of the Rangeley Lakes cross country ski club sat down with some folks and dreamed up The Rangeley Lakes Loppet -- "Ski the Outer Limits!" The Rangeley Loppet on March 2, 2002, will be their sixth annual. They promise "an immaculately groomed 25km loop that features wide trails with both skating lane and tracks set for classical technique." Jeff says they call the course "the Outer Limits" because of the awesome scenery, the panoramic ridges of mountains that the trail parallels, with a three kilometer stretch of gentle trail along a ridge that reminds everyone of the Rocky Mountains. And yet it's an enjoyable, fun and eminently skiable course. "The racers will feel fast and the tourers will have an enjoyable day. It's a great course for everyone!" Jeff says.

Rangeley offers a cozy lodge with childcare available during the race, which drew thank you notes and emails last year after the event, such as this one: "Thank you so MARATHONS, continued on page six

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### NEW ENGLAND NORDIC NEWS

NENN is published six times a year as a membership benefit of the New England Nordic Ski Association. If you are not yet a NENSA member, please join — support nordic skiing in New England!

To request a NENSA membership application, contact the NENSA Administrative Office. For fastest processing, send your membership fee in with your request for the membership form — as of 4/25/99, it's \$30 for the first member of the family (\$40 if not affiliated with a club), and \$20 for each additional family member (\$30 if not club-affiliated), payable to NENSA. When you return the signed membership form, you'll receive the NENSA competition guide and other membership benefits.

For information about life membership in NENSA, contact the Administrative Office.

### DEADLINES

Articles and pictures submitted for publication in NENN must be in the editors' hands not later than:  
Midwinter (January) issue: November 25  
Late Winter (March) issue: January 25  
Spring (May) issue: March 25  
Summer (July) issue: May 25  
Early Fall (September) issue: July 25  
Late Fall (November) issue: September 25

Photos and graphics are always welcome. If related to an article, photos or graphics should be submitted with the text.

### ADVERTISING

For complete particulars on advertising in NENN and/or the NENSA Competition Guide, contact the Administrative Office.

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## FROM THE EDITORS

As this issue heads to press, the grass outside is greening up again and the temperatures are near record high for early December. But this is New England, so we know that a change is just around the corner. Some kind of change, anyway!

We certainly have a full winter ahead of us, with the Olympic Games in Utah beginning just a month from the time this issue is in your mailboxes, and with a full season of NENSA events here in New England (so many that we haven't even tried to list them in this issue -- be sure to check your Comp Guide or go to the NENSA website listed on the left column of this page to see the offerings, plus many photos and articles). In this issue we've highlighted a few of the events that make us grateful to be living and skiing in New England. Organizers of all ages and backgrounds have put a phenomenal amount of work into hosting events such as the New England marathon series, Ski for Women, the Bill Koch Festival, the Masters Championships, just to name a few. This winter we hope you take part in some of these events, and when you do, be sure to thank the organizers who have put many volunteer hours into making it the best possible event it can be!

Wishing you a great winter,

Anne Donaghy and Mary Hamel,  
editors

Co-

## New England Ski for Women

Sunday, January 20, 2002. 9:30am-3:30pm

Holderness School, Plymouth, NH

Women of all ages will have the opportunity to learn to ski or to improve their skiing skills in a casual, friendly environment instructed by female skiers, a number of them former Olympians! The events of the day include: ski clinics for beginners to intermediate level skiers, equipment and waxing demonstrations, clothing displays, 2-women short, fun relay races with special recognition for mother/daughter teams, sisters, relatives, oldest, youngest. Limited day care (no infants) is provided and food will be available. Similar events take place in Anchorage, Alaska and Lillehammer, Norway. Come help begin a new tradition in New England!

For more info. call Fred Griffin at the NENSA office (see address in the left column of this page).

