

# HUNTLY NORDIC SKI CLUB

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April 2018



What a season it's been. Bit of an epic, lots of snow, the Olympics, HNSC coming 7th in the Olympic skiathlon and 12th in the Olympic team sprint, 12th in the World Cup team rankings and the Lecht Winter Games. So this is a bit of an epic newsletter, so settle down with a nice cup of tea in true wax room style or with a fine glass of wine and enjoy the musings of other Nordic skiers including team GB's XC head coach.

## News Flash and quick updates

### SUMMER DATES

- ☼ Sat 26th May - Huntly Sprints entry forms <http://www.nordicski.co.uk/wordpress/?p=2771>
- ☼ Sun 27th May - Clashindarroch Hill Climb entry forms <http://www.nordicski.co.uk/wordpress/?p=2771>
- ☼ Sat 2nd June - Summer Ming BNDS fundraiser event details and registration <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/ming-the-merciless-duathlon-endurance-challenge-2018-registration-44788493590?ref=ebtn>
- ☼ Roy Young, is running a course Thursday club nights 7.30pm May 10th- June 31st for those wishing to improve their skiing skills and be a helper at club coached events , such as JDS. All interested are welcome to come along
- ☼ Sat 8th Sep - Huntly Rollerski Champs
- ☼ Sun 9th Sep - Glenmore Time trial & Cairngorm Hill Climb
- The Club has brought 5 pairs of Swenor Alutech classic rollerskis.
- We may run the Huntly 3-Lap Challenge & Team Sprints on a convenient Sunday in the summer as a club event.
- Several of the younger club members took part in the BNDS on snow camp in Norway, sharing some training sessions with the youngsters from Lillehammer ski club.

- As part of BNDS, club members have skied in various FIS races in Scandinavia, Italy, Germany, European Youth Championships, World Junior Championship and taken part in the Bruskvallarna end of season races.

## The joys of telemarking.



**HAPPINESS IS....**

This year I've had the chance to telemark ski in lots of different environments and using different kit. In Whistler I was skiing in my Scarpa TX pro boots using NTN bindings and DPS Wailer all mountain skis, a set up I'm still not quite sure of as I wait for the boots to pack out, and decide if I like the NTN binding. I find myself paralleling more often than Telemarking. Is it just fitness or the set up I ponder. I left my kit in Whistler as I didn't expect to need it here. So the suggestion of going to Cairngorm for the day meant a trip down to the ski centre to raid the cupboard and drag out my old leather boots that I'd given to the club 20 years ago! In the garage I found my old Elan yellow perils looking thin as a pencil, with G3 bindings. But I had once loved them before moving onto Rossignol Bandits. It was a lovely sunny day on

Cairngorm with good snow cover and not that many folk, but I really struggled to produce anything looking like a telemark turn and was greatly irritated by Roy effortlessly turning in his plastic boots and old Kasama skis. Fitness or kit? The amazing snow coverage here meant that the Buck was calling, I last went up it in the dark over 20 years ago probably on a pair of Fischer revolutions. This time it was in the old leather boots, which have never been remotely moisture proof and some fish scale Fischer Outtabounds. The sky was grey and the clouds low and swirling around the top as we went up, initially over the heather and bog until we found plenty of snow along the side of the stream, up onto the shoulder and onto the crest, where the clouds lifted a little so we could see where we were and then there was a glorious descent of a least 4 or 5 linked turns, before a less gracious zigzag descent back to the car. A brilliant afternoons excursion. Fitness and kit seemed more in tune. But Scotland wasn't the only place with great snow so we headed to Norway for a cheeky weekend break at Hafjell. We hired , T2 boots , Rossignol skis with G3



bindings. The snow was beautifully groomed initially, the sun shone and we were in the zone, hardly a parallel turn in sight, this is why I love telemark skiing. Even as the temperatures rose and the snow became more sticky or slushy the feel good factor remained.

