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MADNORSKI News

News for members of the Madison Nordic Ski Club

January 2008 Vol. 27 No. 4

Global Warming and Snow, Huh!?



**Dirk Mason and Walt Meanwell
(with cohort Ben Neff)**

Please indulge a financial planner and sustainability consultant a moment to pontificate on Global Warming for a moment. How can this be? Snow, Snow and more snow, at the current moment this is the 4th or 5th snowiest December on record. We ask global warming?

How many K have you logged in December this year? We speculate more than some entire seasons as of late. How can we be experiencing global warming, we ask?! Anyway isn't global warming all about a shift in weather patterns? Oh wait, this is a shift, we have SNOW! (*Editor's Disclaimer – Walt and Dirk and not climatologists and tongue in cheek discussion does not represent the opinions of the Madison Nordic Ski Club or the Board. We welcome letters to the editor in response.*)

In all seriousness, what a great start to the season (so we just jinxed it, better knock on wood). We have had wonderful turnouts for the free Nordic ski lessons. If you have not you have

helped Jimmy instruct – thank you. If not, we encourage you to help instruct. The experience is very rewarding and helps improve your own skiing. Our first race of the season was a great success. Thanks to everyone who helps put these events on.

The trails committee is charging ahead and making great inroads. This is excellent timing given the great snow this past month. As we are out skiing on the area trails, we notice that there is a diverse and active ski population beyond the club. It is great to think our efforts of trail maintenance and advocacy reach beyond our group.

Please be courteous to these folks and say “hello”. Who knows, they make be the next MadNorSki member!

Better Balance = Better Skier

Jonathan Walton

Balance, specifically dynamic balance, is critical to the movements of skiing. By improving your balance, you will be able to glide further and keep yourself upright in trickier conditions.

Balance is “bodily equilibrium or stability” according to the New World Dictionary. When you stand upon a moving ski, you react to where in relation to your ski, the snow beneath it, the speed of your ski and the speed of your body. These reactions are made swiftly and instinctively. Fortunately, balancing is a skill that you can improve with some quick and easy steps.

Start by testing yourself with both legs together and then individually. Can you stand for 15 seconds with your feet together? How about on your right or left leg? If this is easy, then try it with your eyes closed, feet together first, then on each foot. Closing your eyes forces your body to rely upon other cues than just your vision for a reference of stability.

Drills for developing your balance

Single Leg Pick-Up: Stand on one foot (the support in shoes will make this easier, stocking feet will be more challenging) and place an object on the front of you on the floor. Slowly bend at the knee and the waist to pick

it up and put it back down. Increase the difficulty by reaching further out to the side and behind your foot. By keeping your head up, you will make this exercise easier as your eyes are able to provide a reference for “Vertical” for your body.

Balance Toss: Set up in a safe workout area, such as an open space in your basement free of obstacles in a 10' radius. Standing on one foot, have your toss you a ball to you. Start by catching and tossing close to your body, moving progressively away from your torso for more difficulty. Use a medicine ball to increase the degree of challenge.

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Junior Racing: South Conference News

Dale Fanney

January marks the beginning of the junior racing season for the Wisconsin High School Nordic League South Conference. The newly formed "Banana Belt" Conference includes Madison West, Lodi, Waukesha West and Oconomowoc. While one or two of the area's top skiers consider Junior Olympics as the focus of competition, most area junior skiers identify with their high school team and club members. Junior racing in the state has traditionally been divided into the North and Central regions hosting invitationals, citizen races, and championships. Last year, the South Conference was created and successfully held it's first ever "Conference Meet" at a Tuesday night Elver Park race, followed by a reciprocal race at Lapham peak.

The 2008 season opens with the Waukesha County Parks 5K skating race in Nashotah on Jan. 5, followed by the MadNorSki Invite 5K skating

race at Elver on Tuesday Jan. 8 at 6pm. Lodi and Madison West will square off for a classical 5K and middle school 4K race at Elver on Jan. 15. Lapham Peak will host the South Conference meet on Wednesday Jan. 23 with a 4.4 km classical race.