## BILL KOCH YOUTH SKI LEAGUE

### The Bill Koch League Festival: 2002

Can you feel it? The rhythm, I mean. When you ski? It's there, you just need to let yourself feel it. When you watch ski videos, it's easy to see how the skiers flow to the rhythm. This year's Bill Koch Festival will celebrate that rhythm. The 2002 Bill Koch Festival will be held in Farmington, Maine at the Titcomb Ski Touring Center. The Maine Bill Koch ski clubs will host the event on March 2 & 3. A committee, headed by Caroline Mathes, is working to provide all New England Bill Koch skiers and their families an exciting weekend. Several meetings have already been held with volunteers coming from all over the state. Even some past Bill Koch parents are involved, like chief of timing, Randy Easter. Caroline says, "We're going to have a lot of fun over the weekend. Lots of fun, fun, fun!" There will be hundreds of youth skiers from all over New England. Have your clubs and districts started to get ready for the opening ceremonies parade yet? March will be here before you know it. Now's the time to plan your part in celebrating the theme.

The weekend festivities will kick off with Opening Ceremonies on Saturday, March 2nd at 10 AM. The start is earlier than in past years because of a new event on Saturday afternoon. After the classical relays have been completed, a "fun" sprint will be staged. The skiers will be sent out, by age group, in waves with one skier per district in each wave. Sunday's individual races are skate events.

You can find more detailed information on the NENSA web site by going to the Bill Koch League link.

### NENSA Annual Appeal Delayed!

Uncertainty over Volvo's status as a sponsor has pushed NENSA's Annual Drive back to late January. The Appeal will be dedicated to sustaining NENSA's programs through these difficult times.

### Make It FUN! It's Your Responsibility!

By Ed Hamel, Coach - Berkshire Trails Ski Club

It might be named the Bill Koch Youth Ski League but both children and adults belong. The adults' main purpose in the league is to organize events and make sure that all BK participants who partake in activities (on and off snow) do so in a fun, active way. Are the adults supposed to have fun too? You betcha!

There are certain responsibilities that come with being a member of the BKL. Both athletes and adults have responsibilities towards each other. The Koch league is about finding life long enjoyment in skiing but the process goes a lot further than that. The biggest reason kids participate in sport is to have fun. The adults owe it to the kids to ensure that every Koch session is a session to remember. If the kids have fun then they will have the desire to come back again and again. Koch sessions could easily become the highlight of after school activity. Make it fun and have fun. That's a tall order to fill. So, it's a responsibility of the young skiers to remind the coaches of things to do that are fun. Tell your coach what your favorite activities involve. Maybe it's a game of tag or a ski along your favorite trail after a new snow fall. Maybe it's building a snowman or flying a kite. All these activities can be accomplished with your skis strapped to your feet.

Athletes have other responsibilities towards their coaches. Guess what! Coaches like to have fun too. Young skiers can make their coaches happy by trying their best. You need to listen to your coach and give them the respect and attention that they deserve. Coaches are there to help all members of the BKL and they need to leave a practice session feeling pretty good about themselves. When a coach feels good about a session, they leave with a feeling of accomplishment.

Coaches and young skiers must respect and enjoy each other. Be fair and reasonable to all skiers. Confidence can be gained by feeling good about the activity you are doing or just completed. I can't wait 'til my next BK session, how about you?

## WAXING TIPS

### Race Day ski testing protocols

This is from Nat Brown's "Nordic Ultra-Tune Update" Fall, 2001 newsletter. You can subscribe for free to Nat's online newsletter simply by sending an email to: <ultratune\_update@yahoo.com> Any other correspondence should be addressed to Nat's old address: natxcgrind@yahoo.com.

When I was with the USST we followed this protocol: Prior to the race we tested both waxes and structures on different, matched sets of skis (about 8 of each -- but I do it now with two or three; it simply narrows the field). Over the years we narrowed the field in waxes AND structures considerably, through a huge test data base. When we have a crew, we continue to do it this way. With only a coach or two, or when alone, we do this:

Given that the ski is the major factor, we expect everyone to know his skis well enough to pick two pairs; some skiers know so well that they pick only one. In many cases, this may mean two different but close structures -- but let me reiterate: the ski is the thing. On top of this, structure, while important, is secondary: almost the right structure is as good as the right structure -- and some are so good and wide-ranging (e.g.: R2 or LJ03) that I feel very confident to relax and forget the little differences.

