

*Far West Nordic Presents....*

# NORDIC NEWS 2009



**INSIDE THIS ISSUE...**

**"FAST SKIS!"**

**"FAR WEST'S NORDIC OLYMPIANS"**

**"GET READY FOR JO'S 2009"**

**"SKIING DOWN UNDER - NORDIC STYLE"**

**"DOUBLE POLE: YOUR NORDIC DNA"**

**AND MUCH MORE, INCLUDING THE 2008-2009  
FAR WEST NORDIC RACE SCHEDULE!**



# WELCOME TO "NORDIC NEWS"

Once again, it's end of November, and as we sit in our homes looking at the bare ground on the ski trails outside, we realize how fickle nature can be, depriving us in our "time of need" of that important substance that enables us to enjoy our favorite winter pursuit — cross country skiing.

For Far West Nordic, this has been a year of transition, with changes and improvements all around in the organization. And for this writer, it is an especially poignant moment, realizing that this is the first opening message in which I am writing as only the "Editor" of Nordic News, and not as the Nordic Administrator of this great association.

But with change comes growth, and Far West Nordic is no exception to this model. As I pursue other career interests, the organization is well-taken care of, with not one but two "administrators" to help handle the growing load of cross country skiing in the West. As Dylan sang many years ago, "The times they are a changing..."

New to the Nordic Administration job (but certainly well-known to many of you) is Kelly McElravey, wife of long-time board member Mike and the mom to top Far West Junior racers Tom and Patrick. Kelly will be handling all the office administrative duties for Far West, including membership issues, camp and clinic reservations and payment, answering our new voice mail system (make sure to note our new phone number, 530.852.0879), and email queries to [info@farwestnordic.org](mailto:info@farwestnordic.org). Make sure to welcome Kelly to our Far West "family" the next time you see her at a race or function.

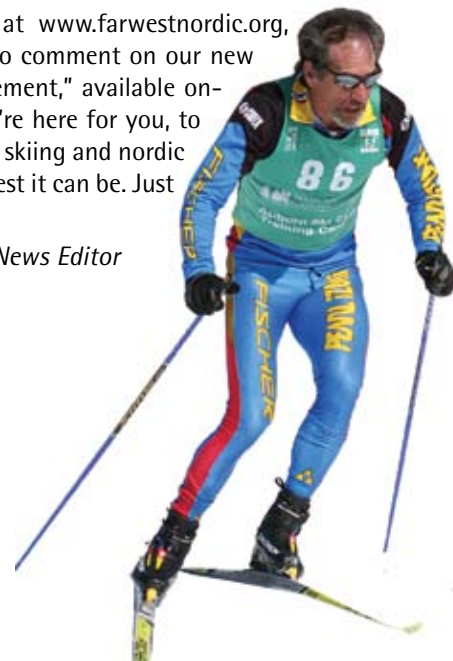
Also new to the organization, but certainly someone whose roots go back a ways in the Far West Nordic family, is Ian Case, freshly returning to California from a living in New England. Ian's father, Colyn, was a long-time member of the Far West Nordic Board, and Ian was one of our top Junior racers in the '90's while living in Grass Valley and Truckee. Ian will be handling all the communications for Far West, including the all-important Website management. In addition, Ian is returning as the featured member of Far West Nordic's Senior Ski Team, hoping to establish it as a pre-eminent program to aid xc ski racers in their 20's (see page 12). Ian can be reached at [web@farwestnordic.org](mailto:web@farwestnordic.org).

Last year saw a remarkable increase in Masters participation in all of our programs, culminating with our trip to World Masters in McCall, Idaho, where Far West members had amazing success. This year, we're already seeing the enthusiasm in that age group, all the while the Junior program is gearing up for a return of the Junior Olympic competition at Auburn Ski Club in March, 2009. Yes, it's going to be an exciting year for Far West Nordic.

Our plea to you? Get involved. First of all, JOIN if you haven't already. Second, we need volunteers, especially for the upcoming JO's at Auburn Ski Club. Third, give us some feedback on how we're doing to serve you, our Nordic "constituents." We have a great new survey

linked to our website at [www.farwestnordic.org](http://www.farwestnordic.org), and we'd love for you to comment on our new proposed "Mission Statement," available online. Just remember: we're here for you, to help make cross country skiing and nordic racing in the West the best it can be. Just add snow, and stir.

Mark Nadell, Nordic News Editor



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

FAST SKIS! . . . . .	PG. 5
<i>by Rick Reynolds</i>	
FAR WEST'S NORDIC OLYMPIANS . . . . .	PG. 6
<i>by Mark Nadell</i>	
WEST SHORE'S WINTER OLYMPICS . . . . .	PG. 9
<i>by David Antonucci</i>	
JUNIOR OLYMPICS IN 2009 . . . . .	PG. 10
<i>by Bill Clark and Sally Jones</i>	
FAR WEST'S NEW SENIOR TEAM . . . . .	PG. 12
<i>by Ian Case</i>	
SOCCER AND SKIING . . . . .	PG. 14
<i>by Andy Pasternak</i>	
SKIING DOWN UNDER . . . . .	PG. 16
<i>by Sally Jones</i>	
DOUBLE POLING: YOUR NORDIC DNA . . . . .	PG. 18
<i>by Ben Grasseschi</i>	
WAVE STARTS . . . . .	PG. 20
<i>by Far West Nordic's Competition Committee</i>	
THE TAHOE RIM TOUR . . . . .	PG. 21
<i>by Jeff Schloss</i>	
THE SIERRA SKI CHASE . . . . .	PG. 22
<i>by Juliet Bradley</i>	
2008-2009 RACING SCHEDULE . . . . .	PG. 23

COVER PHOTO: "JUNIOR OLYMPICS 2005 SPRINTS" BY MARK NADELL

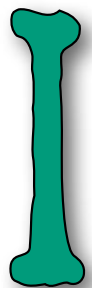
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# GETTING FAST SKIS!

## Wax and Grind Tips from One of Far West Nordic's Top Master Racers

By Rick Reynolds



I've got almost 50 years of skiing experience, and some people think I've always got fast skis. If this is true, it's because I keep things simple. But, keeping things simple can take some effort and you need to be meticulous to get quantifiable results. As an alpine coach I got a reputation for "nailing the wax." I was always asking other coaches questions and I learned what waxes worked well in different parts of the country and different conditions.

To me, there were no secrets; it was a matter of keeping things basic. When preparing for a race, I always kept notes I could refer back to, and kept a close eye on the weather. At speed events I would make the extra effort to set up our speed trap. I'd have one coach whose sole responsibility was to monitor the trap. Our speed trap had three lights, the first two lights were 10 meters apart and told me the speed my athletes had coming in to the trap, the first and third light, 100 meters apart, told me their elapsed time. This not only told me who was skiing well and which lines were fastest, but also told me whose skis were running fast. Keep in mind, this occurred in the 80's before stone grinding became the art it is today. While my guys were learning the course and working on their technique they were also testing wax combinations for me. After two days



of training (sometimes four runs) I knew better than anyone what the wax was going to be, providing the weather stayed the same. If the weather changed, I had more notes to refer to at another time. One year at the Eastern Championships things backfired a little bit. I nailed the wax so WELL, three of my guys ended up in the hospital. One crashed into a fence (he missed a turn) and two caught so much air off one of the jumps they both crashed. They all said with a smile on their face, "those were the fastest skis I've ever been on." Again, the wax wasn't anything special — it was tweaked just right!

