

HUNTLY NORDIC SKI CLUB

www.nordicski.org.uk

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RACING ISSUE



Clash Snow days = 34 (24 good, 10 marginal)

Editorial

The early snow of October/November/December gave promise of a classic Clash season but just to infuriate & frustrate us this was followed by a drought for the remainder of December & the whole of January. To add to our misery the south got more than they knew what to do with, "send some our way" we cried. Yep it did return & February with the full fury of a Scottish winter & gave us some of the deepest snow I've ever seen in the forest – nothing this deep since 2001 when the sled dogs made their only visit – never to return – too much snow! I would normally have produced a mid-season newsletter but after having to cancel our two January events I've been a bit short of local news. I was convinced the Huntly Open Championships would go ahead in February but the metre deep snow disappeared within a week & we are faced with one of those rare years where we don't manage to hold at least one on-snow event. But looking at the snow days so far we are on track for an average season, we just need another week of late season snow. But as someone who thinks the Clash Hill Climb is fun maybe this annual "will we, won't we get snow" torment is appropriate. It is not only Scotland that suffers from a lack of snow at the right time. The World Biathlon Championships in Korea did not have a single flake on the course the night before the competition started. Then, with the assistance of 500 volunteers, stored snow was taken from warehouses & overnight a 2.5km loop was created – oh to have those resources.

However we are not short of news as this has been the most challenging & successful seasons for the club's racing whippets & I can only briefly summarise their & the GB Squad's achievements.

MUSINGS FROM THE FOREST

The February Full Moon Stomp faced cancellation – too much snow & dodgy roads - but in the end the dogged determination of a resolute band of skiers with quite frankly dubious sanity headed not to the Clash but to the more accessible Bin Forest. I wasn't there but I believe they had fun & none were lost. Remarkably efficient for a Huntly outing. Although the Clash was difficult to reach, the voluminous snow allowed exploration elsewhere be it on railway lines (disused) or on classic Aberdeenshire hills like Bennachie.

When finally the Clash was reached the intrepid trailblazers were staggered to see such deep snow. Estimates of an average depth of metre throughout were probably not an exaggeration. Great! The newly trained snowmobile drivers were raring to go. But then comes the problem - it was all too much for our tired old snowmobile. Rick, Alan, Dave & Colin spent a day just running the snowmobile around the Biathlon Range triangle (1.4km). Then it snowed again. Just over a week to go to the Open Champs & Rick was determined to start compacting the snow for the races. At literally the furthest point from home on the Haute Route he encountered a ditch too far, with daylight running out he took the sensible decision of walking out. That is how we know the snow was over a metre deep, Rick plumbed every step.

The following day Pete, Dave & Alan recovered buried snowmobile & managed to run it several times around the main trails. The next day an attempt was made to take the roller out but defeat was admitted before reaching Rollercoaster. Still the grooming that was done did provide a good track around the Haute Route. Three days later the trails were broken & not long after there were just patches.....

While examining these patches Colin Miller came up with his micro-climate theory for the forest. It is true that some areas of the forest are noticeably colder than others. *La Glace de Clash** is one such area, he mused, it must be said in company with Roy, which might explain the outlandishness of it all, how much colder would it have to be to produce a glacier on one of these cold spots? I did suggest to Colin he may be suffering from *lackofsnowitis* – this manifests itself in ramblings & is due to an absence of skiable snow – I know!

* Colin is wont to give poetic names to parts of the forest, some so secret he will not even tell me where they are. *La Glace de Clash* is the exciting downhill the other side of Leids Leap.



Test driving the new snowmobile

RACING NEWS.

It has been a long & immensely successful season for Huntly skiers involved with the British Squad. The logistical nightmare of getting skiers & coaches to destinations from Norway to China; developing individualised training programmes from relatively novice juniors through to World Cup skiers & then preparing teams for major international championships has been the product of many individuals. Much of this work is unglamorous, such as booking flights & accommodation, & the people who do this usually go unrecorded. I could start naming people but would only miss someone however I don't think anyone would begrudge me naming the main coaches Roy Young & Al Dargie & their major role in getting the guys to where they are today. This has been done with few resources but these two have gone out there gained the knowledge, soaked up a lot of freely given advice from Norwegian & Canadian coaches & applied it in a remarkably successful way. It should also be recorded that the team has benefited with practical & moral support from coaches of many nations, even when our skiers have directly challenged theirs – true sportsmanship. Of course the athletes themselves have got a bit to do with it & their dedication & hard work has given them an opportunity that I for one, envy. So to the whole lot of you, whatever your role – well done!

