



— JEUX DU —  
**CANADA**  
— GAMES —

**MEDIA INFORMATION PACKAGE  
CROSS COUNTRY SKIING**



## **MEDIA INFORMATION PACKAGE CROSS COUNTRY SKIING**



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## **A. HISTORY OF SPORT**

Although cross-country skiing originated many centuries ago in Scandinavia it has only become popular as a competitive sport in Canada over the past half century. It was first aggressively promoted in North America during the depression years by Herman "Jackrabbit" Smith-Johannsen, not surprisingly a Norwegian by birth. Smith-Johannsen, was a pioneer in developing trail networks north of Montreal and received his nickname from the Cree Indians during his fleet footed travels in the bush. In 1981, Cross Country Canada introduced the Jackrabbit Ski League for Canadian children, and since its inception the Ski League and other development programs introduced by Cross Country Canada has become the largest learn to ski program in North America. Many Canada Games and Olympic athletes were first introduced to the sport as Jackrabbit Ski League participants.

By the late 70's the sport itself was witnessing significant change. The traditional style of skiing using set tracks and variations of the diagonal and double pole stride gave way to the skate technique. At the international level, the governing body mandated that a 50/50 balance in techniques make up the World Cup circuit. Although more changes have occurred in race formats since then, the concept of balance between the traditional style of skiing that features grip wax under the foot and glide wax on a skis tips and tails and skating technique that features glide wax from tip to tail, has been maintained.

## **B. CANADA GAMES SPORT HISTORY AND PAST RESULTS**

Over the first three Canada Winter Games, the strength of cross-country ski programs available to youth in Northern Canada became apparent. A product of the "Test Program" two pairs of sisters from the North West Territories, Anita and Roseanne Allen and twins Sharon and Shirley Firth dominated the women's classes at the '71 Winter Games in Saskatoon. Not to be outdone, Shirley, Glenna and Mary Frost of the Yukon won the bronze relay medal. The Firth's went onto represent Canada at 4 Olympic Winter Games. At the '75 Games in Lethbridge, the Cockney brothers teamed with Kevin King to lead the NWT to a come from behind win over Quebec and Ontario in the men's relay.

As the Canada Games matured, so did the cross-country ski programs in Ontario, Quebec, Alberta and BC. At the Brandon Games of '79 a young man from Rimouski, Quebec emerged as the dominant force. Pierre Harvey won 4 gold medals in these games and went on to become the most prolific male skier Canada has known. Harvey joined Sue Holloway ('71) as Games alumni to go on to represent Canada at both summer and winter Olympic Games. Holloway competing in canoe/kayak and cross-country while Harvey combined road cycling and cross-country. In 1988 he retired after an International career that included 2 visits to the Olympic Games, 4 World Cup/World Loppet wins including the famed Norwegian Birkiebeiner and countless Canadian Championship medals. The Games unique flavour and focus has allowed many lesser-known athletes to shine. In 1991, Lucy Steele of Whitehorse became the darling the Games leading Team Yukon to a women's relay gold and collecting 3 overall medals. It was the Fortier twins who rode the wave of home court advantage as they dominated the cross-country trails at the '95 Games in Grande Prairie and Lee Churchill became the talk of Newfoundland as he became a multiple medallist at the 1999 Winter Games in Corner Brook.

Below are the ranking of the Provinces/Territories since the inaugural games:

	1967*		1971*		1975*		1979	1983		1987		1991		1995		1999		2003	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	C	M	M	F	M	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
<b>AB</b>	-	-	3	-	-	1	3	5	5	3	5	5	5	2	2	2	1	1	1
<b>BC</b>	2	-	3	-	-	3	6	4	6	4	3	4	4	3	3	5	5	5	4
<b>MB</b>	-	-	-	-	-	3	7	7	3	8	8	8	7	8	10	8	4	9	5
<b>NB</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-	9	6	1	7	9	1	9	10	8	9	8	6	9
<b>NF</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-	8	10	7	5	7	6	6	5	9	3	9	7	10
<b>NWT</b>	-	1	-	1	1	2	10	12	-	11	11	12	11	11	11	11	6	10	6
<b>NS</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-	11	8	9	9	1	9	10	5	9	6	12	12	8
<b>ON</b>	1	2	1	2	2	3	1	1	1	2	2	1	1	1	5	1	3	3	3
<b>PEI</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-	12	11	11	-	-	11	12	12	12	12	11	11	12
<b>QC</b>	3	3	-	-	3	-	2	2	2	1	1	2	3	4	1	4	2	2	2
<b>SK</b>	-	-	2	-	-	-	4	3	4	6	6	7	8	7	6	10	10	8	11
<b>YK</b>	-	-	-	3	-	-	5	9	8	10	4	3	2	6	4	7	7	4	7

### C. NUMBER OF ATHLETES PER TEAM

Competitors: 5 males and 5 females

### D. EVENT FORMAT AND RULES OF PLAY

All Cross-Country Canada rules shall apply throughout competition. Events will take place in the following formats:

Male competitions:

- 10 km Classic technique, interval start
- 900-1,200 metre Sprints, free technique
- 15 km Free technique, mass start
- 4 x 5 km relay: 2 Classic legs + 2 Free legs

Female competitions:

- 7.5 km Classic technique, interval start
- 900-1,200 metre Sprints, free technique
- 10 km Free technique, mass start
- 4 x 3.75 km relay: 2 Classic legs + 2 Free legs

Five men and five women team members may compete in all individual competitions.