Next, the wax manufacturers generally know their stuff and have tested far more than we ever could, so given "the

thermometer and what it says on the box," we always apply the (glide) wax the night before. Generally change will not be necessary, but if things change a lot, all the pre-layering, etc. will be done, and putting on a different final wax will be quick and easy.

So now we have two pairs waxed the same. Test them BY SKIING (speed traps test skis at 50% weight, and so are useless for picking skis, which you will be weighting at 1-200% or more of body weight while actually skiing); this can be done by switching pairs, or by skiing one ski from each pair. Everyone has a different way -- it all depends on training yourself to test and notice.

Then it's time to do a good warm up, forget all the voodoo and then get out there and race. As Mike Gallagher used to say, "You don't need Cera-F, you need Cera-Ass!"

Classic days can be simpler, as most people have one pair for wet and one for dry snow, or even less. If you have multiple pairs, rely on knowing your skis, or if there is doubt, follow the same procedure, wax them the same, etc.

The important thing, again, is the skis: which breaks better? Which goes UPHILL better? (Downhill speed is only a small percentage of winning a race.) In the case of classic skis, which kicks better?

In the end, the best thing is to keep it simple and concentrate on relaxing and skiing fast.

From the "Correspondence" section of the December 1931 Appalachian Mountain Club bulletin:

The verb "to hike." -- It is reported that in a recent contest in England to determine the twelve most unpopular words a high place was attained by the verb "to hike." Had the voting been extended to this country, I am sure it would have kept its rank...

The circumstances of a word are determined by its history. Common report has it that the general use of the word began in the American army on duty in the Philippines. But the dictionaries give it an older lineage as "Dial.; coll.," and mention various districts in the North of England. Webster, 1927, defines: "1. To move with a swing, toss, throw, jerk or the like. 2. To cause to march laboriously." The Standard, 1929, among more detailed references to the swings and jerks, with illustrations, adds: "n. (local U.S.) - a weary journey on foot." The great Murray knows it not, but Wright's English Dialect Dictionary furnishes juicy details. It has a sound old Anglo-Saxon preterite, HUCK; how much more fruity than "hiked"! The general idea is connected with jerks and tosses, but the word seems capable of meaning almost anything. Among the many quotations are two Yorkshire gems: "Timothy's goat cum behind him and hiked him over the hedge," and "Ye mun mind yander bull; he's a nasty beggar for hiking."

Dictionaries are, of course, always behind the times and here have not yet received a vision of the sleazily knickerbockered and silk-stockinged young women who infest the highways about New York (and, I presume, other cities) looking for an easy lift to

## From the Archives

complete their exhausting five-mile "hike." Nor of that highwayman-parasite the "hitch-hiker," whose detailed method and proud boast that he can cross the continent any time in something like a week on something less than no money is set forth for our emulation in a recent magazine article. Yet surely the word seems somehow to belong pre-eminently to them.

In his perennially delightful essay on "Walking" George Macaulay Trevelyan asks provocatively, in a foot-note: "Is there the same sort of difference between TRAMPING and WALKING as between PADDLING and ROWING, SCRAMBLING, and CLIMBING?" And later: "It may be argued that scrambling and its elder brother climbing are the essence of Walking made perfect. And there are still left MARCH and RAMBLE (which under British legs is a good stout thing) and STROLL, and many others to express the variations in the joy of walking."

Can we not, therefore, as members of a properly ancient walking club, set ourselves firmly to use words for our activity which call up pleasant pictures and leave all thoughts of jerks and tosses, all memories of enforced and weary journeys, to the miserable majority who know no more than motor highways?