Eileen Cosgrove

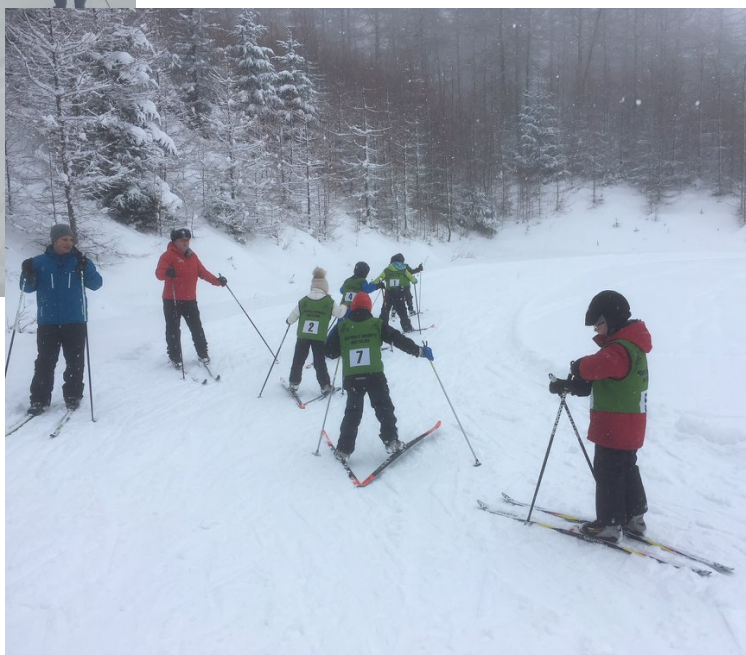
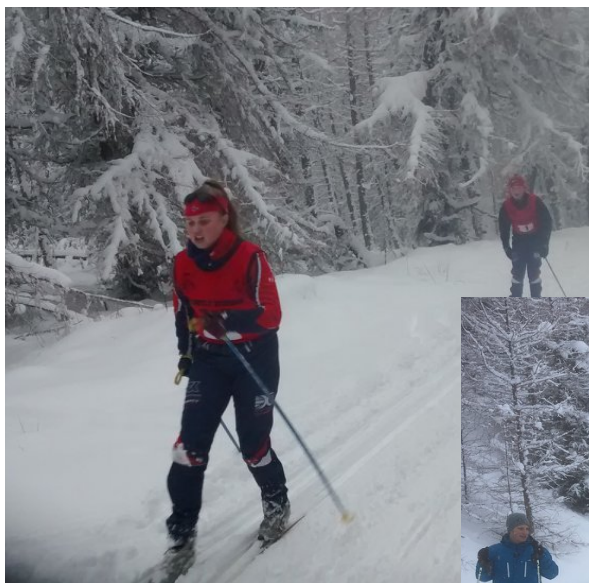
## TACKLING THE BUCK

### The Club Open Championships

The races were held on 4th March, with classic course lengths varying from 8.8 to 1.2 Km and a Skate Skier cross over 310m . There were 35 male and 18 female competitors. The first Huntly skiers home in the long classic race at Huntly Champs and so winning the club awards were:

Clashindarroch Cup winner: Harry Nicholls

Clashindarroch Quaich: Madeleine Cruickshank



## Overall Results

### HUNTLY OPEN CROSS-COUNTRY SKI CHAMPIONSHIPS 2018

Clashindarroch Forest - 4th March 2018

#### CLASSIC RACES

8.8km Race			
Gentleman	Cat	Time	Place
Christian Ewald	Vet	40.14	1st Vet
Harry Nicholls	Sen	40.20	1st Sen
Paul Whibley	Vet	40.40	2nd Vet
Tim Griffin	Vet	42.54	3rd Vet
Jason Williamson	Vet	44.42	4th Vet
Felix Wilson	U18	44.57	1st U18
Sam Griffin	U14	46.56	1st U14
Richard Newman	Vet	49.41	5th Vet
Kieran Forth	U14	54.01	2nd U14
Jakob Ipsen	U14	56.17	3rd U14
David Massie	U14	58.36	4th U14
Rod Campbell	Vet	1.03.50	6th Vet
Nick May	Vet	1.17.26	7th Vet
Paul Kedward	Vet	1.26.02	8th Vet
Charles Wilson	Vet	1.26.13	9th Vet

8.8km Race			
Ladies	Cat	Time	Place
Madeleine Cruickshank	U16	58.56	1st U16
Claudia Zeiske	Vet	1.03.43	1st Vet
Sue Taylor	Vet	1.16.46	2nd Vet

Weather: minus 1 C light snow,  
descending mist, mod. breeze

4.6km Race			
Gentlemen	Cat	Time	Place
Logan Duncan	U14	26.03	1st U14
Luke Nicholls	U12	27.08	1st U12
Ben Calder	U14	27.58	2nd U14
Rasmus Ipsen	U12	32.47	2nd U12
Jack Somerset	U14	34.48	3rd U14

4.6km Race			
Ladies	Cat	Time	Place
Elspeth Cruickshank	U12	28.32	1st U12
Ida Ewald	U14	30.05	1st U14
Anna Calder	U12	31.22	2nd U12
Sophie Forth	U12	32.52	3rd U12
Kirsty Beaumont	U14	35.38	2nd U14