### E. EQUIPMENT & TERMINOLOGY

#### *Equipment*

Equipment changes have mirrored the changes in sport formats, techniques and technology. The sport at the competitive level uses skis costing in excess of \$500/pr,

carbon fibre poles costing \$450 and state of the art carbon composite boots retailing for over \$400. The sport is not longer adopted by those who can't afford Alpine equipment; people choose cross country skiing as it is a life-style sport with universally acknowledged benefits for health and fitness. The changes in formats have made the sport more appealing to Canadian youth.

The ski bag of a competitive skier typically includes 4-8 pairs of skis designed to accommodate skate and classic technique, changes in snow texture and temperature. A skate ski cannot be shorter than the skier's height minus 100 mm while a classic ski is generally the height of the skier's wrist on an upper stretched arm.

Three different boot styles are used to permit classic, skate and now pursuit format races. Pursuit races challenge skiers in both techniques and require a change in skis and poles at the halfway mark of an event. Pursuits with a break, made famous by Beckie Scott, 2002 Olympic Winter Games Gold Medalist, have now given way to continuous pursuit formats that require elaborate stadium set-ups and more flexible equipment. The continuous pursuit format is not used at the Canada Winter Games due to the lack of available pursuit boots at the retail level in Canada. A skier gains considerable advantage with access to these specially designed boots.

A skier will also carry two sets of poles; the longer pair used in skate races. A pole cannot be higher than a skier's height.

The race suit is also changing. At the international level Canadians have tested different styles and uniform materials. Off-season wind tunnel testing has led to Canada being one of the first to perfect the use of one-piece suits at the World Cup and Olympic levels.

### *Terminology*

**Classic Technique:** (aka Traditional, Diagonal) Cross Country Ski technique involving opposite leg-opposite arm motion in a straight-ahead direction. This is the technique primarily associated with Cross Country Skiing. Virtually all the Cross Country Ski exercise machines try to emulate this motion.

**Free Technique:** Also known as tuck skating, or downhill skating, or speed skating, this is skating (mostly downhill, and on the flat - rarely uphill) without the use of poles, and sometimes in a tuck. The more exotic arm movements seen in the mid-1980's (such as *kombi skating*) are less favoured these days.

**Klister:** Goopy gel used for kick waxing in conditions such as old transformed snow and very wet snow. Absolutely the stickiest stuff on Earth but very effective in the right snow conditions.

**Sitzmark:** Large indentation in a track or open area created by the hindmost end of a previously-fallen skier.

**Wax:** Comes in two types: kick and glide. Kick wax is used for grip in the Classic technique. Both Stick wax in a tin and klister are common varieties of kick wax. Kick wax is applied exclusively to the middle third of Classic skis. Glide wax is used on the tips and tails of Classic skis and the entire length of Skating skis. Glide wax helps protect the base of a ski and adapt the base to the temperature of the snow for superior glide.

**Stick Wax:** Small tins of kick wax that is applied in a crayon-like fashion. Color-coded by the brand to adapt to anything from sub-zero to freezing-level snow. Primarily used on fresh snow and sharp crystals.

## **F. ELIGIBILITY**

All athletes must be 23 years of age and under. They must have been born in 1984 or later.

## **G. JUDGING/SCORING SYSTEM**

The winner in each event will be the competitor with the best time in that event.

The provincial/territorial three best times will count towards the provincial/territorial ranking point total. Other scores are omitted. Only the aggregate results will be counted in the same day pursuit race for scoring and medal purposes.

If there is a tie, points will be shared equally between competitors (i.e. if tied for first then each competitor would receive  $98.5$  points  $(100+97)/2$ ). If an athlete does not finish or is disqualified, the athlete does not receive any points.

## **H. PLAYOFF AND TIE-BREAKING FORMAT**

### *Competition*

If two or more competitors or relay teams have the same time, they shall have the same placing on the final list. If titles or medals are to be distributed, all those tied shall receive the same title and/or medal.

### *Provincial/Territorial Ranking*

1. If a tie occurs in the final provincial/territorial team standing, the province/territory with the greater number of event team first places will be assigned the higher rank.
2. If the tie persists, the procedure is repeated for event team second places.
3. If necessary, the procedure is repeated for event team, third places, then fourth places, etc.
4. If the tie persists, the province/territory with the higher standing in the last event completed will be assigned the higher rank.
5. If necessary, the procedure will be repeated for the second last event completed, and the third last, etc.