I've taken the knowledge I gained as an Alpine coach and now use it to help me as a Nordic racer. As most of us know, "fast skis" today is three-fold. 1) You need the right flex; 2) You need the right stone grind; and 3) You need the right wax. And, of course, all of the above need to match the conditions for the day! Finding which skis run fast in certain conditions is simple, but there's some effort involved. I keep all my skis waxed with Toko System 3 Red. This is the wax I use on a daily basis and if a snow condition exists that I want to test skis in, all I need to do is scrape the skis and go. My favorite place to test is to use a straight section with a downhill that allows me to gain a decent amount of speed, and then the trail goes immediately uphill. While testing skis you need to be very meticulous. All the skis need to be prepared the same way, your start needs to be the same each time, your tuck needs to be the same, you can't take clothes off or put them on, and you're wasting your time if it's windy. The track will get faster with each test pass so you need to switch test pairs after each run. If you're meticulous, you'll be surprised at how quickly you'll see which skis are running the fastest. Now, make some notes of the conditions and what ski ran the fastest. What's the stone grind, what's the flex, etc. Next step, test again in different conditions. Then test again. One of 2 things will happen: you will have one pair of skis which are consistently faster, or some skis will run faster in different conditions. After 2-3 tests you will know what skis you want to race on.

Now it's time to try and make your slow skis faster. It's simple — change the grind. Some local shops (such as the Start Haus in Truckee) can usually do a new grind overnight (hot boxing takes longer). Or send your skis off to one of the excellent Nordic-specialty ski grinders such as Nordic Ultratune in Methow, Washington. Look at what grinds are working for you and what grinds aren't working. My favorite grind is a Fine Linear model. It works in tons of conditions; in wet snow you can add a rill, in dirty snow it doesn't pick up too much dirt, and in cold "Sierra" snow it's fine enough to run well. Keep in mind that if you put on a new grind you're going to want to ski it in before you race on it. To say the least, "brush the !@# \$" out of them if there is no time to ski it in. I have raced on a fresh grind before and my skis ran very well (but it's risky)! A general stone grind rule is: Cold snow (0 degrees F and colder) you want a very fine grind; warm wet snow, you want an aggressive grind that will move the moisture and reduce the suction. For in-between conditions, I like the linear grind that you can adjust.

Now, here are some tips I strongly believe in:

1. New skis.... Use 'em! Waxing and skiing on skis is what makes them fast. Don't save them for racing until you know for certain they are fast.

2. If you've got a really fast pair of skis, Protect them. Don't let anyone else use them and

don't use them in marginal conditions. I've got a pair of skis that only come out for "big races."

3.. Be careful using good/fast skis on frozen corduroy. You'll "burn" the edges. In some cases you'll have to stone grind the skis to get it removed and make them fast again.

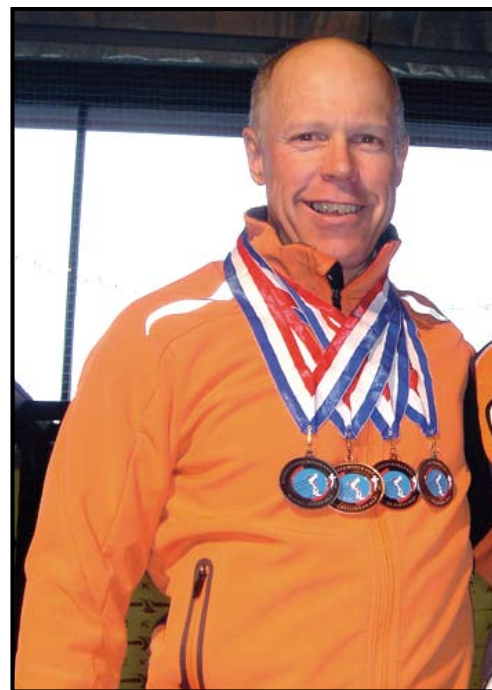
4. Change the grind on your slow skis. What the heck — open it up, make it more aggressive; or maybe they could become your cold skis by minimizing the grind. Do *something* — what have you got to lose?

5. The longer the race or the more aggressive the snow, the harder the wax needs to be. Don't be afraid to add a little hardener (with Toko, it would be a touch of blue) to the wax on these days. This was something I did very often as an Alpine coach and still do today when the conditions call for it.

6. The Great Race: generally go a little colder with the glide wax, and add a rill. When the gliding really comes into play, the snow is on a northern exposure, the altitude is over 7000' feet, and the snow is cold. Near the end of the race the snow will be wet, but that's when you need to count on your warm fluoros and the rill.

7. Finally, take notes that you can refer to from year to year. And use them!

Rick Reynolds is clearly one of Far West Nordic's "elite" racers—and not just in his 50+ age group! A winner of 4 medals at last year's World Masters, Reynolds is well-known for his speedy skis and body to match.



# CALIFORNIA'S NORDIC OLYMPIANS

## Far West Nordic Has Its Share of World-Class Athletes

Story and Photos By Mark Nadell

**T**

his past summer, all sporting eyes (and more) were focused on Beijing, China for the XXIX Olympiad, a spectacle of immense proportions and noteworthy for its amazing feats of engineering and human accomplishment. But perhaps the most critical aspect of any Olympic competition is in the details, the efforts and trials of individual competitors who are literally at the "top of their game," competing against high odds not only to simply get to the Olympics, but attempting to succeed against the best in the world. We can learn a lot from how these athletes focus on improving their skills, stamina, and strength until they achieve their goals.

Here in California, in our small, close-knit Far West Nordic community, we have our own group of Olympians that we sometimes take for granted. They may not be household names to the masses watching NBC during the Olympic fortnight, but to some of us who strive to improve our racing statistics in individual age divisions, they can be inspirations and genuine sources of knowledge. From relatively recent Olympians such as Marcus Nash, to veterans of Olympic games almost 30 years ago such as Glenn Jobe, all of these individuals are still inspiring us by their competitiveness and athleticism. Far West's NORDIC NEWS attempted to catch up with them and glean some insights into their Olympic experiences.

### GLENN JOBE

The recent history of Far West Nordic Olympians has to begin with Glenn Jobe, an Olympic Biathlete in the 1980 Games in Lake Placid. Through his ski area pioneering (starting both Kirkwood and Tahoe Donner's Nordic centers), coaching, and as an example of incredible athletic ability into his 50's, Glenn is a true inspiration for athletes of every age.

Jobe, a resident of Sierraville, began Nordic skiing in 1972 at the University of Nevada,



Reno. Growing up in Alturas, California, he was more involved with Alpine skiing and basketball than with cross country skiing, and certainly never dreamed of competing in the Olympics. It wasn't until Wendell Robie, the founder/past president of Auburn Ski Club, gave him \$500 for expenses to go to the 1976 Olympic Trials that he gained the confidence to compete at the highest level.

Jobe finished in the middle of the pack in his one race in Lake Placid, the 20km. Biathlon, what he terms as a "disappointment." The year before, he had placed 14th at the pre-Olympic World Cup, and achieved the 2nd fastest time in his relay leg, and so had higher aspirations than his eventual 38th place finish. But without quality, knowledgeable coaching, he seriously overtrained in 1979-1980, and had a difficult time qualifying for the U.S. team.

It was because of the lack of coaching, and the mistakes he made in his own training, that caused Jobe to get involved with coaching. One of the biggest satisfactions from his competitive skiing is having been a part of growing the Far West Junior Nordic programs and helping to coach the young athletes.

What does Jobe have to offer as advice for future Olympians? *"Hard work will get you through. Don't give up. Believe in yourself when others doubt you. Have self confidence: I remember how a kid with a remote rural ranch background could be an equal to kids from bigger towns or cities who grew up with more 'advantages.'" Cherish the support from family and friends, good times and bad."*

### NANCY FIDDLER

Another individual whose name is synonymous with great Far West Nordic skiing and coaching is Nancy Fiddler of Crowley Lake, near Mammoth. One of the most successful cross country ski racers in the history of the United States, Nancy's route to Nordic great-



ness was definitely not a "direct line." Growing up in New England, Fiddler didn't really try XC skiing until she was at Maine's Bates College. Claiming she was the worst on her team, and black and blue from falling all over the New England ice, it wasn't long until she won her first race and was "hooked."

After college, she tried for – but didn't make – the 1980 Olympic team. Discouraged, she moved to Bear Val-

ley and quit racing for six years. At age 30, she got the ski racing bug again and went on to achieve remarkable success at the USSA National Championships at Royal Gorge in 1986. Soon after, she realized she could possibly make the Olympic team in 1988, in Calgary, Canada.