Waukesha West coach Mary Eloranta reports the creation of **Peak Nordic** which will sponsor the area's four high schools including Waukesha west, Oconomowoc, Arrowhead and Nathan Hale, as well as a middle school and K-6 kidski program. The new format will give local teams more autonomy from school board restraints and create an atmosphere of support for Nordic ski racing and development. The Waukesha boys team returns all starters from last year and has its goal set on a podium finish at state championships this year. The girls team features a lot of new skiers after graduating 10 skiers from last year's super/3rd at State team. Oconomowoc is reforming a new team under the Peak Nordic logo after the

retirement of Jerry Hazard as head coach.

MadNorSki Juniors are represented by a Madison West boys and girls team with new energetic coaching from Louise Jones and Bill Rattunde. The team sports 25 skiers this year with the addition of at least 10 new skiers. Returning top skiers Birken Schimpff and Corrina Jones hope to finish in the top 10 at State this year while middle schooler Nicole Bathe continues to develop into one of the area's rising stars.

Lodi enters its third season with 22 high school and 12 middle school racers hoping to improve on last year's modest gains. The young team continues to grow in experience and has an active schedule of races this year.

Hopefully the future will see the development of additional teams from Middleton and Madison Memorial, Baraboo, Portage and the South Kettle Moraine area. Plans include a
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2007–2008 Calendar



January

- 5 MadNorSki Bus Trip to Minocqua Winter Park
- 3 Board Meeting 6:45 p.m.
- 7 Club Meeting; 7:15 p.m. Social begins at 6:30 p.m. Lussier Center
- 8 Elver Park Race Series; 6 p.m. registration, 7 p.m. Race
- 15 Elver Park Race Series; 6 p.m. registration, 7 p.m. Race
- 22 Elver Park Race Series; 6 p.m. registration, 7 p.m. Race
- 29 Elver Park Race Series; 6 p.m. registration, 7 p.m. Race

February

- 2-3 Madison Winter Festival and Capitol Square Sprints 5 Elver Park Race Series; 6 p.m. registration, 7 p.m. Race
- 7 Board Meeting 6:45 p.m.
- 11 Club Meeting; 7:15 p.m. Social begins at 6:30 p.m. Lussier Center
- 12 Elver Park Race Series; 6 p.m. registration, 7 p.m. Race

March

- 6 Board Meeting 6:45 p.m.
- 10 Club Meeting; 7:15 p.m. Social begins at 6:30 p.m. Lussier Center

Board Meeting	Club Meeting	Meeting Theme	Meeting Agenda
Thursday, Jan. 3	Monday, Jan. 7	Waxing for racing and recreation	Wax Demo
Thursday, Feb. 7	Monday, Feb. 11	Birkie stories	Juniors fund raiser
Thursday, March 6	Monday, March 10	Racing wrap-up Pot Luck	Election of officers

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spring coaches conference to discuss the future of high school Nordic skiing in Wisconsin. Hopefully regional development centers such as MadNorSki/BlackHawk, Lapham Peak, Wausau, Green Bay, Eau Claire and “the Northland” will develop support structure for new high school teams. For the time being, the South Conference will take its rightful place with the Central and Northern regions of the state. (Hey—we have more snow!)



The Elver Park shelter comes alive with racers during the first “early-season” race. Racing normally doesn’t start until January but with the terrific snowfall this December, race directors Dave Bell and Tom Galliger were able to pull one off before the holidays. Members organized by Jimmy Vandenbrook volunteered to teach the public lessons before the race.



2007–08 Board

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Unstable Surface Balance: There are a wide variety of tools available for challenging your balance, such as wobble boards, foam rollers, balance discs and BOSU "balls". All train you to correct for an unstable base of support. Center your foot on the platform and balance on one foot. To increase the difficulty, close your eyes or try the single leg pick-up on your platform. A wobble board can easily be made with a small rectangle of plywood and a 2x4 rounded off on one edge.

Single Leg Glides: Find a gentle, straight set of tracks. See how far you can glide on one foot. A slower glide will be more challenging.

Make sure that you train on both feet and work to improve your non-dominant side. Have fun with it and make a game of it as part of your regular training regimen. Using a combination of these drills, you should see rapid improvement in your ability to balance over your gliding skis. As the snow and terrain changes, your body will be better able to react and stay upright. Enjoy the snow!

Jonathan Walton is a Certified Massage Therapist, personal trainer and the owner of Invigoration on Monroe Street.



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Diagonal Stride

Provided by Yuriy Gusev

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Diagonal Stride is the first gear in the
classical transmission. It is used when
climbing steeper hills where double
poling or kick double pole will only
bog the engine down.