2.5km Race			
Gentleman	Cat	Time	Place
Noah Griffin	U12	19.50	1st U12
Ben Kedward	U12	20.31	2nd U12
Hugh Gilliland	U10	20.40	1st U10
Harris Kings	U10	20.54	2nd U10
Lewis Macmillan	U12	20.58	3rd U12
Harry Osbaldiston	U16	22.16	1st U16
Robert Bate	U12	27.27	4th U12
Hector Starkey	U10	29.06	3rd U10
Donald Boyd	Vet	30.32	1st Vet
Scot Ramsay	Vet	31.00	2nd Vet

2.5km Race			
Ladies	Cat	Time	Place
Nicola Beaumont	U10	18.34	1st U10
Rebecca Dargie	U12	18.36	1st U12
Laura Calder	U12	18.51	2nd U12
Samantha Robson	U12	19.10	3rd U12
Willow Ramsey	U12	20.49	4th U12
Freya Ramsey	U10	30.59	2nd U10
Julie Symington	Vet	27.45	1st Vet
Rachel Ashley	Vet	30.38	2nd Vet

1.2km Race			
Gentlemen	Cat	Time	Place
Gordon Boyd	U8	11.05	1st U8
Arthur Ashley	U10	11.25	1st U10
Kai Whibley	U10	11.35	2nd U10
Luke Gilliland	U8	11.45	2nd U8
Ewan Bate	U10	14.39	3rd U10

1.2km Race			
Ladies	Cat	Time	Place
Astrid Ipsen	U8	10.04	1st U8
Kyla Kings	U8	11.49	2nd U8

### HUNTLY OPEN CROSS-COUNTRY SKI CHAMPIONSHIPS 2018

Clashindarroch Forest - 4th March 2018

#### Skate Ski Cross Races over 310m course

Mini Skiers			
Gentlemen			Ladies
Gordon Boyd	1st		Astrid Ipsen
Ewan Bate	2nd		Kyla Kings
Luke Gilliland	3rd		
Kai Whibley	4th		
Arthur Ashley	5th		

Junior Skiers			
Gentlemen			Ladies
Harry Osbaldiston	Joint 1st		Samantha Robson
Hugh Gilliland	Joint 1st		Rebecca Dargie
Ben Kedward	2nd		Nicola Beaumont
Robert Bate	3rd		Laura Calder
Harris Kings	4th		Willow Ramsey
Hector Starkey	5th		Freya Ramsey
Lewis Macmillan	6th		

Youth Skiers			
Gentlemen			Ladies
Ben Calder	1st		Elspeth Cruickshank
Logan Duncan	2nd		Kirsty Beaumont
Jack Somerset	3rd		Sophie Forth
Luke Nicholls	4th		

Seniors and Veterans			
Gentlemen			Ladies
Donald Boyd	1st		Rachel Ashley
Scot Ramsey	2nd		Julie Symington

Open Race			
Gentlemen			Ladies
Kieran Forth	1st		Madeleine Cruickshank
Paul Whibley	2nd		Elspeth Cruickshank
Logan Duncan	3rd		Samantha Robson
David Massie	4th		Sophie Forth
Ben Calder	5th		Kirsty Beaumont
Luke Nicholls	6th		Rebecca Dargie
Paul Kedward	7th		Nicola Beaumont
Jack Somerset	8th		
Ben Kedward	9th		
Hugh Gilliland	10th		
Gordon Boyd	11th		
Lewis Macmillan	12th		

## Clash Report 2018

The Clash season kicked-off when Jason and Clyde Williamson claimed a Golden boot on an isolated ski day on the 20<sup>th</sup> November. Things properly got going a few days later, then we had 2-3 weeks of reasonable skiing until mid-December. The eagerly awaited White Christmas did not





**SNOWMOBILE MAN**

materialise and there was a bit of a drought with only 10 days or so of marginal skiing in January. Were we going to have another poor season? Heads were dropping. What you have to remember about the Clash is that February is the snowiest month. In fact the snowiest day in the Clash is the 13th February when you have a 73.3333333333.....% chance of skiing. Well we weren't disappointed and the snow returned on the 6<sup>th</sup> February and pretty much gave us continuous skiing until our last day on the 9<sup>th</sup> April. The season ended with 92 ski days and 67 of those could be classed as "good" ski days.

A long last the snowmobile was put to good use and got some desperately needed miles under its belt. It is now properly run in – only taken four years.