Only recently having begun training consistently and systematically, she was discouraged by her results at Canmore, but determined to do better. Also, watching "doped-up Europeans" blow by her on the courses didn't help. By the time she got to the 1992 Games in Albertville, Fiddler had achieved significant success on the World Cup and Championship circuit, with many top-20 finishes. Even though she had missed an important developmental phase in her training, and was now 35 years old, Fiddler still produced the best results of any American woman at those Games.

After retiring as one of the most successful women in U.S. cross country history, Fiddler fell easily into coaching and instructing, setting the bar high not only for herself, but for others as well, hoping to inspire and bring out the greatness in every person on snow.

Fiddler has two Olympic memories. Standing in the middle of the Olympic Stadium in Canmore, she was lined up with the best skiers in the world, sliding her skis back and forth to keep the klister from sticking. *"You are SO ready to go, and when you do, you take two strides, your klister grabs, and you fall down in front of the whole world. Pretty funny, huh? It happened to me, and I will not forget it."*

A happier memory for her was in the first leg of the 4 x 5 km. relay, and had one of the best races of her life, picking off skiers ahead until she passed Marje-Lise Kirvesniemi from Finland, probably the top female skier of her time. She eventually came in 4th, only 7 seconds from 3rd place, and the feeling still lasts to this day.

*"There is no easy path to doing anything at all well, and I learned that you have to keep persisting to get anywhere. There are always going to be barriers, traps, bad days, bad people, bad*

*snow, bad skis, injuries, car trouble, financial woes, illness and numerous other evils to keep you from achieving your goals. If you just keep trying, you can do anything reasonably well, and that is what I did."*

## BETH (HEIDEN) REID

Although

Jobe and Fiddler's racing days are mostly behind them (except for an occasional World Masters medal for Jobe, or in Fiddler's case an age group championship in a 10 km. running competition), there is a former Olympian who is still dominating her field on the local (and National) race circuit, winning four gold



medals at last year's World Masters Competition in McCall, Idaho. Of course, Reid's Olympics weren't even in Nordic ski competition, as she went to both the 1976 (Innsbruck, Austria) and 1980 (Lake Placid) Games as won of the world's top speed skaters.

Starting speed skating at the age of seven in Madison, Wisconsin, she and her older brother (you may have heard of a skater named Eric Heiden) quickly rose to stardom in the sport. Reid qualified for her first Olympics when she was only 16 years old. In Innsbruck, she skied to an 11th place finish in the 3000 meter competition, but knew she had the potential to place even higher. At the 1979 World Championships, she shocked the world by winning all four events, and was a favorite going to Lake Placid. But an ankle injury kept her from achieving overall success, finishing between 3rd and 7th, and was glad the Olympics were over and she could get back to life as usual.

Of course, life as usual for Reid meant looking for other sports to dominate. She took up bike racing as a form of cross training, and won both the U.S. Road Race Championships and (in 1980) the World Road Race Championships. After the Olympics, while a student at the University of Vermont (UVM), she was the NCAA Women's National Champion in cross-country skiing. She was inducted into both the Bicycling Hall of Fame and the Speed Skating Hall of Fame. Can we say "high achiever?"

Now, Far West skiers can enjoy seeing Reid in action, dominating at a multitude of local races and certainly not showing any signs of slowing down.

## JUDY RABINOWITZ

While Jobe, Reid and Fiddler are well-known in the Far West Nordic community for their Olympic and coaching history, there



is another local racer who isn't as easily-recognized, even though she went to two Olympics and raced in World Championships for the United States, and even now is one of the top women racers on the local circuit.

She was primarily a swimmer in high school in Fairbanks, Alaska; Judy Rabinowitz didn't begin cross country

ski racing until her junior year, and soon after had success competing in the Junior Olympics. She took a break from skiing when she went to Harvard, she soon realized she missed the competition, and taking a leave from college, made the 1980 U.S. Ski Team. Her first Olympic experience was in 1980 in Lake Placid as an alternate, where she watched and learned from other athletes, including Eric Heiden. In 1982, she made the World Cup traveling team, and really learned how to ski race on the European circuit.

With excellent results on the World Cup circuit in 1983, including lots of top 20's, Rabinowitz was the top North American at the 1984 Olympics in Sarajevo. Having won U.S. Nationals, and later taking a 7th at a World Cup event, she had set her goals a bit higher, and was a bit disappointed with her result. She soon went on to retire from skiing, complete her education at Harvard Law School, and went to work for the U.S. Justice Department. She now lives in Larkspur (Marin), and is considered a top competitor in local Far West races, especially in classic events.

Rabinowitz's most profound memories of her Olympic experience is remembering how different the world was back in the '70's and '80's, witnessing first-hand the deprivations and political repressions in countries that no longer even exist (East Germany, USSR, Czechoslovakia, etc.) She believes that her path to the Olympics was all about dedication, patience, hard work, and self-knowledge, all of which was transferable to life skills and lessons.

## KRISTIN KRONE

Even though she's a stalwart on the local race scene (and a beloved figure as the owner of Truckee's Wild Cherries Coffee Shop), Kristin Krone's name more associated with Alpine Olympic racing than with Nordic skiing. A two-time Olympian, Krone has been able to apply her determination and competitiveness to Far West Nordic racing in recent years.



She began skiing at the ripe old age of three, and knew by ten that her dream was to ski in the Olympics. In 1988 at Calgary, her first year on the National team, she managed a 17th in the Super G and 15th in the Combined. It was at Albertville in 1992, however, that she was considered a "contender." Her second Olympic experience didn't last quite as long as she would have liked, however. In 2nd place at midway in the Downhill portion of the Combined event, Krone went a little too much "all-out," and achieved what she called an "agony of defeat" type of crash landing, ending her competition with broken bones instead of medals. But, she says, "I achieved my goal of going all out. It was better to crash having raced my potential than to have been so nervous that I skied poorly and placed way down the list. This would have been a huge loss.

Krone claims to be very "goal oriented, giving 110% to achieve that goal." She uses her experience in ski racing and applies it toward family and business to achieve successful results. She claims that some call it "neurotic," but she tries the best she can at whatever she's doing. In recalling her Olympic experience, she believes that *"It is important to appreciate the enormity of the event and all that you have achieved, but on race day it is just another race and your career and experiences and all that you have accomplished comes from everything leading up to that point. The actual event of the Olympics is just the icing."*

## CANDACE CABLE

One of the most amazing Olympic athletes we have here in California has seen national and international success in a host of disciplines, from track and field and marathons, to Alpine and Nordic ski racing. Candace Cable's accomplishments could take up an entire feature-length article, and yet she is relatively unknown to many of the Far West Nordic local racers.



The list of her major athletic accomplishments is ridiculously long. A 55-time National Champion in U.S. Track and Field; 6-time winner of the Boston Marathon, Gold Medalist in the Paralympic Games in 1980, 1984, 1988, 1992, and 1996. A 32-time National Champion in Cross Country Skiing, and a medalist in 3 World Championships and 5 Paralympic Games. Plus individual achievements such as

hand-cycling across the U.S., kayak circumnavigating Tahoe, and more.

Cable didn't grow up wanting to be an Olympic athlete, and certainly not a Paralympic champion. Not really a competitor in her youth, it wasn't until after her car accident in 1975, resulting in a spinal cord injury, that she began to be involved with wheelchair racing in the late 1970's and through the '80's. She found that sport was the perfect vehicle for her, *"To reclaim my self. To redefine myself. To feel good again."*

Cable now uses the same strategies of her athletic career and transfers them over to her endeavors as a business person, whether as a motivational speaker, spokesperson, or as the Executive Director of "Turning Point Tahoe," a non-profit that creates recreational and environmental education opportunities for persons with disabilities. She uses many of the same athletic skills such as decision-making, goal-setting, open-mindedness, planning, teamwork, and determination to achieve her current life goals. Her favorite memory from all the Olympic games she has attended is in the Opening Ceremonies, where she says, *"It's that moment where all competitors have the possibility to win a medal. The energy in the stadium is so strong with anticipation."*

## MARCUS NASH

Two other Olympic athletes are the most recent ones. Marcus Nash, a 9-time National champion in cross country skiing, went to two Olympics: in 1994 at Lillehammer, Norway and 1998 in Nagano, Japan. Now a pilot for Cathay Pacific Airlines, he also runs an internet-based training/coaching program, All Mountain Training. Originally from Maine, Nash traveled all over the world in his days as a professional cross country skier, and when he retired, he chose Truckee out of all the places to live and ski, often saying that the best cross country skiing is right here in California. Watch

for him this year as he threatens to return to racing on the local Far West Nordic circuit.

