

## Booting it into Gear

Whoohoo! NDC -Thunder Bay version 2011/2012 is out of the gates and heading towards what we all feel will be our best racing season ever! Things got rolling right after the May long weekend with our annual 'Boot Camp' -- so called because coaches Eric and Timo use their boots to kick us into shape after spending the first months of spring getting chubby. Actually, 'Boot Camp' mainly serves as an orientation for the new athletes, a refresher for the returning ones, and a chance to get our first solid training block of the season under our belts. This year, our inaugural camp consisted of a few baseline physiological tests, a ton of meetings, and 18 to 24 hours of training over eight days.

This season the team is bigger than ever: 12 athletes in total, and all of us were in attendance for our first camp. Some of us had to skip out on a large chunk of high school weeks before final exams! Good show! For the out-of-towners, like myself, returning to my home-away-from-home to start the new training season felt great. It was awesome to see the familiar faces from last winter all in the same place. After spending a good chunk of the spring relaxing at my folks' place in Southern Ontario, it was nice to switch it up and be in the company of people who want to succeed in skiing.

There's never a boring moment during boot camp. A normal day consists of a morning workout, an afternoon workout, and a meeting in the evening. There was a lot to go over. We had meetings to learn what is expected of an NDC athlete, we met our Integrated Support Team (IST), we went over how to attract and keep sponsors with Team Manager Amanda and special guest Adam Kates. But wait, there's more; we met the board of directors, got started with our clothing and equipment orders, and were presented the tentative annual schedule.

For training we eased into the camp with zone 1 workouts for the first three days. One running, one ski walking, and another double pole rollerskiing. But on day four, things got way more serious. Hark! The daunting Critical Speed Test! The critical speed test is essentially a 4,000 meter running time trial, followed two hours later by a 1,000 meter time trial. We do this test on the 200-meter indoor track of the Lakehead University Hangar. I can tell you up front that running around that track 20 times as fast as you can, and then another 5 times trying to go faster isn't the most fun you can have running. Nonetheless, fun was had by cooking up friendly rivalries, setting PB's, and pushing our bodies into the red zone. I am happy to report that the entire team is in better shape than ever even this early in the season. Nearly all of us set PB's in the 4,000 meter which is surprising considering we haven't done much serious training since December.

To recover from the critical speed test, some of us did nearly five hours of zone 1 the next day just because we're so hardcore. We went for a wet rollerski in the morning and longish bike in the afternoon out to Reijo Purias's house for a sauna and swim. Reijo, an Olympian and long-time supporter of the team, had some

gruesome stories to tell about frostbite among other things. Ugh! Remember kids, frostbite isn't worth the 'cool' look, nor should you take your chances below - 20°C!

Another highlight of our camp was visiting one of our amazing sponsors and supporters, Fresh Air Experience. We had a chance to join Al Cranston and the Thursday night running crew for one of their runs. It was great to see so many positive and motivating runners. Thank-you to Fresh Air for all of your support and letting us come out and run with your group!



Al Cranston and the Fresh Air Thursday Night running crew! Photo credit: John Sims

Strength Test! That's what we did the next day. At NDC - Thunder Bay, we do the normal CCC strength test; which is how many pull-ups, sit-ups, push-ups, box jumps, and dips you do in a minute with a minute recovery between each exercise. Except, we add a rather cruel twist: Once you finish the test once, you get one measly minute of rest and then we do the whole thing all over again! Hey, Hey, Hey, Hercules! Needless to say, there was a lot of dizziness and nauseousness afterwards but that's how it goes. A number of us scored PB's in this one as well!

The next day we shredded some ski walking, agility, and soccer. That was fun and I got wet feet for like the fifth or sixth time that week!

The final day of boot camp was the Ouimet Canyon rollerski test. This one's a doozy. Like the critical speed test, it is broken up into two segments. The first a 2.1 km striding time trial with over 150 meters of vertical climb and absolutely no downhills. Twenty minutes later, we start the second segment is a 1.2 km double pole time trial with 50 meters of vertical climb. The hill is so big and steep that it's

insanely dangerous to ski down. Once upon a time Eric lost a nipple unadvisedly trying to defy this hill's gravitational potential energy. We get rides down in the van now. The PB trend that had already been established with the earlier test continued into the rollerski test. Way to go Team Traum!



Pushing through the Ouimet Double pole test!

The conclusion of the rollerski test doubled as the conclusion of the camp. Unfortunately we had to say bye to a few team members who had to return home to finish high school or to work. But they'll be back! In the meantime we can look forward to what will surely be a great season of training and racing!

Ahem! I would also like to take this opportunity not only to thank my personal sponsor Ski\*Go, but also to announce publicly one of the team's new implementations: the so-called 'Idiot Jar'. The 'Idiot Jar's' aim is to affect positive behavioral changes through adverse stimuli. Basically if you do something deemed dumb enough, for example, if you forget to bring your shorts to the gym have end up having to borrow a teammate's pair of sweaty ones or you say inappropriate things within earshot of an old lady, you have to put \$1 into the 'Idiot Jar' AND bear the chirps of heartless teammates. Through the act of having the put a dollar in the 'Idiot Jar' when we do stuff that negatively effect our training or is just plain dumb, we hope that together we will learn not to be idiots and instead be even smarter and more responsible! The 'Idiot Jar' will be kept it in the meatwagon.

Below is a picture of a few team members posing in the streets of Thunder Bay. Thank-you to John Sims for the great shot! More to come.....



Signing out --- Andy Shields