Ruth Gillette Hardy.

[The Editors dedicate this to Fred Griffin.]



## NEW ENGLAND MARATHON SERIES

much for arranging the sitters. I'm sure you had a million things to organize at the last minute and this added another to the list. It was very nice for us both to ski."

There will also be a big prize table again this year, with all participants eligible for the prizes, not just the event winners. Jeff had thank you emails on that, too. Someone wrote: "Thanks so much! I raced poorly but I walked away with a pair of poles and a wax iron!"

And how about the gourmet food? "Oh, we had many extremely favorable comments about the food," Jeff says. "People sent thank you notes particularly about the homebaked goods. And the grilled sausage was a huge hit after the race. We plan to have gourmet food stations along the course, like last year's cheese fondue dip at the first stop, and then there was fruit ambrosia at another, and homemade brownies to die for..." Well, certainly to ski for!

The thank you note that best sums up the Rangeley Loppet came from Dave Hosmer, a man who has skied many, many cross country events, has the best eyes in the crowd for organizational detail and doesn't use superlatives lightly: "The race was a lifetime top ten experience. You guys did just an awesome job on the race. The course was just about perfect for a "general audience" 50 k race... scenic and a lot of fun to ski. We do not need to hold marathons on World Cup level courses. Yours was perfect: the fast guys went fast and us slow ones went slower and we were all pleasantly tired (exhausted) at the end. I think the Craftsbury/classic and Rangeley/skate is just the way it should be. Craftsbury's course (the first 25 k) would not be good for skating with a crowd. For us in the weak arms bracket your course would not be fun to classic as it has too many long double pole sections... The course prep simply could not have been better."

It would be exceedingly difficult to improve on the Rangeley experience. But wait! There's the Great Glen to Bretton Woods Nordic Adventure on March 10, 2002!

If you are into point to point skiing and views, you had better not miss this inaugural event that starts at the Great Glen Trails Outdoor Center, travels up the Pinkham B Road (closed in winter) and over the Presidential Range Rail Trail to Jefferson Notch at an elevation of 3,000 feet. From there a long descent brings skiers to the Base Road and into Bretton Woods. It's a classic technique ski adventure rounding the northern half of Mount Washington. And there is even the option of skiing just 25km to Jefferson Notch and being bussed back to Bretton Woods.

Sue Long, the Event Director, writes that in addition to already hearing from many skiers interested in participating in this first annual event, "We're also very pleased by the phone calls and e-mails from folks wanting to help work the event. It's quite an undertaking, and the help and cooperation we're getting from the U.S Forest Service, the NH Bureau of Trails, the NH Department of Transportation, local snowmobile clubs, our sponsors and other volunteers is invaluable for the event's success. I think the Nordic Adventure can become another one of the classic, long-lived Mt. Washington challenge-type events (like the Mt. Washington Road Race, and the Bicycle Hillclimb), where, when a participant crosses the finish line, they are justifiably very proud of themselves, for what they've just accomplished."

Will there be gourmet feeding stations? Well, there's a big pasta dinner with all the trimmings for only \$12.95 per person the night before the event, at the Bretton Woods Alpine Resort base lodge. During the event racers will be plied with food, drink and waxing supplies (and first aid, if necessary) at four stations along the route. At this point it doesn't sound like there will be any spicy sausage soup or fruit ambrosia, but maybe next year...

For more information on these NENSA events, go to the NENSA website: <http://www.nensa.net>.

For more information on the Craftsbury Marathon: [www.craftsbury.com](http://www.craftsbury.com) or 802-586-7767.

For more information on the Rangeley Loppet: [www.etravelmaine.com/rangeleyxcski](http://www.etravelmaine.com/rangeleyxcski) or 207-864-4309

For more information on the Great Glen-Bretton Woods Adventure: [www.ggtobw.com](http://www.ggtobw.com) or 603-466-2333. Sue Long asked us to print the correct email contact for the Great Glen-Bretton Woods Adventure: [sue@mt-washington.com](mailto:sue@mt-washington.com).