For Nash, being an Olympian meant being a part of something much greater than a sporting event. *"The Olympic Games transcend politics and most of the turmoil in the World. Sharing this experience with my close friends and teammates is something I will always cherish."*

## KATERINA (HANUSOVA) NASH



Born in the Czech Republic, Katerina Nash, has been to 3 Olympic games, two as a cross country skier for the Czech Republic in 1998 and 2002, and one as a mountain biker in 2004 in Atlanta. Now married to Marcus Nash, she is still racing on the World Cup circuit, and narrowly missed going to her 4th Olympics in Beijing this year.

She is still currently one of the top athletes in the world in mountain biking, racing for the Luna Chix team. Nash is training once more

for a stint on the World Cup Mountain Bike Circuit in 2009, but plans to jump in some local Nordic races this winter to supplement her training. If so, watch out! Both Marcus and Katerina live in Truckee and can be found occasionally teaching Nordic clinics in the area.

Mark Nadell is the former Far West Nordic Administrator, and helps coach the Alder Creek Middle School and Far West Nordic Junior teams. He also takes a lot of photos, as any of the Junior Nordic skiers can tell you.

# CROSS COUNTRY SKI TRAILS OF THE 1960 WINTER OLYMPICS

by David C. Antonucci

**M**any people know of the 1960 Winter Olympics based in Squaw Valley. Few know that the cross country skiing events were held entirely on the West Shore of Lake Tahoe. For seven days during the two-week Olympiad, men and women skiers on wooden cross country skis glided through the backwoods of the West Shore.

Events included 5km relays, 15km to 50km distance races, and a 20km biathlon. Norway, Finland, Sweden and Soviet Union clinched medals. American Andrew Miller placed 17th in the 50km race, setting the highest placing for a USA cross country skier in any previous Olympics.

Race courses were originally designated for Squaw Valley area. A mid-1950's building boom triggered by Olympic anticipation made this venue unusable. In 1957 the cross country venue was moved to the superior terrain and climate of the Homewood-Tahoma area of Lake Tahoe. The move was risky, as competing nations seized the opportunity to unsuccessfully argue for disqualification of Squaw Valley as the designated 1960 Winter Olympics site.

Races started and finished at a special stadium constructed west of Highway 89, midway between Tahoma and Chamber's Landing. Race courses fanned out from the stadium, stretching from what is now Sugar Pine Point State Park to what is now Homewood Mountain Resort. Log cabin style timing buildings and aid stations dotted the area. Log bridges spanned watercourses. Skiers used classical technique as the modern ski-skating technique would not emerge until almost 25 years later.

On this site, a number of historic Olympic firsts occurred. Racers were timed using electronic technology instead of manual hand timing methods, and races were televised live in the U.S. Trail corridors were cut through the forest instead of circuitous routing around unsuitable terrain and immovable surface features. Trails were groomed using a powered tiller, newly invented specifically to pulverize hard-crusting snow at this site. The biathlon debuted as an official Olympic event.

The early abundant snowfall and rolling terrain of the West Shore make it an ideally suited venue for cross country skiing. Olympic ski trails were narrow, single lane parallel tracks. The



The 1960 U.S. Cross Country Ski Team.  
Photo courtesy of David Antonucci.

popular ski skating technique and the wider, modern trails were unknown. The 65km of trails meandered along land contours, slipping through narrow corridors carefully carved through the forest. The trail network was designed by Wendall Broomhall, a former Olympic skier and 10th Mountain Division WWII veteran, and Allison Merrill, a Dartmouth College ski team coach. Much of the work was accomplished with Olympic personnel, U.S. Army forces and local labor. The trail network is revered among skiers as the first cross country ski area in the United States specifically constructed for this purpose.

In 1999, noted cross country ski area consultant John Frado published a report proving the feasibility of restoring a portion of the surviving trails. On the eve of the 2002 Olympic Winter Games, former 1960 Olympian Joe Pete Wilson and David C. Antonucci rededicated the Sugar Pine Point State Park trails under the spotlight of national print and electronic media. This important event was attended by former Olympic officials, public officials, volunteers and interested citizens and marked the beginning of a new era for the trails.

Plans could include a future opening of more trails, museum display, historical monument, directional signage, trailhead archway and additional grooming equipment.

# 2009 USSA CROSS COUNTRY JUNIOR OLYMPICS

By Bill Clark

MARCH 7<sup>th</sup> THROUGH MARCH 14<sup>th</sup>, 2009  
AUBURN SKI CLUB TRAINING CENTER

**“T**he most important thing in the Olympic Games is not winning but taking part; the essential thing in life is not conquering but fighting well.”

Pierre de Coubertin,  
Founder of the Modern Olympic Games

The spotlight of U.S. cross country skiing will swing around to the Auburn Ski Club Training Center and Far West Nordic in March of 2009. Junior Olympics (a.k.a Junior Nationals) is coming to Donner Summit/Truckee for another dose of our great Sierra skiing and, with any luck, more California sunshine.

This annual gathering of our country's best 14-19 year old skiers is the culmination of a qualifying process held throughout the season within each of the 10 USSA divisions. Teams will travel from all corners of snow country for a week of hard-fought competition on the challenging ASC courses. The over-400 athletes that come to the start line for the competition are the best of thousands that have vied to gain a coveted spot on their team. This is truly a National Championships in every sense. Our own Far West juniors can look forward to a home turf advantage on courses they know well. As you ski the ASC trails this winter watch out for fast skiing juniors training and testing their fitness on the courses.

This summer ASC made a couple of improvements to the trails in preparation for JO's. Brush has been trimmed back, trails graded and widened, and a few tight corners softened. Machinery is serviced and ready to begin shaping what we hope will be an above-average snow pack by March.

## CLIMATE CHANGE CHALLENGE: A GREEN CHAMPIONSHIP

Early on in the planning process the JO Organizing Committee realized we have a responsibility to take action and protect our most important winter resource: SNOW. As a result, our Junior Olympics will incorporate sustainable and tangible environmentally-friendly green practices wherever possible. It's been an interesting exercise to examine the event through a "green" lens, but we think the results will be positive, both on and off the snow. Each of our sub-committees is incorporating green steps into their



Beautiful sunshine and warm weather marked the 2005 XC Junior Olympics at Auburn Ski Club.  
Photo by Mark Nadell

planning. We're also making plans to exhibit and demonstrate environmentally-friendly products that athletes and visitors can take back to their home ski areas and clubs.

To kick off the green theme, Alison Gannett will be our opening ceremony speaker. Alison is an extreme skier widely recognized for her leadership in green practices in the outdoor sports world. You can check her work at [www.alisongannett.com](http://www.alisongannett.com). Our expectation is that athletes, sponsors and the entire winter sports community will join with us to demonstrate that a large winter sports event can set a new standard. Whatever the results, this "Green JO's" effort will be a fundamentally important step forward for all winter sports. After the event, we'll summarize and assess what was successful and what was not. Future JO's will hopefully build on what we've started. Visit the Green Program link on [www.xcjuniorolympics2009.org](http://www.xcjuniorolympics2009.org) for details.

## OUR CHALLENGE

Our task now is to produce an event worthy of the athletes and coaches who have worked so hard to be here. The success of our 2005 JO's is still fresh a memory and a good head start, but we don't want to stop there. It will take another huge effort to host top notch National Championships for the juniors.