Introduction

There are several important factors
that play a key role in properly
executing diagonal stride. To make the
discussion easier they have been broken
down into body position, timing and
power. Each of these components play
an integral part in executing the stride
successfully. It is important that the
athlete perfect each component to be
successful.

Body Position

Body position in all sport is important
for enabling the athlete to apply
power to each motion effectively
and efficiently. For this reason body
position in diagonal stride is similar to
other ski techniques as well as to other
sports.

Feet: Center the weight across the
ball of the foot. If the weight is too
far forward onto the toes it will be
hard to apply enough force through
the kick. If it is too far back it will be
hard to apply force quickly enough to
be powerful. The skier's weight will
shift toward the whole foot in the glide
phase of this technique but will quickly
shift back to the ball of the foot for the
kick. Body position drills should focus
on keeping the weight on the ball of
the foot.

Ankles: The bend in the ankles is vital
to directing the power in such a way
that the skier is propelled forward
down the trail and not up in the air.
The degree of bend at the ankle is
dependent primarily on terrain - the

steeper the terrain the more acute the
angle at the ankle. Also, the more force
the skier is attempting to deliver the
deeper the angle will be.

Knees: The angle at the ankle must be
closely mimicked by the angle at the
knee in order to keep the skier's weight
positioned over the feet where that
force can be directed though the ski
to the snow. Generally skiers struggle
to get the proper angle at the ankle
rather than at the knee. What results
is a knee angle greater than the ankle
angle, which places the skier's weight
behind the feet. This slows the speed of
the kick, loads a great deal of weight
on the quadriceps, and diminishes the
amount of force applied to the kick.

Hips: The hips must be high and
forward. When it comes to body
position this is accomplished by having
the skier's weight over the balls of the
feet, maintaining the proper ankle and
knee angle, keeping the upper body in
a "C" position and by maintaining a
quick kick. Look for the hips to remain
high and forward through the entirety
Continued on next page



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of the diagonal stride cycle.

Core/Back: The upper-body, from tailbone to head, should form a soft “C” shape. Think Neanderthal man, big foot, gunslinger. Do not think of the Queen of England or of the postural advice of your parents. This “C” position will help keep the hips over the feet, relax the lower back as well as position the muscles of the core to apply force to the poles. This “C” can be very shallow leaving the skier quite upright or rather pronounced putting the skier in an aggressive forward position. The depth of the “C” is also dependent upon terrain with most skiers adapting a more up-right shallow “C” position as the terrain becomes steeper. An “S” shape in the back is the most common core body position mistake and puts a lot of pressure on the lower back. This can also force the hips back. Another common mistake is to fold at the waist into an “r” position. This too forces the hips back and makes it hard to deliver power to the kicking ski.

Shoulders: Shoulders should be rounded leaving the arms hanging free and loose in front of the body. Even skiers who ski in a very shallow, upright “C” position should have a forward attitude at the shoulder. This position allows for a smooth pendulum swing of the arms as well as a good position from which to apply both

body weight and force to the poles.

Arms: In the neutral or starting position the arms should hang loose from the shoulders. The angle of the arm at pole plant should enable the skier to apply maximal force with the core and back as well as the weight of the upper body to the poles. This means that the arm will be much closer to 90 degrees in steeper terrain, and slightly straighter in more gradual terrain. At pole release the hand should be low. The follow through of the arm is dependent upon speed (and terrain). The faster the skier is moving the longer the follow through. The shoulders and hands should reach forward down the track in front of the skier rather than across the skier’s body or out to the side.

Timing

In all techniques the whole body works together to transfer the skier’s weight from ski to ski and down the track. Timing of the diagonal stride mimics that of a running stride. The skier’s opposite arm and leg are forward together. In skiing the upper-body contributes forward momentum by applying power through the pole as the skier glides, plants, compresses and explodes forward off the kicking ski thus propelling the skier down the track. At the same time as the kicking ski and poling arm pass back behind the skier the opposite arm and leg swing forward (just like

running) adding forward momentum to the propulsion down the track. This technique uses the same timing as running but has the added power of the upper-body, and the speed and efficiency of the ski gliding on snow.

The term “kick” is used to describe the forward propulsion of the skier from one ski to the next (as in a runner striding from one foot to the next). This term is misleading, as the skier does not actually kick backwards any more than a runner kicks backwards. This “kick” could better be described as a jump or the propulsive component of the stride, but the term “kick” is utterly entrenched and will do fine.