Wildcat saw a lot of use this winter as more and more skiers accepted its challenges. We probably need to get some modifications on the challenging bend where I have gone off track the other side of trees on several occasions.

The Forestry Commission (FCS) are in the process of formulating their new Land Management Plan (LMP) for the Clashindarroch Forest. The club over the years has established a good working relationship with FCS, we might not always get what we want but generally they are receptive to our requests. They have asked the club for input into their LMP. Their preliminary documents state a commitment to maintain the current standard of the existing ski trails but encouragingly they also recognise the wider recreational use of the forest beyond the Nordic ski trails and Coynachie recreational area. The club has responded to FCS stating that we wish to build on our already good working relationship and have a more pro-active input to improving the skiing.

Thanks to Rick Newman for helping groom the trails and to Colin Miller for his regular snow reports and considerable behind the scenes maintenance on the trails – blocked drains don't clear themselves.

Pete Thorn

## **A View on Skin Skis.**

This is not a proper review – just my thoughts on the new-fangled skin skis.

I recently got a pair of Salomon Equip 8 Skin skis to replace my Fischer Superlight Pro fishscale skis which I had managed to snap in half on about their third outing. This misfortune was my opportunity to try out this new “skin” technology skis. I got the fishscale Superlights as something a little bit more “sporty” for Scottish conditions without the hassle of having to wax which can be so tricky. Skis I could just put on and ski and still win races – at least in my dreams. Superlight’s aren’t race skis but they go a little bit better, actually quite a bit better, than your ordinary recreational fishscale ski you might use at the Ski Centre.

Temperatures around 0°C are probably the hardest conditions to apply grip wax and these temperatures or higher are very common in the Clash. Which is why recreational skiers tend to use waxless “fishscale” skis in Scotland. Fishscale skis have far too much drag for ski racers and they sometimes use “zero” skis that have “roughed” up grip bases to provide traction in these difficult to wax temperatures. Now my technical knowledge of skis is minimal so I’m not going to dig a big hole for myself and I’ll just leave my explanation at that.



**SKIN SKIS**

Over the past couple of years or so both Salomon and Atomic, and maybe others, have come up with a new design for a classic ski which uses a “skin” instead of fishscales or “zero” ski bases. Anybody who has used skins for ski touring in the mountains will know what a skin is. Originally skins were sealskins, the nap of the fur giving grip in one direction and not the other. Nowadays you will all be pleased to hear that “skins” are synthetic or made out of mohair. These skin skis are claimed to be a direct challenge to zero skis and also are claimed to work over a wider range of conditions.

On to my Salomon Equip 8 Skin skis. Unfortunately, I didn't get them until the end of the season but obligingly the Clash gave some late snow for me to test them. With this intensive, two-day testing programme I can say the skis are very nippy. They came pre-glide waxed. Well waxed skis is a bit of a novelty with me and once I got over the initial shock I started to enjoy their extensive glide. These are more a performance than recreational ski. You will see from the photos that the grip section is quite short when compared to the fishscale pattern on recreational skis. More like the wax pocket of a good skier. Why do I say a good skier well when I started going up hills I noticed I slipped frequently and thinking this was a fault of the ski. However, after skiing for a while I realised it wasn't the ski, it was poor technique. Me! poor technique! I know it is hard to believe. When I concentrated hard on good form I had few problems even up the steepest hill the Clash could throw at me - Herringbone. OK, I know that isn't World Cup steep. Over the two days temperature varied from a little below freezing to +5°C. On fresh snow, old snow, polished and glazed tracks I was still able to propel my way forward.

I did notice a slight whine as I skied but nowhere near as noisy as traditional fishscales. So there was a little bit of drag, maybe I needed slightly stiffer ski, but then I probably wouldn't have got up the hills. A beginner skier may struggle with these skis but I suspect that versions of slightly softer skis with maybe longer skin sections will appear. In summary, I am very pleased with them, I just mustn't break them.

If you want to read more about skin skis and the Atomic version which has removable skins for varying conditions try this web page: <http://www.turrenn.net/salomon-skin>

Pete Thorn

### **The Lecht Winter Games – 17/18 Feb 2018**

There are times when, weather, conditions and atmosphere all come together to give a truly memorable weekend of Scottish skiing. The Lecht Winter Games was one of those weekends. The weekend grew from an idea from Park & Ride to put on a ski



**TRAILS AT THE TOP OF THE LECHT**



event during the excitement of the Winter Olympics. British Ski & Snowboard (BSS), Snowsport Scotland (SSS), Snowsport England (SSE) and the Lecht 2090 all got involved and the idea expanded to include activities and displays from all snowsport disciplines. Huntly Nordic were asked if we could lay on the Nordic side of things. A phone call from BSS to Aberdeenshire Council soon got their commitment through the Huntly Nordic & Outdoor Centre (HNOC) to support the event with equipment, minibus & staff. The club provided skate skis, coaches & volunteers – a lot of volunteers.