The one key ingredient is volunteers – we need lots of them, in all capacities and skill levels. This season we'll need race crew volunteers to begin training and learning the ropes during our early season competitions. Many of you in our Nordic community are seasoned race workers, but that should not stop rookies from signing up. Newcomers to our crew will learn from some of the best. Our goal is to make volunteering as rewarding and memorable as the competitions will be for the athletes. If you have interest in joining the volunteer team give Auburn Ski Club

# THE JUNIOR OLYMPICS

by Sally Jones, ASC Nordic Director

a call at 426-3313 x100, or go to [www.xcjuniorolympics2009.org](http://www.xcjuniorolympics2009.org) and click on the volunteer link. Whether as a volunteer, cowbell ringing spectator or an event sponsor, everyone in the community is invited to join them this March!

Another challenge is funding; JO's is an expensive event to host. Our sponsorship committee has been pounding the pavement all summer and fall. There are still sponsorship spots at various levels open and available. JO's is a highly visible event for our region and nationally in the Nordic community. In addition, it's a great way to show support for these athletes. If you have interest in being a sponsor please contact us right away via the sponsorship page at [www.xcjuniorolympics2009.org](http://www.xcjuniorolympics2009.org).

## SHOW YOUR SUPPORT

The 2009 Junior Olympics will provide an environment for these competitors to show us their best. For a handful this championships will be the beginning of a journey that will lead to international and Olympic competition. During our week of competition we're sure to see great performances. The skills they have learned through training and competition will be applied to every aspect of their lives, helping them achieve their goals and ambitions in life. There is no doubt that JO's are a pinnacle of success and personal achievement won through plain old hard work and dedication to the sport.

The road to making a Junior Olympic team is long and hard. Honor the athletes and what they have accomplished; come out and watch them shine.

**Bill Clark is the Director of the Auburn Ski Club Training Center on Donner Summit, and is in charge of the venue for the 2009 Cross Country Junior Olympic Competitions.**

Over 400 of the Nations' best junior athletes will be coming to Truckee March 9th through 14th to compete for national titles, personal bests, club and team trophies.

Approaching the event we have a highly motivated pack of young athletes who will benefit from racing on their home turf. Hosting JO's is an opportunity to showcase ASC and the outstanding cross country skiing available in the Sierra, and to boost the sport within the community.

Knowing the trail system, having intimate knowledge of Sierra snow and weather conditions, and familiarity with the altitude are all advantages the team will benefit from again this year, not to mention all the friends, family and fans loudly lining the course with energizing cheers.

Many of you will remember 2005 when we last hosted this prestigious event in our area. This was the first time since 1971 we had undertaken such a large event. Far West Skiers had their best results ever, with Matt Gelso winning our first ever "home grown" National Championship title.

The event is for 14 to 19 year-olds athletes USSA puts a limit on each division - only 42 can qualify - so each Division sets its own criteria for selection to the team. In The Far West we use a percentage-back calculation to determine if a young skier is of the right caliber to represent our Division (full details are available on the Far West Website).

The races that this performance will be gauged include two 5/10km classic races (Snowshoe Thompson Classic at ASC & the Allan Bard Memorial in Mammoth) and two skate races - a 1 km sprint and a 5/10/15km on the JO courses at ASC. We encourage all aspiring young athletes to come and race these events to gauge if they are ready or if they still have some work to do for next year's event in Maine.

Most of our racers begin skiing at a young age - and start racing with one of the fun Middle and High School Teams. Young athletes who want to raise the bar further usually train with The Auburn Ski Club's Development and Competition Teams year round and at Far West-sponsored camps throughout the summer.

What does it take to be a Junior Olympian? These are just some of the favorite workouts our athletes endure and enjoy:

- A Double-pole rollerski workout from Donner Lake to Donner Pass on Old Hwy 40
- A Skate rollerski up Blackwood Canyon, with 30 minutes of intervals at 80-95 percent of maximum effort.
- A 17 mile run from Sugar Bowl to Squaw
- A 16 mile run from Royal Gorge XC Center down to the actual "Royal Gorge" on the North Fork of the American River
- Multiple Time Trial runs up Negro Canyon up to the Drifter hut at Tahoe Donner XC
- Running or mountain biking the "Hole in The Ground" Trail
- A 50 mile Road bike ride around Gold Lakes
- Strength workouts three times a week

The juniors competing in the 2009 JO's are certain to succeed, regardless of race results. These young athletes display work ethic, discipline and commitment in their cross country ski endeavors, matching that of elite athletes. These characteristics carry over to their personal lives where they are accomplished in academics, music and various other sports, and are remarkably articulate, polite and gracious. Their preparation for and experience at Junior Olympics will apply to all other aspects of their life.

# FAR WEST'S SENIOR PROGRAM

## An Opportunity for Mutual Benefit

by Ian Case

**M**any people recognize the value and benefit of pre college-age kids being involved with a sport such as Nordic skiing that can be part of their healthy development on all fronts—physically, mentally, morally. Likewise, the recreational pursuit of sports among masters as an important balance to their other work seems to be quite a worthy and rightful activity.

But what about when you turn 20 or graduate from college? Does it make sense to continue to pursue Nordic skiing and set higher and higher goals for yourself? Is it worth really striving to reach the highest level of excellence you possibly can and spending nearly all your time in an arguably self-focused and self-serving individual endeavor? Maybe instead, you should be focused on becoming an environmental planner, political leader, artist, or educator, finding time to volunteer for community efforts or doing any number of things that would seem to serve a greater purpose than building up your ability to ski fast in a race? And furthermore, is it irresponsible to uncompromisingly go after such an all-consuming activity wherein the financial rewards are modest at best (and more often heavily in the cash-negative zone) thus creating a financial burden on others who are kind enough to lend their support, and/or "enjoying" life at or below the lowest tax bracket in the nation and all the day-to-day realities and challenges that involves?

These are all things that I have earnestly pondered and sought my own answers to over the years as I've chosen to pursue high level XC skiing. At the end of last season, I questioned all of these things more sincerely than ever. Being aware of the great cost—financially, time-wise, and in terms of pure effort—that this sport involves at the higher levels of competition and training, and also being acutely aware of an abundance of exciting new opportunities to move forward with a very rewarding creative career outside of skiing that seemed to have clearer and more obvious benefits to the rest of the world, I came to a point where for the first time in many years, I was really unsure whether I should continue to ski.

During this time, I was lucky enough to get to revisit California for a week to race in the Gold Rush and get some technique instruction with my old (I should say former) coaches prior to the final national-level races of the season in Fairbanks, Alaska. During my four or five years based in Vermont and racing all over the country, I certainly hadn't forgotten how wonderful the Far West ski community is, or how great the skiing in the Sierra Nevada, but getting to see and ski with so many enthusiastic new and familiar faces reinforced for me, more than ever, that there is no other place on earth I would rather be if I'm going to be involved with skiing. The Far West ski community is something very special and an enormous blessing unto itself and all those that come into contact

with it.

When I heard last spring that Far West Nordic had approved a new level of support for Seniors (that oft-forgotten 20-29 age category in between Juniors and Masters...the age where skiers should be reaching their peak!), I was extremely excited. My dream for years had been to come back and work with the coaches who knew me best and believed in me the most, who I trusted the most, and to be in the community that had provided opportunities and nourished my development as a racer during my high school years. But, I was nowhere near being able to see my way financially to making it work to live in California in the absence of a fully-funded senior program, compared to the three or four others around the country which have enormous budgets to work with (as the result of endowments or tremendous widespread regional support). In fact, the only way I'd been able to make it work for myself up to that point had been to juggle between two and four part-time jobs while living rent-free with my incredibly patient and supportive parents.

Combined with a training-compatible job opportunity, these new measures of support for Seniors in Far West Nordic, though by no means representing a train/eat/sleep-only kind of life like some elite athletes enjoy, inspired me to seriously look into the possibility of living and training here again, and made me feel like it might be doable, even though it would be a huge leap from the life that I had.