The “kick” of the diagonal stride can better be likened to the explosive jump of a long jumper than the foot strike of a runner. In either case imagine the jumper or runner attempting to kick the foot back at take off. In actuality the foot and leg is left behind the athlete in the follow through after the jump or foot strike. The same is true for the skier. In fact the skier’s “kick” is similar to the jumper’s jump in that the foot is planted on the ball of the foot. The athlete then compresses down on the planted foot, and explodes forward off the foot down the trail or, in the case of the jumper, through the air. The time the jumper spends in the air is the time the skier is gliding. The more powerful the jump the further the jumper sails
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One-minute Clinic

Yuriy Gusev

Core strength is very important element of cross country ski fitness. However in order to use it effectively you have to follow some biomechanical principles. Poling is pretty much the same across all classic and skate technique with exception of non-dominant side in V1. In order to apply core strength effectively you need to have your elbows away forward from your body at the time of the pole plant pointing slightly to the right and left side.

See you on the trails!



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through the air. The more powerful the “jump” for the skier the further the skier can glide. The major difference is the direction of this jump –the jumper must orient some power into the air while the skier is oriented entirely down the trail.

This jumping sequence is so linked as to be a single motion containing all the elements of glide, plant, compress, explode, glide. See more on timing under “Power”.

Power

Power results from force applied quickly. Power relies on being in a position that allows both the application of the skier’s strength and the application of that strength over a short period of time.

The above description of body position aims to put the skier in that position. Timing allows power development while maintaining the forward momentum of the skier.

The effective, efficient and repetitive

application of power to the skis and poles is the goal of learning proper technique –including body position and timing. Once the skier can grasp the idea of proper body position it must be ingrained through repetition. This repetition will also develop the strength it takes to maintain this position and develop power from it. The practice of proper timing will help develop the speed of force application.

The job of the kick in diagonal stride is two-part. The first part is compressing the ski to the snow, which is vital to gaining the platform from which forward propulsion is performed. The second part is making that forward propulsion powerful enough to propel the skier further and faster than the competition.

A large part of this power comes from weight transfer. This could easily be put in the “body position” section. The entirety of the skier’s weight must be over the gliding / kicking ski for the skier to both

glide with relaxed balance and apply maximal power to the kick. In fact the

ski will carry 100% of the skier’s body weight in the glide and all the skier’s weight plus the force added by the kick itself during

The kick phase

In diagonal stride the speed of the kick is of primary importance to power development. This is because the skier must execute the kick fast enough in order to stop the ski in the snow without interrupting their forward momentum. In the short period of time that the ski can be stationary while the skier is still moving forward, that ski must be planted, flattened against the snow, and loaded with the force of the skier’s weight plus muscular strength (compressed) until the skier can finally explode forward off that foot onto the other ski. This entire sequence must be split-second fast – and that speed is the primary contribution to power in diagonal stride.

Power from the upper body is generated in a similarly quick application of force down onto the
Continued on next page

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From previous page

pole.

The force is developed with a crunching motion of the core as well as the use of the lats and application of the upper body's weight onto the poles. This motion actually takes place over a longer period of time than the kick as the poling motion begins before the initiation of the kick. Never-the-less power is still developed by applying this force quickly. To enable this, the poling motion should not be overly drawn out. The forward swing of the other arm is simultaneous to the poling arm. It should be swung low, relaxed and directly down the track so its momentum can be best utilized.

Training/Racing

Technique is the tool you use to apply your fitness to the sport. Technique is the screwdriver, fitness is what you use to turn

the screwdriver, ski racing is the job you are trying to accomplish. With technique training you are simply trying to develop a good tool to help you get the job done. But fitness comes first. If you are fit enough you can drive the screw into the board with no screwdriver at all. There are many examples of skiers with inefficient technique winning even World Cup ski races –in other words skiers who can drive the screw with no screwdriver –and they do this with fitness. All technique work must be done in conjunction with and as an addition to preparation aimed at aerobic, anaerobic or strength oriented training. Do not mistake having a nice tool chest with being a good carpenter.

Conclusion

Proper body position enables proper timing — both of which enable effective, efficient application of power.



There's always room for improvement with diagonal striding, but that's part of what makes it so fun!



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