TechnoAlpin had been trialling their Snow Factory at the Glencoe and Cairngorm ski centres and it was moved to The Lecht for the Winter Games. Traditional snowmaking requires the air temperature to be below 0°C but the Snow Factory can produce snow at temperatures as high as 20°C. This trial was important for BSS as they have a rather bullish ambition of using this equipment to guarantee Scottish snow for training. The Snow Factory only arrived at the Lecht two weeks before the event and this was not enough time to produce quantity of snow needed for all the areas. But it did produce a lot of snow (crushed ice actually) that was used in the Park & Ride jumps. (<https://www.technoalpin.com>).



**FROM THE TOP OF THE LECHT**

After a fairly snowless January more than enough real snow appeared in early February resulting in epic skiing conditions by the middle of the month. In fact our biggest worry in the week leading up was whether the Lecht would be stormbound. But the clouds cleared. A 428m long cross-country track was groomed on some ideal terrain near the car park, but there was so much snow you could pretty much ski



anywhere. Our plan was to be like an HNOC Open Day, but on snow. Hour long coached sessions in both classic and skate techniques were laid on. The public could also borrow equipment to ski around the track with club members on hand to help out. They even had the opportunity to have a timed lap around the track. A large minibus was filled to the brim with skis, tents & all the paraphernalia we needed – a special thanks is due to Elizabeth for organising this. Fortunately, there were plenty of club members to help unload and set things up. It was chaotic at times but worthwhile. The Nordic activities were the only totally free event put on over the weekend which is a credit to the club, HNOC and Aberdeenshire Council for the imagination to do so.

On the Sunday The Huntly JDS were taken on-mass to the Lecht. Not the first time the JDS have visited but the first time with such complete snow cover and groomed cross-country tracks. Overnight the Lecht groomers had bulldozed snow from the higher slopes to freshen up the track. They also prepared some other areas for Nordic skiing, in particular a kilometre plus track at the top of the runs. And this was to produce the highlight of the day for the JDS. The club committee had agreed to give financial support to the event but this was not needed. So we (the Committee) decided to treat the JDS to lift tickets to take them up the chair lift to the highest groomed tracks. For many of them this was the first time on a chair lift but I would like to think what they found most inspiring was the uninterrupted view across the snow-covered hills to the Cairngorm Plateaux – a wildness that one day they could explore on skis. After skiing some of the kids skied down - a real challenge on skinny skis but one they succeeded in. – while others used the chair lift.

Alex Standen put the Huntly BNDS juniors through a hard session and for the timed lap he made them double-pole the 428m track. Hamish Wolfe set the fastest time of 1:14 while Rebecca Dargie from CBNSC skated the fastest lady's time of 2:04. Both won a surf lesson from ScotSurf in Aberdeen.

I didn't have much time to visit the other ski activities that weekend but subsequently learned they were all fully booked, they looked busy from a distance. I did get a chance to watch a bit of the Olympics on a big screen and own up to sampling a couple of beers in the evening in a busy Lecht café. Nearly 100 people had ski instruction on the Saturday and I would estimate well over 200 Nordic skiers took advantage of trails over the weekend. And I think now is the time to thank all the numerous helpers and coaches from the club for making the weekend such a success.



**FREE LESSONS**

I can't praise the Lecht too highly for their support, enthusiasm and track preparation. The Lecht's manager, James "Tosh"

McIntosh had been awarded an MBE in the New Year's Honours and the success of the weekend was another feather in the cap of someone who has always tried new ideas to enhance skiing. The longer-term vision of BSS and others of having guaranteed snow for training in Scotland has yet to be realised. There are many challenges to be overcome, funding being one of them. But if it were to go ahead then you would be hard pressed to find a better team than at the Lecht for making it happen.

There were many highlights over the weekend but one sticks out. A young girl, probably about 6 years old, first time on skis. She kept going for hours, she would fall over but bounce straight back with a big smile and carry on. She never got down the hill on the track without falling until her very last run when she shouted "I did it, I didn't fall" and I had the privilege to see her do it.