In pondering all of this and trying to decide if I should continue to pursue skiing, I gradually came to realize the extent to which this ski racing endeavor could be about something much bigger than myself. I knew I was done skiing if it was only going to help me. Through a lot of sincere thought and the insightful words of other skiers and coaches, I started to see that coming to Far West was a fantastic opportunity, not just to benefit myself with better coaching, more community support, some race travel assistance, and more people to train with, but more importantly, to be able to actually have this skiing pursuit be something that could really help others. I could see that that my training alongside the juniors and other seniors, and my help with some of Far West Nordic's communication needs, and being involved in a tight-knit, ski-loving community to share the passion and fun of the sport with others, could be things that were mutually beneficial, and not just a one-



way street.

Furthermore, it was pointed out to me that doing something that you love, whole-heartedly, is inevitably a good thing for the world. That's what life should be about, I think...and the idea that this model is at odds with practicality is something I challenge head-on, with my move and my entire life this year in California.

I'm really excited to have such a great opportunity to be a part of Far West again, to be able to give back to the best of my ability, and hope that that giving is at least equal to the support I know I'll be receiving, on so many levels.

I'm also really excited as a general fan of U.S. skiing, to see support for seniors growing all across the country and in the Far West

region. With such well-supported and well-organized junior programs across the country, and now a few viable places for them to go as seniors to continue to progress during the most demanding years of their development, I feel like there is a stronger and stronger glimmer of hope for U.S. international skiing! And perhaps just as importantly, stronger and more complete ski communities full of skiers of all kinds, each with something unique to offer, who both give and benefit from each other and learn lessons that carry over into nearly all aspects of life. That, like the skiing in California, is about as good as it gets!

Ian Case is Far West Nordic's new "Communications Administrator," handling the website and more. He can be reached at [web@farwestnordic.org](mailto:web@farwestnordic.org).

# SOCCER AND SKIING

## What's the Connection?

By Andy Pasternak M.D., Silver Sage Family Health

**A**s part of my medical practice, it's always fun to look at new research that comes out and figure out how it applies to my patients and to myself. Here's a great example: A recent study out of Copenhagen compared the benefits of playing soccer to jogging. Thirty-seven men were divided to either playing soccer, jogging or doing nothing.

Obviously, the couch potatoes had no improvement in their fitness. Comparing the soccer players and the joggers after 12 weeks, soccer players had bigger improvements in their body fat (3.7% to 2%) and also increased their muscle mass by 4.5 pounds (versus no change in the joggers). Finally, the soccer players had much more fun exercising compared to the joggers who thought their runs were exhausting.

So what does this have to do with cross country skiing? While this study compares runners and soccer players, there are three important lessons that I think translate well to gliding on the snow.

### LESSON #1: INTENSITY IS GOOD

In this study, during exercise, the average heart rates between jogging/soccer players were the same. The soccer players, however, had short bursts where their heart rate spiked while the joggers kept their heart rates lower but more consistent. Traditionally, we medical folks have droned on like a broken record saying things like "exercise for 30 minutes 5 times/week at 60-70% of your maximum heart rate." While this does help prevent cardiovascular disease, it doesn't necessarily help fitness. More studies are showing that to improve fitness and lower body fat, getting your heart rate elevated for short bursts of time is key. For people just starting out on an exercise program, it's still important to work your way into intensity by starting out at lower levels, but for athletes who feel like they are at a plateau, adding intensity

is a great idea. So next time you're climbing up a steep hill, feel free to punch the gas a little bit and then take a break at the top and enjoy the view!

### LESSON #2: SOCIAL EXERCISE IS GOOD

The soccer players reported having more fun, in part, because they were part of a team. Obviously, cross country skiing is an individual sport. But if things are getting stale, make it social. Invite friends and family to join you. Have little races during your playtime, alternate who gets to decide which trails to ski and try other games with your blokes/mates/chums to keep it fresh.

### LESSON #3: HAVE A GOOD TIME, ALL THE TIME

While the researchers didn't follow the gentlemen after the study, I'd be willing to bet the soccer players were more likely to continue their exercise. That's because they don't consider playing soccer exercise (i.e., work and one more thing to do). It was a fun activity that just happened to help their fitness. Especially for you readers who are more serious about your XC skiing and racing, don't forget to take some time to remember to make your skiing fun (and I'm primarily talking to myself right now). Life is full of way too many stresses; your XC skiing should be one way to recover from those stresses!

Glide on and ski healthy!

Andy Pasternak is the director of Silver Sage Sports Performance Center in Reno, is an active Master racer, and is one of the great sponsors of the Sierra Ski Chase.



# SUMMER SKIING DOWN UNDER

New Zealand Offers Great Skiing (Plus Dinner with the Prime Minister!)

By Sally Jones

T

his August I received a call from some old friends who are part of The New Zealand XC Ski Association. They were “wondering” if I would “be willing” to be flown Down Under to be a Technical Delegate for a three day series of FIS races – a Southern Hemisphere Winter Games trial event.

It didn't take much convincing as I've been wanting to get back to New Zealand for awhile, and the offer of a free flight, accommodation, transport and skiing is a hard one to pass up.

I was brought down to officiate a small, but competitive field of Kiwis, Australians, Japanese, Canadians, French and Swiss skiers. A much bigger field is expected next year as this was a trial event for next year's Winter Games, which is planned to be the largest winter sports event outside of the Olympic Games. The aim of the event is to give Alpine and Nordic skiers and snowboarders another chance to improve their FIS points prior to the Vancouver Olympics in February 2010.

The Snow Farm, located between the well-known ski towns of Wanaka and Queenstown, is the only venue for groomed cross country skiing in New Zealand. It has long been a favorite summer training spot for several northern hemisphere teams. The elevation of 5,500 feet and the 50 km of trails—all above tree line—make for great summer training opportunities and wonderful views. There are now even accommodations and a restaurant on site (or just 40 minutes away in Wanaka).

While Truckee folks baked in their summer temperatures, I flew into Queenstown with a ski bag very full of boots and skis to find sub-zero readings. The folks at Paco's and Sierra Nordic had been kind enough to dig into storage to fill the desperate orders for



gear I had received from friends and Kiwi ski team members.

It was great to be back in New Zealand, catching up with old friends and relishing the skiing on extra blue hard wax all week (not the usual Kiwi conditions). The above-tree-line skiing is great for the views, but can also mean some pretty harsh “white out” conditions, with no trees to distinguish the edges of the trails. We had one race in poor conditions and volunteers had to flag the edges of the trails so no one would ski off the bank or into the river.

Between races, I was invited out to stay in one of the backcountry huts to enjoy the full moon. These easy-to-reach huts are well equipped with beds, wood fire, stoves and solar powered lights. All you need to carry is your food and a sleeping bag (and you can pay for a snowmobile to carry your gear out if you prefer!)

## BEST TIME TO VISIT

The ski season runs from July to September. August through Early September have the most reliable snow, and some fun events.

I'll be down for the Winter Games again. You have to be a FIS racer to enter the competitions, but grooming is guaranteed to be top notch and it's great for spectators.

The Merino Muster on August 22nd is a great event to participate in. Named after the annual "muster," or rounding up of the sheep from the High Country, the Muster offers 10 km, 21km and 42 km options.

You could also combine your trip with a skip across to Australia to enter the Kangaroo Hoppet World Loppet race the week later on August 29.

It's an 11 hour+ direct flight from San Francisco to Auckland on Air New Zealand, and then on to the South Island town of Queenstown. Or fly into Christchurch and drive through the Southern Alps past the highest peak of Mt. Cook, and check out the Tasman Glacier on your way.

## WHERE TO STAY

One option is the lodge at the ski area – they will pick you up from Queenstown and offer full accommodation and meal packages right on the trail system, though you may want the flexibility of your own car to come down off the Mountain.

Wanaka is a 30–40 minute drive and Queenstown a 50–60 minute drive, depending on road conditions (I recommend renting a 4-wheel drive unless you like putting chains on!) Both towns offer a range of accommodation from budget motel/backpacker, vacation rentals, through luxury resorts. Rent a car from Avis and they will give you a lift pass to one of the four great alpine ski areas out of Wanaka or Queenstown.

I recommend that if you have a few days to spare you should check out some of the North Island too and soak in the green pastures, the new lambs, the native bush and the wonderful coastlines.

