

# The Wind-Up

By Jesse Winter



**W**ell, it's that time of year again. Every morning finds the members of the National Team Development Centre waking up and going straight to the computer screen to check the forecast for snow. Dry land training is getting more intense every day, but also ever more tedious, as each consecutive interval or recovery run is yet another reminder that racing is just around the corner. Yes, it must surely be November, that month of the training year that somehow seems to sneak up on you, and yet still takes forever to finally pass. The NTDC crew and I are busy putting the final touches on a spectacular training season and getting ready to rock at Sovereign Lakes in a few short weeks. As I type this, while simultaneously trying to organize my NordicFest donations, fill out a backed up training log and guzzle some much needed morning java, I find myself looking back over the past summer and what has been the best NTDC training season yet.



We arrived in Canmore and set up shop in the nice little condo that would be our home for the next three weeks. At least it would be for me. After a week of acclimatization and prep training, Harry, Luke, Mike and Christina headed up to the Haig Glacier with the Ontario Ski Team without me. Eric and I had decided weeks before that it would be safer for me to stay at low altitude, given that I needed to ensure that I was well and truly recovered from a nasty bout of mononucleosis from the past winter. I organized my own mini-training camp in Canmore, taking the opportunity to train with some good friends and solid competitors like Ian Murray, and former team mate Chris Butler. For me, it was a great experience to be totally in control of my training, and from what I hear, things on the Haig went just as swimmingly. This brings us to the second risk of the summer. Eric had sat all of us down before heading out west to discuss the possibility of doing only one Haig camp, as opposed to our usual two. In exchange, we would have the opportunity to go to Austria in October

Things kicked off in a more relaxed and slightly later fashion this year. Eric decided to take some risks this summer, and try mixing up our regular summer schedule. The first risk was passing up our annual Giant Strides camp in favour of allowing everyone to direct their own training a little more in the early summer. The team officially convened in mid-June, when Harry Seaton and I (the only out-of-towners this year) moved into our new digs at Casa de Morrow (Lorne, Linda and Dave have been incredibly generous in helping to support Harry and I. Thanks so much to all of you). The team spent the next few weeks getting back into the swing of things, and getting some very good training done in and around Thunder Bay. In early July, we packed up the team van and headed west.



Downtown Schladming, the town we stayed in while in Austria

and train for 3 weeks on the Dachstein glacier. As I'm sure you can imagine, we didn't take a whole lot of convincing.

When we arrived home from Canmore, most of us took a week or so away from the team to visit our families and recover from what had been a very intense training block. We got back together in mid-August for what Eric described as an 'in town training camp', which took us through to September. Late summer in Thunder Bay offers some of the best training in the country, and we took full advantage of it. Everyone got a lot of really good work done, but the thought of our upcoming trip to Austria was never far from our minds. Unfortunately for one of us, this is when disaster struck. Or at least it could easily have been disaster had it not been for our incredibly dedicated assistant coach, Timo. On a roller-ski near South Gillies, Christina had an argument with a bailey bridge. Now, Christina can be very determined, especially when she's trying to stifle her giggles during a team meeting. On this day however, the bridge won the argument, leaving Christina with about 6 stitches in her knee and a broken bone in her hand. She wouldn't be coming with us to Austria. Obviously, she was very upset, but as I said, this was not disaster, but disaster narrowly averted. While the rest of us were trying in vain to learn German, Christina had Timo all to herself. Timo is a great guy, and an even better coach, but he has a tendency towards epic adventures in the woods, often with only his GPS watch to guide him. Spending three weeks at the mercy of 'The Big Fin' would seem daunting, even to me. Christina however, rose to the challenge, and trained her butt off.

Meanwhile, over in Austria, the rest of us were busy being stunned daily at the number of 'Red Group' skiers surrounding us while we trained. It seems that Der Dachstein in October is the place to be if you're a World

Cup skier. Lucas Bauer was there with his Czech team, as were Anna Dahlberg, the Frederiksen brothers, Lina Andersen, Petra Majdic, their respective national teams and a host of other incredibly fast skiers. It was amazing to be training amongst the fastest skiers in the world, and it made all of us realize that they are, in fact, human, just like we are. All in all, the entire trip was amazing, and well worth the risk to get there. We even had time



Harry, Luke and PHTC friendly rival Lenny Valjas, who we ran into on Der Dachstein with his team. It seems great coaches think alike.

to take in a real live European fashion show! Three weeks in Europe was an adventure for all of us, and something we are all hoping to repeat this winter, only exchanging Schladming Austria for the World Junior and Under 23 Championships in Praz de Lys Sommand, France.

To conquer France however, we must first conquer the domestic NorAm race circuit, and that campaign is about to start. The five of us have come a long way

this summer, but we have a long way still to go. A hectic (and now typical) pre-Christmas race calendar has us leapfrogging across the country, first to Silver Star BC, then to the Callaghan Valley Olympic venue, then back to Duntroon Ontario. Four days at home to visit family for Christmas is all we'll get before we head back out on the road to Canmore for the World Junior and U23 Trials. That will be our final testing ground, and will determine who of us gets to take on the world in France. Nervous excitement is building, but I can speak for my team mates when I say we are confident in what we have accomplished this summer and where it will take us. We changed things up and took some risks. Now we're into the last few weeks of the pre-season wind-up, and we can hardly wait for the big pay outs.