Pete Thorn

### **SMT (Sunday Morning Training)**

For many years the club has run sessions on Sunday mornings and Thursday club night for our younger members. The purpose has been to meet the Training to Train and Training to Compete objectives of the clubs long term athlete development plan. In the LTAD plan there is an objective for Learning to train for those aged 11 or so . To date the youngsters have been in the 12-18 age group and many have joined the national BNDS and represented Britain at international races such as the OPA, EYO, Scandinavia Cup, World Cup or Olympics or have gained their national coaching qualifications. Unfortunately numbers in that age group are lower than they have been for some years and so for the coming season we are going to open up the sessions to include those a year younger in the learning to train category and who have also attained their blue award at JDS.

If you know of a young skier who would be interested in coming along to the sessions please contact Eileen for more details, [tout.tele@gmail.com](mailto:tout.tele@gmail.com)

### **A worker's look at Olympic Games (The Team Leader view)**

People talk about the "Quadrennial" (or the "Quad"). This is the 4 years between each Olympic Games & no matter what other things you are doing for the sport the 4 year plan is there. Initially stretching before you is  $365 \times 4$  (- the 14 days of the current games) = 1,446 days between the end of Sochi 2014 & the start of PyoneChang 2018. But, you guessed it, those days pass increasingly quickly & what is before you amazingly is now behind you.

Homeward after a games is both great & sad. The great is the relief, just having got the wax room closed down (& the €100 deposit back as we had swept it); all those bags to the airport & checked in; & not lost an athlete at the Closing Ceremony & the huge worry that prevails the team leader at the games is washed away as you sink into the plane seat (there may even be an option of a small glass of wine before take off, which is usually the first since new year.)

The Sad bit is that the mind keeps going over the what ifs. I count my self as a “half full” sort of person, but after World Champs and Olympics I seem to focus on what we did badly, well maybe not even badly but what we could have done better. I suppose I’m looking for improvement which is half full in that we did well but we can be better. I think this is true for all team leaders, there is definitely an audible sigh as we sit on the plane, then there are vacant stares into the mid distance - where are the sports psychs when you need them?

Within a month there is the “learning points” meeting. Then, I’ve always thrashed out a new 8 year plan (always is a bit of an exaggeration to be honest, there was one after Vancouver & then another after Sochi, the current one is being put together by others). This plan was my “road map” although I’ve started calling it the satellite view, the year plan becoming the helicopter view, before that was turned into detail.

We have to put down performance targets & explain how we are going to get there. This is the way British sports work; if the sport is to be “invested” in then there has to be outcomes that can be invested in because there is a plan to get to those outcomes. (That’s maybe not the way personally I’d have it but it is the way it is in Performance Sport)



**THE FAMOUS FOUR**

By May we will have had the selection on the next seasons Squads & will have the detail of the first camp & the outline of the rest of the summer. With Technique being a priority in our sport, finding some good snow conditions in the summer is always a priority. Fortunately Norway has several centres that maintain pisting until July, so June was frequently spent in the Norwegian mountains (& mostly in the sun - even at

night at that time of year).

By July the planning is for the race season - bringing together athletes & relevant support teams at the races that are going to be good for developing our athletes. Working in the background as I pulled this together was Frank who would run my dreamy plan in his spreadsheet & tell me to stop dreaming & work out what are the priorities. The British Team from 2008 to 2018 was probably the team with the smallest budget in the world that managed regular top 30s in World events.



**HANS AND JOSSI, PERFORMANCE COACHES**

You get the picture, the team was always operating on the ground, training, racing, travelling but in the background there were people racing around to put the next bit in place. I have to thank so many volunteers that helped with that running around - we may have been short of money but we had / have great people doing amazing things

By late summer 2015, space & time has to be found for the start of the selection process for the Olympic Winter Games (known by everyone working on it as OWG). BOA start asking what will our team look like (& they don't like flippant answers like Smart); FIS start developing the International Federation Criteria. Then there's a briefing by BOA about Pyeongchang (PYC), what are conditions like? Hows the travel? Local issues. Then the emails start to fly, what are we targeting, will we go to the pre-games test event?



As soon as FIS release the international criteria the work begins on the British Criteria (The Olympic Qualification System - known by all as the dreaded OQS). BOA tell us they want our criteria to guarantee a selected person will not finish worse the 2/3 of the field (again not a thing that I like but it is what it is). Then the thing that is number one on the to do list is evidence gathering to produce a criteria that is fair to athletes as well as officialdom. Then there is the meeting to defend the criteria - which is a fraught & emotional process; a sort of Dragon's Den experience.