My travels took me up North to Gisborne to visit some old Truc-kee friends. Larry and Cindy Prosor have made a wonderful "off the grid" new home in Gisborne, where the sun shines a lot, great wine is produced, the surf is always up, and ocean

view property is still very affordable!

## A VISIT TO THE PRIME MINISTER

Did you know that the former Prime Minister of New Zealand is an avid cross country skier?

Having given ski lessons to PM Helen Clark, and hosted her here in Tahoe a couple of times, I was finally able to take her up on the invite to "come and stay at The Premier House" (New Zealand's version of the White House" in the Capital, Wellington). Larry and Cindy joined me, and we had a unique opportunity to see the Prime Minister at work and a glimpse of the schedule a World Leader juggles on a daily basis. I often think of her when I feel overwhelmed at work. I have always admired how she is able to take care of her health (and ski habit!) while holding such responsibilities. Unfortunately after 9 years of running New Zealand, she was recently replaced in the General Election, so accommodations won't be as fancy next time I visit. At least she will have more time for skiing now!

Maybe it's time to run another Far West Nordic Trip to New Zealand? I have organized a couple of trips for our juniors in the past, and am waiting to see what airline prices and exchange rates do to be able to share this great country and culture with this generation of skiers. Maybe its also time for a masters trip? I'm booked as Technical Delegate again for the 2009 events, so I would welcome some of our race crew to come and help!

*Sally Jones, in addition to being a valuable Far West Nordic Board member, is the director for Nordic Skiing at Auburn Ski Club and high-ranking instructor for the Professional Ski Instructors of America.*



# The Teaching Stick...

# DOUBLE POLE: YOUR NORDIC DNA

by Ben Grasseschi (Illustrations by Sophie Aaron)

**I**f you are like most Nordic skiers, you look at the double pole technique as a necessary evil. It is a way to get to from Point A to Point B that is effective but not pretty—or preferred. Perhaps you think of double poling as a way to do specific strength and get your upper body huge, like the “Governator.” Heck, many of you think it is only used for classic skiing and therefore not necessary to learn—let alone practice.

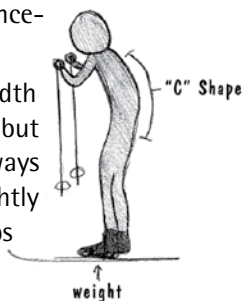
Oh, dear reader, I encourage you to think again. I believe the double pole is the most seminal form of all techniques within skiing. Whether you are classic skiing or skate skiing, a good double pole is the foundation of solid technique. It is the most basic blueprint for all that you do out there on the snow. I would even go so far as to call the double pole, “your Nordic DNA”.

Wow. Big statement. But, let’s take a closer look at the double pole technique and see how this DNA revelation can help you become a better skier, no matter how your prefer to slide on snow.

## ATHLETIC STANCE

First, let’s start with the Basic Athletic Stance—the foundation for all good skiing.

The Basic Athletic Stance is: feet shoulder width apart, weight center-forward of your arches, but behind balls of the feet. Your ankles are always flexing forward. Your knees should be slightly bent and pressing over toes. Keep your hips high, forward, and in-line over the knees. There is a slight ‘c’ shape to the back, and your shoulders and chest are relaxed, directly above the hips. And finally, your eyes should be looking up the trail, not down at your feet or skis.



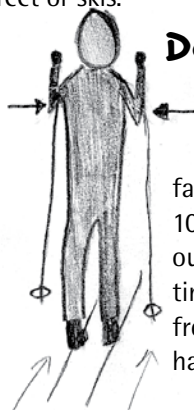
for good timing with the rest of the stroke.

From this good starting point, move your poles quickly straight down into the snow. (Simultaneously you should be doing a slight, yet strong, “crunch” of the abs). The poles aggressively ‘punch’ the snow and then quickly release—the power phase is done. Relax on the follow through to your hips, but then come quickly back to the high start position. Be sure the follow-through pendulums from the shoulder so that your hands are passing your body mid-thigh (as opposed to above the hips (rowing/swim style), or down by the knees (the “ape,” or old-school style) on the follow through and the return to starting position.



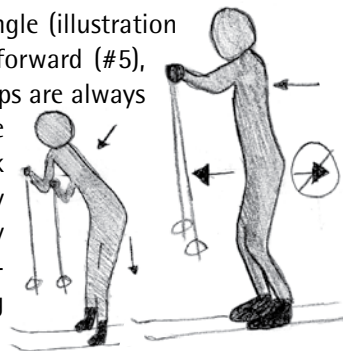
## DOUBLE POLE

From the basic Athletic Stance, move your hands high and in front of your face, shoulder width, and approximately 12-15” from your face. Your elbows may be bent approximately 90-100 degrees but should not be sticking too far outside your body center. Begin the double pole timing from this position, rather than ‘starting’ from behind your hips. By beginning with your hands high and forward, you will set yourself up



If the double pole is done correctly, the body never deviates from the basic athletic stance. Ideally, this forward body position

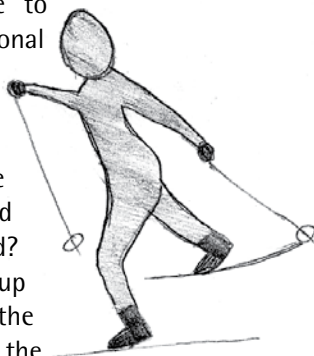
should be identical to the pole angle (illustration #3). The chest is always pressed forward (#3), not down at the snow (#4). The hips are always thrust forward as much as possible (#5)—the butt does not drop back (#4). And, the knees are slightly bent, barely compressing and only lightly “absorbing” the poling (illustration #6).



Got it? Good. Now let's splice your solid double pole DNA into the different genes of Nordic.

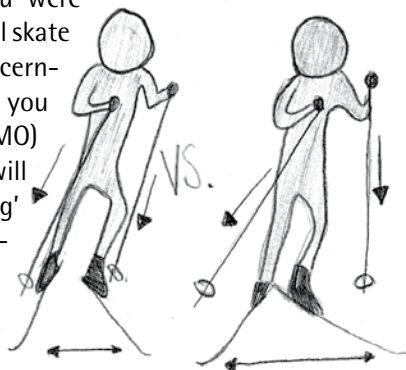
### CLASSIC

If you were to visualize the traditional classic technique right now you would see (hopefully) the following image. Ok, break that down into it's most simple form of propulsion and you would have a double pole. Not convinced? Try this: Take your fingers and cover up just the back leg and back arm of the illustration. What you have left is the double pole position! You see then that a good Athletic Stance is the first strand in your Nordic DNA helix. So now let's move on to skating to find the second strand of your Nordic DNA.



### SKATING: V1

Forget most of what you were taught about the V1, or uphill skate technique, especially concerning the poling. Here, I offer you the Genetically Modified (GMO) version. From now on, we will Double Pole on the 'poling' side. This means that the traditional, “hang” and “push” poles are no longer relevant. Instead, double pole the V1, just like you would in the classic track, allowing some room for mildly offset hands. (Your skis still need room to clear your poles as they move forward). Here are two ways to practice this:



1) For those of you who remember, the skating technique started with the Marathon Skate- essentially double poling in the classic tracks and then “skating/pushing” one foot/ski to the side, out of the tracks. To get a feeling of this “new” technique, practice the marathon skate.

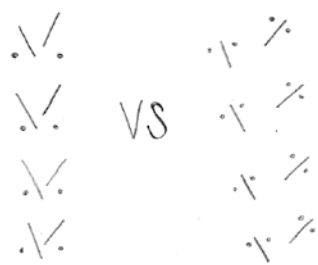
2) Or, try this: Start in a skating “V”. Choose your dominant side and double pole only on that side. For this drill, allow the ‘trailing’, or non-poling side leg, to limp along however it can. All your focus is on deliberately double poling on the right. Your mantra is,

“Double Pole, Right side; ‘fall’ to the left side. Double pole, right; fall left. Double Pole right, fall left.” Over and Over until you get it.