The following summary concentrates on Huntly skiers but it should be noted that skiers from other clubs also performed admirably this winter & if you want to read more about the rest of the team you should go to www.britnordicteam.co.uk for some excellent write ups, photos & videos.

British Championships, Austria, Feb 2009.

As part of the British Nordic Development Squad Stuart Gray, Harry Nicholls, Rory Swann & Cameron Miller travelled to a very snowy British Championships at Obertilliach. This was the second time Rory & Cameron had competed at these championships but for Stuart & Harry it was their first time. A contingent of juniors from the Cairngorm & Highland ski clubs meant there was good competition in the boy's races. Rory took a third in the 5km classic but Cameron had a race to forget when a wrong turn led to his disqualification. I'm sure he will learn from the experience because this is what this competition is all about, learning & gaining experience. Ruaridh Newman & Michael May, travelling across from the Austrian Championships, joined the squad for the 4km double-pursuit. Ruaridh took first place in a closely fought race with Michael May third only 0.5sec behind the silver medal. Olwen Thorn took bronze in the Ladies 10km classic & made up for her navigational error in last year's pursuit race by winning gold this year (you see Cammie you are not first Huntly skier to go astray in a race).

In the Meggitt's Sprints Huntly skiers came away with some prize money with Olwen once again winning the ladies race & Ruaridh, Michael, Rory & Cameron taking clean sweep of the boy's final.

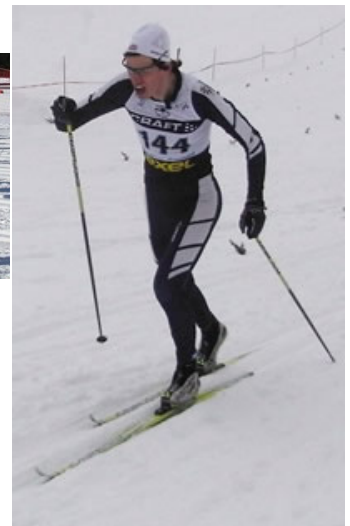
World Junior Championships, France, Feb 2009.

After the experience of the World Juniors last year, Sarah Young, Andrew Musgrave, Alex Standen & Andrew Young had another high altitude venue for their races this year, a very Alpine & picturesque Praz de Lys Sommand. Also there was PJ Barron who this time was skiing for Ireland. Not only did the skiers have to cope with the altitude but also temperatures as high as 10°C on one race day.

Andrew Young had a particularly fast sprint coming 39th. Alex & Sarah both had a couple of their best results this season in their 10km & 5km free races. Musgrave got us pretty excited with a remarkable 12th place in the 20km Pursuit, but topped this a couple of days later when he turned in a stunning 9th place in the 10km free – I knew it was stunning when a slightly animated Roy phoned the Ski Centre during a snow-less JDS to give the news hot off the press. I got one or two disbelieving looks when I relayed the information & it took another phone call from Roy to convince everyone that he wasn't having us on.



Action from the World Juniors.
L: Musgrave in 20km Pursuit.
C: Start Ladies Pursuit.
R: AY in Classic Sprint.



European Youth Olympics, Poland, Feb 2009.

Deborah May, William Newman, Callum Smith & Andrew Young travelled with the British Youth Olympics team to Szczyrk. I have already mentioned the snow at Obertilliach, but there is snow & there is snow, & Szczyrk had snow! This led to journeys of up to three hours each day to reach the cross-country venues & races were postponed one day because of too much snow. Misfortune struck the team when Andrew went down with flu & was unable to compete in any of the races but, despite the great disappointment, Andrew displayed great strength of character by concentrating on getting well & fit again for his next competition (the World Championships). Something like this can demoralise a team but in the case of our skiers they were galvanised in to great racing. Callum produced Britain's best ever result with a 28th place in the 7.5km classic (his target was top 30) earning him the honour of carrying the flag at the closing ceremony (as did Alex Standen two years ago). William produced his best result in the same race, well up the field in 58th place & well within the 20% target set by Roy. Deborah has worked very hard to earn her place in the team & overcame her nerves to prove this place was deserved with some solid results.



Callum Smith

World Championships, Czech Republic, Feb 2009.



Muzzy being chased by Australian Ben Sim in 30km Pursuit.