## NEW ENGLAND MARATHON SERIES

"Jeff--Great Job Today--thanks to all your volunteers---it was a perfect day for a perfect race! Thanks," Marty Hall

"The post race feed was quite remarkable. When your race grows into the many hundreds you may regret having set such a high standard for post race food."

"My wife especially liked that every km was marked! We had a great time and will be back for next year's race. Thanks again!"

"Dear Mr. Foltz, I just wanted to let you know I participated in the race yesterday and had a wonderful time. The course was beautiful and everything was well organized. I appreciate all the effort your club put into hosting the event. Thanks alot."

"Great job with the marathon Sunday. A great trail with stellar views. Many congratulations."

Photos on this page are of the Craftsbury Marathon, 2001.

Above: The racers' start

Right: Along the trail (that next gourmet food station is just ahead!)

Photo credit - Kate Carter. With thanks to the Craftsbury Outdoor Center for providing them!

## Masters Skiing -- Early Season

by Rob Bradley, CSU

Were you frustrated by this past November's lack of snow? Tired of the same old rollerski routes? After thirty years of the same fall training routine I decided to try something different this year. I joined Masters skiers John Sackett and Dave Boucher for Thanksgiving week skiing in West Yellowstone, Montana.

We arrived to find no snow. However, rollerskiing up the closed Yellowstone Park main road was an exciting change from New England scenery. I saw the first baldeagle and first elk herd of my life.

The Western skiers were blase about the lack of snow, sure in the knowledge of imminent storms. We New England snow dogs were straining at the leash and after two days spent rolling we drove off in Dave's car on a snow hunt. We sniffed out 3K of great skiing on a 8500 ft. plateau. We skied down the road winding through the lodgepole pines to a high spot with views of magnificent mountains. Later that night a small storm moved through giving us excellent skiing on the town trails the next day.

Westerners don't seem to give Thanksgiving the High Holy Day status that we do in the East. Over one hundred novice skiers showed up for a three day camp beginning on the holiday. The trails were packed with coaches and skiers enjoying the gently rolling hills.

Along with enjoying the snow and scenery we went to the IMAX theatre and later the Wolf and Bear Discovery Center. Watching a 800 lb grizzly nimbly climb trees to swat down pre-placed food corrected my Eastern view of bears as slow and mild creatures. To be safe always ski with a slower skier.

For any skiers looking to get a jump on the season and a psychological lift, I recommend a trip to "Yelly."

Uncomplicated  
Effectively  
Fast  
Ski Wax and Tools  
reasonably priced  
Toko Max Tip Line Support  
Innovative



## 2002 NENSA Masters' Championships

January 26 & 27, 2002: Jackson, New Hampshire

NENSA is bringing together the Volvo NENSA Masters Championships with a weekend of Volvo Eastern Cup races -- on Saturday the EC will be a sprint at Great Glen, while New England's racing Masters will be competing in an individual freestyle race and sprint relay at Jackson. On Sunday everyone comes together at Jackson for the NENSA Masters and Eastern Cup classic technique seeded mass start races!

Racers at Jackson will be skiing on Jackson's World Championship courses. Lodging can easily be found -- ranging from economical to sumptuous -- in the Jackson and Conway areas. Festivities will include a torchlight parade through Jackson Village with larger than life puppets. There will be a banquet at the Black Mountain Ski Area, with entertainment provided by a bluegrass band.

For detailed information about the weekend, including lodging information and the race registration form, go to: <http://www.jacksonxc.org/Events/VNMC2002.htm> or phone: Jackson Ski Touring Foundation 603-383-9355. The Jackson Ski Touring Foundation is a non-profit organization chartered to maintain cross country ski trails in and about the village of Jackson.