The OQS has to be in place 20 months before the Olympics, so June 2016; as FIS need the Southern hemisphere to have the same opportunity to qualify as the Northern & this gives everyone 1.5 seasons. (Selection has to finish by mid January in the year of OWG).

But by then the days are moving away & the season before OWG has a big World Champs. Across all sports the World Champs of that season have significant meaning in OQS - & don't try telling anyone that the style (Free or Classic) are the reverse of those that will be a year later in the OWG.

(Now here's one of those learning points from early March this year - make sure the support team at the World Champs is going to be replicated in at least job roles if not personnel. Answers on a postcard / email for this one - what do you think would be the ideal size of support team for a fortnight at the World Champs where your aim is to have at least 1 top 10? Need some context, the Norwegians have 28, the Russians over 30 but to be fair they have more than 6 athletes attending).



**JLOW HARD AT WORK IN THE WAX ROOM**

After a great 2017 World Champs, I spend the final World Cups talking to people about what would allow us to push on & be even better. Discussions focus on making sure we have good skis in PYC. We have a

partnership with Norway who share some wax info with us. When all team members have at least 3 roles, how do we have people around the athletes at the right time?

April 2017 sees us planning the year with our major support team at Sport Scotland Institute of Sport (SIS in 3 letter mode). April is also the “transfer window”; coaches start moving & signing new contracts, the same with waxers. If we are going to make changes it has to be now or we are what we are. This makes the month feel like trying to do a jigsaw that has a lot sky & sea but no front cover showing what it will look like when you get the pieces right.

In Mid April we got the opportunity of some additional money and had 2 excellent Norwegian coaches holding off from signing other contracts.



**JOSSI ANNIKA CALLUM AND HANS**

(This was an insight in to the circus act using live chain saws in the juggling). We got our men. So back to the new drawing board for the new team. By May the whole new team were skiing in Sjusjoen & the OWG was completely in focus with 4 athletes already qualified and 2 more with opportunities.

It was great working with Alex Standen, Jostein Vinjerui and Hans Christian Stadhiem - all fitted together well (mainly because like everyone else in British Nordic they are as mad as the athletes).

The pressure builds, camps, extended camps, how much kit will you take to PYC, test races, treadmill testing, details to fill in, bookings, where will everyone be before flying to OWG, video to watch, questions, TEAM GB trip to the building site that will be the OWG, what about OWG kit, what do you mean you are not coming to Salford in the middle of the race season to get your OWG kit, when can you collect, the season start, flying to the first World Cup (never easy), skis, wax, technique, getting stuck in Zurich airport (& then Paris), Christmas, Tour de ski, & then the Pre-OWG camps, international driving licence.

Did I mention selection? Well that happened - the 4 who had qualified the year before maintained their qualification, the other 2 didn't quite make this time (but James in particular had a spectacular season)

The OWG holding camps - So half the OWG team is in Sjusjoen training with Hans. The other half is with me in a mountain resort near Seefeld (the site of the last world cup before the OWG). I leave for a short break home,



**CALLUM AND HANS**

only for the phone to ring - "I went to the gym & then got the groceries but there has been an avalanche" & the road from Innsbruck to the mountain is closed. So 1 athlete up a mountain with no food & the other in a huge 4 wheel drive truck on a road with avalanches (but has lots of food), & I'm in Huntly. The mid-distance stare at this end, & suddenly time is moving both quickly & extremely slowly at the same time (I'm not sure Einstein got to that one - or to mis-quote both Bones & Scotty from Star Trek (the original of course) "its physics Jim but not as we know it").

2 days later we are all in Seefeld surrounded by diggers & snow. Seefeld world cup turns out to be a lot of fun even if it is the most disorganised World Cup I've ever been to. At the end of which we have a logistics triumph. JLow (our waxer manager but not a singer) & I label, list & load 12 skis bags; 6 boxes, 2 bags & a heap of things stuck to the underside of our wax table into the mini bus. I set off for London.

40 hours later I'm arranging the bags/boxes/things in a car park under the airport hotel so the guys who would arrive 2 days after me would be able to



collect the kit & get over to the airport for check in. My mid-distance stare is becoming normal as I head for bed but fortunately I'm so tired I sleep somewhere in that mid distance.

I'm flying the day before most of the team & then Josi & Youngy 5 days after that, so as I head to check in I have to arrange the hotel to keep the keys and give them only to people that give them the appropriate password. (After Josi & Youngy, Neil would take the bus for a holiday before Bruce took it back to Norway)

BA's Team GB check in was absolutely superb, all the folk there were actually volunteers who had finished their normal shifts & stayed on to help. My check-in was relatively easy & allowed me to persuade the volunteers to meet Hans & Jlow and help bring the kit from the bowels of the hotel, rather than a team relay doing this. (My mid-distance stare on the plane did have visions of 10 luggage chariots in a convoy menacing other travellers).