In fact, I encourage you to enjoy learning again by literally taking baby steps with your left leg. Eventually, once you get the idea of double pole V1, you will need to push off equally, to the side and forward, (not back), with both legs. But in the meantime, the above exercises will get you started into the new “GMO” skiing.

### SKATING: V2

Ahhh. Here is the skating technique that most benefits from your encoding “your Double Pole DNA.”



To practice this new V2: In the middle of the skating lane, start in a narrower (than V1) skating “V”. Double pole exactly like described previously for classic technique (pic 2); but down the middle of the skating lane. Let your legs move underneath you, allowing them to “float” side-to-side under your core. Do not turn your upper body in the direction of the gliding ski; instead, keep your chest pointing mostly in the middle of the track. Your ski tracks should look like this, not like the old-school technique, which would have you poling off into the woods on the right side and then off into the woods on the left side. Not very efficient when trying to go forward, is it?

### SKATING: V2 ALTERNATE

Oh boy. This is where it gets fun! The V2 Alternate is an elegant and powerful skating technique used for fast flats and slight downhills. The V2 Alternate translates directly back to improving all your double pole techniques because the timing of the V2 Alternate encourages you to “throw” yourself/your weight forward and commit to a gliding ski. If you take this committed V2 Alternate position back to your double pole technique practice, you will see that it, along with all the other exercises here, encourages one ski balance—the second strand in you Nordic DNA helix.

The best way to see incredible balance and, excellent double pole technique, is to check out videos of U.S. Ski Team members, Torin Koos, and Andrew Newell. They do this “new” double pole style, in both skate and classic, as well as anyone in the world. And, I do not think their DNA is flawed.

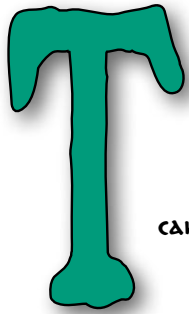
So, try double poling more often than you usually do. Try it while skating. See if you can't “teach an old dog new tricks”. I'm sure you can. It's all right there in your Nordic DNA.

Ben Grasseschi is the Far West Nordic and Auburn Ski Club's Head Coach, a World-Cup Wax Technician, Toko's Technical Representative, and does a mean “YMCA” dance.



# WAVE STARTS!

## Far West Nordic's Recommendations for Safer Racing by the Far West Nordic Competition Committee



he start of a cross-country ski race can be pretty stressful. The usual start scenario has hundreds of racers starting in a fairly wide area that quickly constricts down to a narrow ski trail wide enough for one to two skiers. The gun goes off and it's a mad scramble to get towards the front without getting stepped on, tangled up, or breaking a pole. These hectic starts can be exciting, but for some, the stress can severely impact the fun of the whole experience.

The Competition Committee of the Far West Nordic Ski Education Association has received a fair amount of input from local citizen racers, asking if there are ways to make the starts safer and less crowded. In the Far West Division (California and Nevada) the citizen races are organized and hosted by the individual XC ski resorts. These ski areas put on the races and have the ultimate say in how they want to run their individual races. Within the context of these ski area races, Far West Nordic creates the Sierra Ski Chase and Fischer Cup race series and determines the Far West Masters team. There is great cooperation between the ski areas and Far West Nordic, and together we try to put on fun, safe, and competitive ski races for all ages and abilities.

First a brief explanation of some different start formats. There is the "mass start" where everyone starts together and the first one across the line is the winner. These are the easiest races to put on from a race organization standpoint and can be very exciting as everyone is racing head to head. Another format is the "wave start" which breaks the mass start up into smaller waves that start a few minutes apart. The waves can be split by speed (faster racers in one wave, slower in another), or by sex, age, or technique (skate wave, classic wave.) Wave starts can drastically reduce congestion at the start but can be difficult to host because race areas have to oversee that racers sign up for the right wave, actually start in the wave they've signed up for, and get timed correctly. Finally there are "interval start" races where racers start individually and race against the clock. Usually the interval between racers is 15 or 30 seconds. Interval start races are the least congested but are the most difficult to host and also lack the head-to-head excitement of group racing. In the Far West Division, interval start races can be found at Auburn Ski Club's Snowshoe Thompson classic race and Paco's Fun Race. Wave starts can be found at Auburn's Sierra Nordic duathlon and some of the bigger races like the Great Race,



One wave start example is the Gold-Silver-Bronze Rush at Royal Gorge.  
Photo by Olof Carmel

Tahoe Rim Tour, and the Gold Rush. After receiving input from racers, Far West Nordic is encouraging more local races to implement wave starts in order to increase safety, promote a better overall race experience, and make it easier to attract more racers.

One simple way to divide the field is to have two starts: an "open" wave and a "women's-only" wave. In races that have a separate start for men (open) and women, women who start in the men's start will not show up in the women's results. For Far West scored series—Fischer Cup, Masters Team, and Sierra Ski Chase—racers will be scored in the category they start in. Women who start in the open wave will not be scored in the Women's field.

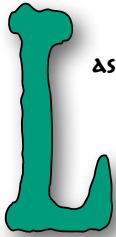
Race entry forms should have designated sign up boxes for Wave 1 (men and open) and Wave 2 (women.) Race results should have a separate list for open and women.

No matter what the start format a race has, Far West Nordic hopes that racers will cooperate with the individual ski areas and follow their guidelines. If racers have questions about scoring for Far West series races, please direct those to the Competition Committee at [web@farwestnordic.org](mailto:web@farwestnordic.org). Even though the United States Ski Association does not sanction the Far West Race Series, we generally follow USSA rules in all matters of racing.

# GOING THE DISTANCE:

## The Second Annual Tahoe Rim Tour: Stride, Skate or SnowShoe

by Jeff Schloss



ast year Far West Nordic debuted a brand new race: the Tahoe Rim Tour. This race adds another point-to-point race to the area, allowing people the adventure of skiing or snowshoeing 30 kilometers on a groomed trail across the wild lands between Tahoe XC and Northstar.



The start of the 2008 Tahoe Rim Tour, Classic Division  
Photo by Gene Murrietta

Last year a huge blizzard forced us to change the course on race morning to a 20 kilometer loop, but this year we are hoping to use the full course and experience the magic of traversing all eighteen miles from Lake Tahoe to the XC Center at Northstar.

The Tahoe Rim Tour will begin at North Tahoe High School in Tahoe City and will cruise through parts of the Tahoe XC Touring Center before climbing 1,100 feet up the "Fiberboard Freeway" to 7,700 foot Starratt Pass. Over the top of the pass, the race will veer off from the familiar course of the Great Ski Race and will instead head east along the Sierra Rim before connecting into the trail system of Northstar Cross Country. The course will finish by following the rolling terrain of the Northstar trails to the finish line at the Northstar XC Center. It's a challenging 30 kilometers with approximately 2,000 feet of climbing, similar in difficulty to the Great Ski Race. After reaching the finish, participants can celebrate their accomplishment at the post race party: hot food, drinks, raffle prizes and more will take place right at the finish area and buses will be waiting to take finishers back to Tahoe City.

There are three great options for entrants in the Tahoe Rim

Tour: you can choose between classic style skiing, skate skiing, or snowshoeing. The classic skiers will start first at 8:30 AM to take advantage of the fresh groomed tracks and the (hopefully) good waxing conditions. The skate wave will start at 9:00 AM and the snowshoers will start immediately after the skaters. Snowhoers will take a shorter route once on the trails of Northstar making their course a half marathon distance of 21 kilometers. The course will be groomed with classic tracks on the right and a wide skating lane on the left. There should be plenty of room for everyone. Prizes will be awarded for age group winners in each of the three categories: Stride, Skate, and Shoe.

The Tahoe Rim Tour is a fund-raiser for the Far West and Auburn Ski Club Junior Nordic programs. Northstar Resort and Tahoe Cross Country are generously donating their services to make this tour an incredible winter experience and to help raise money for Tahoe's young skiers. It is a win, win, win event, giving people a chance to challenge themselves on a new course, with three different choices of style, and all of the proceeds going to junior skiers. Come join us for the second annual Tahoe Rim Tour!