NOTE: When a triple tie occurs and is only partially resolved, the remaining ties will be resolved by returning to priority #1 and proceeding through the order again.

## **I. TECHNOLOGY OF SPORT**

Cross-country skiing has experienced a quiet revolution in that it has come a long way from granola, wool knickers. Today's equipment rivals the stability of some Alpine gear with significantly better glide and prices.

In the 70's and in most peoples garages, skis were made of wood, boots were low cut leather, the poles were made of bamboo and bindings resembled metal rat-traps.

Salomon's Nordic System (SNS) or Pilot and the New Nordic Norm (NNN) binding systems have replaced the antiquated three-pin bindings. (Note: There are back country versions of these systems). These modern binding systems offer positive connection to the ski and great control and stability. Because they are mechanically hinged, you won't get the crease across the top of the boot as was the case years ago. Wood has been replaced by lightweight synthetics which performs better in the snow.

Modern fiberglass skis are faster and lighter than their wooden predecessors and come in a variety of shapes and sizes designed to take you over any terrain or conditions. Wider cross-country skis are used to provide the stability and buoyancy needed for deep unpacked snow. You can go from moderate light back country touring models, to full blown mountaineering skis with medal edges. The bases are made out of polyethylene (generally referred to as P-Tex). Sintered P-Tex bases (compressed by heat and pressure) hold wax better and are tougher than extruded (pressure molded) bases - it can be a matter of cost for the consumer.

Wax-less skis have fish angled scales on the running area underneath so that they provide momentary grip when the skier pushes on the snow. Waxable skis perform the same function but are much faster in the end - although, waxingless racing skis have been used at the World Cup in difficult conditions.

Special paraffin based grip wax is applied underneath the ski kick zone (generally the middle third of the ski) and momentarily bonds with the snow crystals when the skier pushes.

## **J. ROLE OF OFFICIALS IN SPORT**

Cross-Country race officials are some of the hardest working volunteers in any sport. A course official's day could start in the middle of the night. Uncertainties brought on by changing temperature and snow conditions can keep course officials up most of the night. Stadium crews must be prepared to scramble at the last moment after final grooming takes place in the start / finish area, often just prior to the start of race.

While races cannot be run at temperatures below -20 degrees, course and race preparation by officials must go on. Course set-up and tear down often takes place when the thermometer is well past the legal racing limit. Truly the 120 - 150 race officials on any given race day are the unsung heroes of the sport.

Canada offers a national level training and certification program for cross-country officials. The program takes 2-3 years for full completion and involves theory and practical sessions. In 2006, Cross Country Canada implemented a revised Level I program that incorporates on-line registration, training and evaluation programs. New Level II and Level III programs will be developed in the years to come leading towards the 2010 Olympics.

## **K. FACILITY DESCRIPTION**

All Cross-Country Ski events at the 2007 Canada Winter Games will take place at the Mount McIntyre Recreation Centre in Whitehorse.

Mount McIntyre is located just 10 minutes from the Athletes Village. It consists of a 0.6 km, 3.3 km, 3.75 km, and 5 km loop.

#### **L. SPORT MEMBERSHIP NUMBERS AND STRUCTURE**

An estimated 1.35 million skiers participate in cross-country in Canada on an annual basis. The sport represents a \$4.4 million industry at the retail level and has strong skier bases across Canada. Cross Country Canada, the national sports governing body responsible for organizing and developing programs from grass roots to Olympic Team members, has a membership of over 320 clubs and 46,000 active skiers.

#### **M. NOTABLE PAST ATHLETES/ALUMNI**

Many current National Team and Olympic Ski Team members have participated in the Canada Winter Games. The list includes Olympic Gold Medallist Chandra Crawford who sprinted onto the National scene by winning gold at the 2003 Bathurst-Campbellton CWG and Paralympian Brian McKeever, who continued his International dominance of his class at the 2006 Paralympics by winning 4 medals. McKeever competed as an able bodied athlete at the 1999 CWG in Corner Brook. Other Canada Winter Games alumni on the National Team include 2006 Olympians Dasha Gaiazova ('03), Sean Crooks ('03), Phil Widmer ('03), Graham Nishikawa ('99,'03), Chris Jeffries ('99), Dan Roycroft ('99) and George Grey ('99). These athletes will be joined by Perianne Jones ('03), Madeleine Williams ('03) and Dave Nighbor ('03) as they "Own the Podium" in 2010.

#### **N. NOTABLE CANADIAN RECORDS**

Sharon and Shirley Firth – First Canadian women to attend four consecutive Winter Olympics ('72, '76, '80, '84). They also won a combined 48 national titles. They are members of the Order of Canada and the Canadian Skiing Hall of Fame.

Pierre Harvey – Became the first Canada male athlete to compete in both the winter and Summer Olympic Games. He's a three time Olympian and winner of three world cups. He's a member of the Order of Canada and the Canadian Skiing Hall of Fame.