Seoul, & picked up for the 3 hour drive to PYC. (Wax room kit to be delivered there rather the OVL - Olympic Village for athletes' own 3 letters). PYC was cold, now most of the people reading this newsletter live in a cold place but when there is ice in the apartment stairwell you know it is cold. -18 then add wind chill & we were worrying the races couldn't be run).



Create a wax room, create an athlete room & storage, get the buses sorted, work out what bits of kit fit, swap bits of kit, wax, scrape, ski (repeat - Josi & Hans doing about 50k a day, every day); go to doping control with athletes, check out the layout, team leaders meetings, Opening ceremony, OVL canteen (good by the way), meet other team leaders and GB athletes

**ANNIKA**

Team GB for some reason put the 3 XC coaches in 1 room in an apartment which had our Performance Director, Alpine Head Coach, & 2 Alpine coaches. Clearly a mistake as we all got on way too well.

OVL is pretty odd. The apartments have no sink or kitchen facilities - well they do have them but they are all sealed off behind hard plastic sheets. All drinking water comes in bottles (made by Coke-cola). There is a TV but it only has the OWG channels - we get to see every event but not with any commentary. This seems always to lead to us becoming experts in every



sport, GBR would certainly have won more medals if only they had listened to Apartment 502.



**PYC XC STADIUM**

The racing will always be defined by the results - that is what is in the history books. All Olympics are defined by the results too, apart from some socio/political events, but there is more than that. For XC Vancouver was the springboard, Sochi the belief, PYC the Skiathlon.

Like most of the races in PYC the men's skiathlon was an epic. The eventual winner falls in the first hill (& was about 40s behind when they went past me the first time); Niskanen tries to break the field into a howling gale; & Andrew Musgrave sits in, then attacks & then leads the chase. What a race, 7th. What he doesn't know until he reads this is that a senior BOA staff member took me aside and said it was the best race of any OWG, he knew where we had come from and the road so long we've gone. It was amazing & "what if" the Norwegians hadn't had team orders not to help chase down one of their own (1st time the Norwegians have ever had a team agreement like this).

The Team Sprint was also awesome. Youngy had been a bit worried about his throat & tiredness early in the week, then Muzzy went through this a day before the race. So our race plan was a little out of phase but what a strong performance, 12th in OWG. (Team Huntly Nordic 12th in the World)

The other Huntly club member, Callum, had some great moments, he recovered well from being knocked over in the skiathlon (this can just be seen on the TV footage, although I didn't know about this until the end of the race - I spend race time in the darkest deepest parts of the snowy forest; yes I know it was a golf course in PYC). He also had a great 50k where his last 3 laps was some the most exciting skiing probably not seen on TV. The best of his 2 OWGs so far.



**ROY IN THE WAX ROOM**

So now Closing Ceremony is done, the athletes join the coaches at the Team GB party (& as it is in Korea - Karoke ; & what good voices some of the non XC athletes have). All are packed, the buses turn up at 02:30 & snoring starts after the head count (& re-count). 05:30 we are Seoul airport. Team GB logistics may insist on huge contingency but they have redeemed themselves here by having the luggage lined up ready for check in - XC & Biathlon at Checkin 35; Alpine & Luge at 36;

Snowboard & Park 37, Bobsleigh ..... Easy peasy but still a long time to the flights. The redemption continues when at 07:00 huge numbers of other teams arrive and check in resembles a red cross station in a place no one really wants to go on holiday.

09:30 - 10:00 ish (sorry but my control of time has joined that stare in the mid distance). The athletes are going through security (it has a 30 minute queue). Me; I've written a sort of white lie at the beginning of this. I'm sitting in an empty check in area as I'm actually retiring as Head Coach & so waiting for Eileen to find me and take me on a tour of Japan. I collect all my bags around me, check the empty space where the British & World's best winter sports people had been a few minutes earlier, sigh, stare into mid distance & fall asleep.

I would like to finish by thanking everyone in Huntly Club for the support they've shown me & to all the club members that have raced at any level. I have been incredibly lucky to be involved with such a set of amazingly talented & special people (athletes, parents, volunteers, - friends all). When the last page of the book comes out it will have to be very long to name everyone who has had something to do with the incredible decade I've just finished.

Roy Young  
Photos Jostein Vinjerui