# NENSA

## Skier Etiquette

by Fred Griffin, NENSA Executive Director

Etiquette for skiers? Rules, right? The FIS Handbook details these nicely. And isn't there a piece on the NENSA website—"Rules To Ski By"? Why are we traveling down this road again? It's behaviors off the race course I am talking about this time around, not those on it. The very important relationship between racer and race site is something I've never seen addressed, yet it remains a critical part of a successful event.

Pat Cote and I met with this year's Eastern Cup race directors at a workshop in Holderness in early November. Our intent was to make sure each site was clear on our expectations for the coming season. We ended up doing a lot more listening than talking, learning than instructing. Let me share the lessons with you.

They begin and end with the understanding that a race site is not a commodity for skiers to select, use, discard, and leave behind. The centers, the trails, and the people who put on Eastern Cup races are an integral part of the community we call cross country skiing in New England. They have elected to take on a difficult challenge with a guarantee of hard work. They care about our sport.

NENSA staff spends time with Race Directors in support of clean starts, well-marked courses, quick and accurate results. It is a two-year multi-step process to land an Eastern Cup. Sites need to have a workforce of volunteers and a track record of running successful smaller events. Course and stadium layout, along with parking and adequate shelter must pass muster. In short, Eastern Cup sites have earned our respect—they should have yours as well. How do you show it?

Registration: Late registrations, illegible registration forms, forms sent without money all create headaches for race sites. They are poor etiquette, bad manners. They force race directors and secretaries to work into the wee hours and create snarls at the bib pick-ups on the day of race. Sure, sometimes racing is a last minute decision—but all too frequently racing is a decision made early on and it's the paperwork that is last minute. Planning your schedule in advance and sending in clear, clean, fully completed forms is not an option. It is required protocol.

Awards: Race directors spend considerable time and money putting together medals and prizes at Eastern Cup races. It is a courtesy not only to them but to your fellow competitors to stay for the awards ceremony. If you are slated to receive a medal or prize but are forced to

leave you should inform the race director or staff of your circumstance.

Housekeeping: We are not at a baseball park, a basketball arena, a race track where it is accepted for food wrappers, peanut shells, paper cups to drop to the pavement. Cross country skiers have earned the reputation of being respectful of the environment, guardians of clear air and pristine forests. I can't think of a single excuse for klisters tubes, race packets materials, detritus of any sort to be left behind when we leave.

Gratitude: Humanize your race experience. Understand that many of the folks responsible are volunteers and those who aren't are putting in extra hours under frequently arduous conditions to provide you the chance to race. When was the last time you thanked a groomer or course marshal, registration worker or race director, for a job well done? Please and thank you are life's lubricants. It's your job to keep things flowing smoothly wherever you are.

Many of you are already schooled to proper race etiquette. It all comes down to understanding the needs of all the members of every neighborhood in our cross-country ski community. It's only good manners.

## NENSA Race Officiating Workshops

Jan. 12 - Bolton Valley, VT (freestyle format)

Jan. 13 - Ole's in Waitsfield, VT (classical format)

Jan. 26 - Jackson, NH (freestyle race and relay)

Cost: \$10.00 per day (FIS Manual \$20.00 extra)

Instructors: Ted Gardner, Jim Rodrigues

NENSA employs officials at all Eastern Cup and Championship events. Technical Delegates are paid a standard fee of 50.00 per race plus mileage expense. TD's work with the Race Directors and Chief of Course to provide safe, smooth-running competitions. These small-group, hands-on workshops provide the opportunity to observe first-hand the structure and dynamics of a high level cross-country event. Participants will work with NENSA instructors as they shadow the Technical Delegate assigned to the races they attend. Follow-up opportunities will be given to those who wish to achieve officiating proficiency. Participants MUST register with Fred at the Administrative Office: 802-874-2270 or fred@nensa.net

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# CONTINENTAL CUP RACING

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## Silver Star Report

by Zach Caldwell

The Nor-Am circuit got off to an especially early start this season with races in Fairbanks on the first weekend of November. But the early start didn't seem to dampen the enthusiasm of the North American ski racing community for the late November Continental Cup races in Silver Star, BC. Once again this season there was a field of talent worthy of any National Championship. This season the atmosphere was especially tense as all of the early season points races are potential Olympic qualifiers.

