

# TECK SKIER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

Sport Canada's Long Term Athlete Development Model (LTAD) is a catalyst for change and improvement that can help our sport achieve its goals of fostering both life-long participation and international excellence.

Within the LTAD framework, The Learning to Train (L2T) and Training to Train (T2T) stages of development are identified as the most important stages of athletic preparation. In recognition of this, Cross Country BC will be launching a new athlete development initiative this fall - the Skier Development Program sponsored by Teck, a diversified resource company based in British Columbia.

The Teck Skier Development Program will target skiers 9-14 years of age, and combine developmental camps and races with a focus on regional activity that is both affordable and accessible.

The intent is for our cross-country sport system to provide each developing athlete within the targeted age range the opportunity to attend a dryland regional camp, an on-snow regional camp and a minimum of three regional cup races within their home zone on an annual basis. In addition the new program includes the Teck Midget Championships and Teck BC Cup Series which all athletes are encouraged to attend.

For cross-country skiing the recommended number of races per season are:

- six to eight for girls 8-11 and boys 9-12 years of age, and
- eight to twelve for girls 11-13 and boys 12-14 years of age.

A long-term athlete development plan means a system of skill development, training and competition that is optimized for the abilities of athletes during the various developmental stages. The following factors should be considered when planning:

- Optimal practice/training-to-competition ratios should be the objective for all stages of athlete development.
- At the L2T stage, an insufficient number of competitions (inappropriate training-to-competition ratio) will result in a lack of sport skills to build on in later stages.
- At all stages, the appropriate level of competition is critical to the technical, tactical and mental development of the athlete.
- The length and level of the competitive season should be aligned with the changing needs of the developing

Sources:

NCCP L2T (On-Snow) Reference Material, 2008  
Cross Country Skiing A Sport For Life, 2007



Photo: D. Koerber, Revelstoke Nordic Ski Club

athlete in the LTAD progression.

- Early season races should be at the shorter end of the range. The maximum distance should only be used one or two times towards the end of the season.
- When deciding which races you should enter, the following should be taken into account:
  1. The format (i.e. mass start, relay, team sprint, interval start, pursuit, individual sprint).
  2. The ability and fitness of the skier.
  3. The difficulty of terrain (course profile).
  4. The elevation (altitude) of the race site.
  5. Where the athlete is in his/her age grouping – first year, second year etc.
- At the end of the L2T stage girls can begin to develop their maximal oxygen consumption rate ( $VO_{2max}$ ) through racing, as they are entering a Window of Optimal Trainability (WOT) for this performance factor. Race distances that are optimal for this stage - in order to develop  $VO_{2max}$  - are in the range of 1.5 to 3 kms (5 - 10 minutes).
- Due to the longer period of pre-adolescent growth for boys (as compared to girls), it is not optimal for boys at the L2T stage to be introduced to  $VO_{2max}$  development. Therefore most race distances at this stage should exceed 3 kms, so that the athletes are optimizing the WOT for aerobic capacity that corresponds to the growth phase they are in.

Following are two examples of club programs that offer an LTAD-aligned, age-appropriate approach to competition.

## Skier Development - Whistler Nordics Report

The Midget Championships are a classic testament of what sport is to be about; family, friends, a little competition and a whole lot of whooping and hollering .... and a little cross-country ski racing too!

This year's meet was held at the Telemark venue in Kelowna. The event was well attended with clubs from all over BC as well as a few from just across the border in Washington State.

The weather was a welcome treat with comfortable temperatures, classic dry interior snow, (at least from what we're used to) and even a little sun to start that spring tan.

Although we didn't send our largest Whistler Nordics Team of skiers we certainly sent a strong team with top results in all the categories once again.

Whistler ended up fifth overall which was terrific given our lower than usual turn out. We vow to better that next year, and if the fun that two of our first year racers had was any indication we should have a lot more for next year.

*Brent Murdoch, Whistler Nordic Ski Club*

## Skier Development - Strathcona Invasion

The Strathcona Nordics Team had an excellent weekend in Kelowna at the BC Midget Championships March 3-4.

The 26 skiers ages 9 - 12, made their presence felt at this important provincial tournament, which brings together the best young cross-country skiers in BC.

Early Saturday morning, head wax tech Andrea Stapff worked diligently with her waxing team in very difficult 0 degree, light powder conditions. Their work helped propel the team to some very strong finishes in the 2km classic race - including a silver medal for Tallon Noble. In the afternoon, all of the relay teams performed well in the 4 x 1.5km event, with a bronze medal for the team of Ethan Wong, Connor McGrady, Tallon Noble, and Ross Lamon.

On Sunday our racers put on a very exciting show in the 300m and 400m skate sprints. Tallon brought home a bronze medal, while Ross and Stewart Lamon each placed 5th and 4th in their respective age categories. The eight girls in the 2002 category clearly demonstrated that they will be a force to be reckoned with in the years to come on the provincial race scene. Amelia Wells brought home a gold and Annelies Henckel took the

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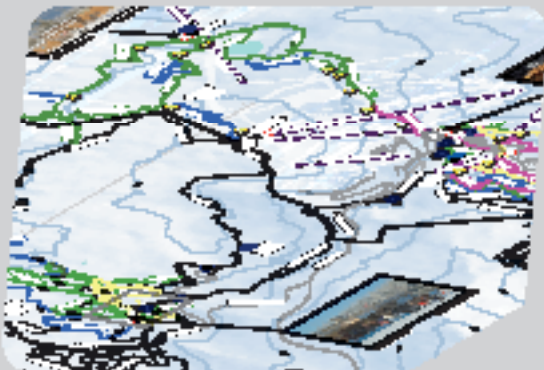


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silver, with Emmy Stapff taking 5th in the very competitive 2002 girls 300m sprint final. Alexandra Apedaile received a technique award for her beautiful skating skills. Coaches Tim McGrady and Berend Henckel promised they would go blond if anyone brought home a gold, so thanks to Amelia, watch out for two blond coaches at Raven Lodge this weekend.

Finally, the team placed 3rd out of 18 in the club aggregate standings, which is outstanding for a relatively small, island club.

The coaches are extremely proud of all the racers and are thankful to the parents for making the trek to Kelowna and supporting the team and coaches at the race - and they are thankful to Dr. Andreas Conradi for helping to make the race suit program a reality. Coach Tim McGrady said, "It was so great to see the red and black of the Strathcona Nordics so prominent on the race course all weekend!"

Congratulations to all the athletes, their families and coaches!! Well done!

*Tim McGrady, Strathcona Nordic Ski Club*

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