The World Championships at Liberec had us setting our Sky boxes to see if we could catch glimpses of the British skiers. We had by far the youngest team there with all of our skiers eligible for the World Juniors & one young enough for the Youth Olympics. This really was playing with the big boys (or girls). What did show up was the philosophy of getting teams to major competitions really pays off for a team that has few resources to match the major nations. The skiers in the team, on days they weren't racing, could act as support for their team-mates on the course or testing skis. Andrew Musgrave once again improved his performance with a 56th in the 15km classic (11% behind winner) & a truly exceptional 45th (& only 5.5% behind winner) in the 30km Pursuit. Watching the Team Sprints showed the level our skiers have reached, Andrew didn't look out of place skiing alongside the best skiers in the world, it is not everyday you see a Brit overtake the likes of Angerer on TV. We also beat the Aussies coming 17th out of 23

teams. Alex Standen was suffering from a cold which prevented him repeating his performances of the World Juniors. Andrew Young finally became fit enough to enter the Sprints & the camera zoomed in for a close up of his start. Too close, the TV screen went black as the camera tripped him up. Race over. Unfortunately the race officials did not act quick enough to give him a restart later on & he cruised around to a 98th out of 132 starters. He received a very fulsome letter of apology from the cameraman & head of Czech TV; it will no doubt be a very good "what happened next" for Question of Sport. Sarah Young & PJ Barron also raced at Liberec gaining valuable experience.

Universiade Games, China, Feb 2009.

Travelling to Yabuli for the Universiade (World Winter University Games) was Posy Musgrave along with one other British cross-country skier, Simon Spencer, & team coach Pete Gurney. I mention Pete because his "blog" (actually emails) kept us entertainingly informed of their trials & tribulations on the other side of the world – he turns a story of getting into the waxing hut into one of 'Scott of the Antarctic' epic proportions. I think they may have felt that being so far away they would be forgotten. Posy had missed out on the Universiade two years ago & came back to training quite late once the selection policy became a bit clearer this time round. Well, she must have put in some quality training as she posted her best ever results, particularly the 5km free & the Sprints. With temperatures as low as -18°C it wasn't easy skiing but I think she returns with all fingers & toes.

Biathlon.

Despite a valiant attempt at achieving a World Cup qualifier in European Cup Biathlon this season (missing it by just 12 secs in one race) Olwen Thorn missed out on a chance of selection for World Championships in Korea. It was probably a big ask to achieve the standard of shooting in her first season of biathlon but she has been asked to continue with the British squad next season.

THE SUMMER AHEAD

Although the winter is not over we have a full summer programme ahead of us. In addition to the GB Rollerski Series (11 races) this year there will be an official Scottish Rollerski Series comprising the six Scottish races. Note that the Clash Hill Climb is moved from September to 31st May. As always I will be asking for volunteers to assist organise the Huntly races. Which brings me to the Officials Training Course on the 2/3 May – if you want to go on this course please let me know, places are filling fast.

6th June – Not to be missed is Ming's Midsummer Madness & ceilidh in support of the BNDS.

Final Bits & Pieces.

- The Skitmore family return to Aberdeenshire from their long absence in Azerbaijan. They have remained club members all this time & we welcome them back & look forward to them skiing with us again.
- Thursday Club Nights continue at the Ski Centre – 7:30pm.
- Do I have your correct email address? Are you receiving emails? If not please let me know.
- Have you signed up to the Snowsport Scotland Nordicscotland Yahoo Group? If you want an invitation to join this group please let me know. It has information further afield from Huntly.

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Cross-Country (Nordic) Ski Officials Training Course Levels 1 & 2

2nd – 3rd May 2009

Huntly Nordic & Outdoor Centre, Aberdeenshire.

The Snowsport Scotland Nordic Committee are organising a training course for cross-country ski officials on the weekend 2/3 May. The course will cover the basic levels 1-2 of a proposed 5-level officials training scheme.

- Level 1 – Initial qualification able to perform secondary official duties and administrative roles.
- Level 2 – Experienced in a number of secondary roles able to perform all major, secondary, and administrative roles.
- Level 3 – Event Organiser Home Nation TD
- Level 4 – GB National Technical Delegate
- Level 5 – FIS Technical Delegate

Levels 1 & 2 are suitable for anyone involved in the organising of on-snow and rollerski races in the U.K. The course is open to all civilian and military skiers and would benefit any club/group that organises races.

The course will cover the following topics:

- Reason for Officials
- Rules
- Role of Officials
- Governing Bodies
- Event Organisation
- Organising Committees
- Events and Formats
- Course Design
- Course Preparation
- Administration
- Examination – open book

The Clashindarroch Forest Ski Trails and Huntly rollerski track will be used for practical work.

The course will be given by Jim Davidson, one of only two British FIS (Nordic) TD's. Jim is keen to pass on his knowledge & years of experience. This may be your first step to becoming a full FIS TD.

The course will cost £50 per delegate to cover expenses, facility hire and materials. You may be eligible to grants from your local Sports Association (or similar organisation) – worth checking.