By the time you read this our Olympic hopefuls will be heading into the homestretch of the qualifying period. After the past week here it appears that US National Championships in Bozeman will be a very important series of races for those skiers who still have a shot at an Olympic team berth.

The Silver Star races held some pretty big surprises, starting right away with the classic event on Thanksgiving day. The temperature was very close to the freezing point and humidity was very high. It snowed on and off and the tracks glazed after only a few skiers. It quickly became apparent that ski selection would make a big difference as the waxes that would kick well tended to be quite slow. Folks (like Kris Freeman) who skied on soft skis were generally out of luck as the course featured quite a lot of fast flat terrain. The surprise of the day was Marc Gilbertson who finished second. By most criteria he missed the wax badly and had almost no kick. He actually chose the same wax that we were using with the Stratton group but he kept it very short and thin. With almost no kick Marc double-poled his way to his best-ever national level classic finish. The big success of the day for the Stratton group was Andy Newell's 14th place finish - about 30 seconds behind the likes of Marcus Nash.

The classic race was followed a day later by the sprint. Once again Andy Newell had everybody talking after he won the qualifying round half a second ahead of the USST sprint specialist Torin Koos. In the past Andy has shown blazing speed in qualifying but hasn't fared as well in the elimination heats. This year he appears to be showing a little more tenacity as he easily controlled all his heats until he lost the final to Carl Swenson in the last straight away. The other notable performance from the SMS crew was Dave Smutock's 7th place performance in qualifying. That is roughly the position that Newell held in qualifying a year ago, when he went on to finish sixth at Junior World Championships. Dave got off to a good start in his opening heat against Andrew Johnson, but they

get tangled up on the first sharp corner when Andrew successfully pulled off an aggressive inside pass and Dave wound up on his butt. Chalk it up to experience and watch out at US Nationals! On the women's side Tessa Benoit showed great speed, easily controlling every heat on her way to victory.

After a day of rest the skate races were the final event of the series. The skate course was moved down from the mountain where the classic race was held, as continually falling snow had provided enough cover on the tougher race courses down low. Several coaches predicted a close race ahead of time and nearly everybody was surprised at how quickly the times spread out on the tough course. Justin Wadsworth won the men's race easily ahead of Carl Swenson and Andrew Johnson. Marc Gilbertson continued to build on his promising form, finishing 5th in spite of what he considered a disastrous performance. Nina Kempel won the women's race easily ahead of the Canadian Fortier sisters and Wendy Wagner. Tessa had a disappointing day, feeling strong but sluggish and finishing 13th.

From here the Continental Cup series moves to the Midwest with stops at Thunder Bay and Telemark. However, it's not clear how many of the top skiers will make the swing eastward. Without the top skiers it's hard to get good race penalties, and the opportunities for good Olympic Qualifying points appear to be slim. As of now there are a handful of people that are looking pretty solid for Olympic Team spots. Nina and Wendy look good on the women's side. On the men's side Justin Wadsworth, Carl Swenson, Kris Freeman, Andrew Johnson and Pat Weaver are all holding good points. It wouldn't be a big surprise to see Torin Koos and Marcus Nash placed on the team by coaches discretion. If that's the case then it is likely that a handful of athletes are fighting it out for the possibility (but certainly not the promise) of one or, at the most, two more spots. Right now Dave Chamberlain appears to have the points to claim that position, but his form hasn't been as good as he'd like. Marc Gilbertson and John Bauer have been skiing well, each garnering a couple of top-five finishes this past week, but the points haven't been all that helpful with the large spread in the skate race and the somewhat flukey results in the classic race. Justin Freeman hasn't yet shown the form to claim a spot, but certainly can't be counted out. In any case, we've got four New Englanders looking solid, with a handful of others knocking on the door. We should be well represented on the men's side. Tessa is our best shot on the women's side. She's got to find another gear, but that's nothing new for her this time of year. So, cross your fingers for the Eastern skiers at US Nationals!

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## SPRING SERIES RACING

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### NENSA/USSA Spring Series

by Chris Klein

O.K. what exactly is this Spring Series thing all about?? Even if you live deep in the woods and only get out once a month, you've heard about this spring series by now. So, you must be asking yourself a few questions. Why is this a big deal? What makes it different from any other race? What will I see there? As a participant of numerous Spring Series, (ten of the last twelve to be exact) I feel that I can answer a few of those questions.

The spring series is the last event that is on the national scoring calendar, or the last NRL event of the year. Many of you are familiar with the NRL but then again, to many of you it's just a few initials. The NRL stands for National Ranking List. This is the ranking list that consumes the thoughts and actions of any cross-country skier in the country with lofty goals. The NRL is included in almost every elite selection criteria and provides us with a system of measuring an athlete's performance for any given day in any part of the world. It ranks athletes by using an average of their best four performances throughout the year. Each athlete earns NRL points based on their performance in a given race. These points are the result of a calculation formula that only Einstein would understand. At the end of each period, the points are posted and an athlete receives a National Ranking. It is this ranking that is used by the US Ski Team to determine selection to many international events and teams, including the Olympics and World Championships. Since points are calculated with the strength of the field in mind, it is in an athlete's best interest to get in as many points races as possible and get to the events that have the best competition.

With our country being so big there are only three to four events a year that bring our best skiers together, in turn providing the best points races of the year. Spring Series is one of those events, making it a focal point for the best athletes in the country. It's the last chance of the season for a skier to get good points and up their ranking before heading into the long summer break. This is the first time the Spring Series has come to the East. It's a great opportunity for skiers of all ages and shouldn't be missed!

So, now we know why this is a big deal to many of the country's elite but what makes it different from the other NRL events? FUN!!! The spring series has always carried an underlying theme of fun. Being the last big event of the year, it serves as a celebration of all the hard work and sacrifice that athletes have made throughout

the season. Spring is right around the corner and it's a great way to lighten up and take that mental break that is much needed after the long season. Spring Series has always been the perfect balance of racing and fun. Many events are planned beyond the races, bringing the athletes together in a non-competitive arena. It strengthens friendships, sportsmanship, and reminds us of the reasons why we ski. Not only is it a race series, it's a festival of skiing. It's no wonder that the best athletes return for Spring Series year after year.

Have you ever heard of Kristina Smigun? How about Beckie Scott? Thomas Alsgaard? Lukas Bauer? Martin Koukal? They are all recent alum of the Spring Series and a preview of the athletes that you may see. You'll see a vendor village near the start line with representatives from various ski companies and other sponsors. You'll witness a carnival atmosphere that is often reserved for events in Europe. You might see the CU Team snowboarding down a nearby peak or a pick up game of football or softball. You'll see athletes waxing out in the sun while barbecuing, followed by a retreat to the hot tub where they will plan their post-season trips to the beaches of the South. You'll hear plenty of laughter and can be sure to see a bunch of skiers take over a local dance floor, displaying why they stick to skiing. Oh yeah, did I mention there will be great racing too??

The only acceptable excuse for not making it: you don't like skiing or having fun. We'll see you there!!

Chris Klein is the Director of this upcoming Spring Series. He is also the Nordic Director at Salmon Hills Resort in NY, and is the Athlete Representative to the USSA cross country committee. Chris raced for many years as a Mid-A athlete, for St. Lawrence University, Team Stratton, Gold 2002, and he raced for the U.S. last winter at the World Cup at Soldier Hollow.

News Flash: National Life Insurance has stepped forward to be the Title Sponsor of the NENSA/USSA Spring Series!

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