

Training tips and advice for the 2005 CSM

By: Chris Blanchard

Introduction: As the 2005 Canadian Ski Marathon (CSM) approaches, I have been asked to share some training tips and “words of wisdom” for participants. You may ask: “Who is Chris Blanchard and why should we listen to what he has to say?” It’s a good question and my recommendation is that you don’t just listen to me but also to other experienced skiers and decide for yourself what works best. As for credentials, I began participating in the CSM at age 7 and by age 10 (1981) I completed my Coureur de Bois Bronze. In 1982 and 1983 I completed my Silver and Gold and then quickly retired to follow a competitive career in cross-country skiing on a provincial and later on a national and international level. In 1998 I represented Canada at the Olympic Games in Nagano, Japan and following my retirement from competitive skiing in 1999 I began re-participating in the CSM almost 20 years later. This season I will be attempting my Gold for the fourth time.

Objective: With approximately 20 weeks left until CSM weekend, my goal is to provide skiers with ideas and useful exercises that will help them realize their goals, whether it is completing the full distance or completing one section a day. In setting out a program, I have broken the remaining time until the CSM into 5 periods each consisting of 4 weeks. Each period will have a slightly different focus so as to progressively build up to eventually achieving your goal. Training is similar to constructing a building in that you need a solid base from which to begin the next phase. As such, if you leave everything until the last minute, you will likely not have a strong enough base and will have a more difficult time achieving your goal. Another important point is to get your self outside. As the weather gets cooler and the days get shorter, people have a tendency to tend to head indoors to the gym. Remember the CSM is an outdoor event will take place regardless of the weather. A wise skier once told me “there is no such thing as bad weather, only poorly dressed skiers.” The moral of the story is to: (i) get outside and (ii) start training now and not two weeks before the CSM.

Structure: An overview of the five periods is:

- Period 1:** General Conditioning (Sept. 27th – Oct. 24th)
- Period 2:** Extending the Base (Oct. 25th – Nov. 21st)
- Period 3:** Introduction to Specific Training (Nov. 22nd – Dec. 19th)
- Period 4:** Specific Volume Training (Dec. 20th – Jan. 16th)
- Period 5:** Taper and Peak for CSM (Jan. 17th – Feb. 13th)

General tips: The following are some helpful tips that should come in handy between now and the CSM.

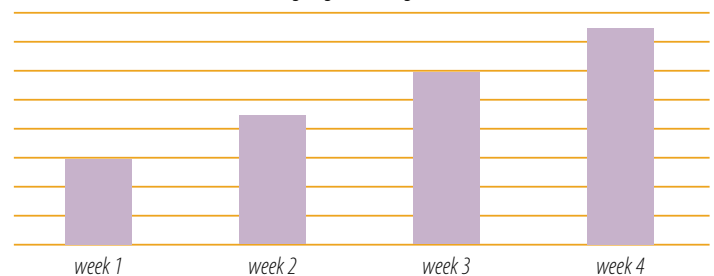
Goal setting: If you’ve registered for the CSM you’ve already tackled the first step. However, it’s also important to set goals for each training segment and individual workouts. Goals can be as simple as; having fun, completing a workout in a specific time or perfecting technique. Remember, however, that they need to be realistic but at the same time tough enough to make you strive to meet them.

Join a ski club: This is something that may not be for everyone, however, I find that training with a group has always been a great motivator to get off the coach. In addition, ski clubs typically have coaches that can help you improve your technique, another important component of xc-skiing. For a directory of clubs around your area go to the Cross Country Canada homepage: <http://cananda.x-c.com> and follow the link for “clubs”

Keep a training log: When I was skiing competitively keeping a training log was a requirement. However, a training diary is not only useful for competitive skiers but for everyone. Its main purpose is to keep tabs on what you do so you can improve over time either by not repeating an earlier mistake or by increasing your training volumes. To do this, you need to know what you have done in the past. Another advantage is the confidence you get by knowing what you’ve done. The week before the CSM you won’t have to freak out that you haven’t trained because you’ll have a written record of exactly what you’ve done! There are all types of training logs you can buy or for simplicity I’ve included a template (see “CSM Training Program Template”) which I used to use when I skied.

Progressive training cycle: As mentioned, I have broken the remaining time between now and the CSM into five 4 week periods. To get the most out of each segment one must increase the workload (i.e. hours trained) progressively throughout the segment. The objective is to rest at the beginning of each period in order to recover from the one before, and then to begin building up again. Where does someone start? This is a good question and not easily answerable because we all have such different abilities. In general, however, you will want “week 2” to be set at a level which will allow you to be able to increase your volume through to “week 4” without becoming impossible to complete.

Training Segment Progression



Three Rs: Rest, Recovery and Relaxation. A popular misconception is that the harder you train the faster you will be. To some degree this is true, however, it is recovery that allows all of us to use the potential we develop through training. If you cannot recover from a workout you are in effect taking one step forward and two backwards. In general, hard workouts should be followed by easier ones, hard weeks followed by easy weeks. Easy days do not mean that you do nothing rather it means you plan activities which are not highly taxing such as walking 20 minutes to work. In general, everyone should take at least one to two days off (no exercise) per week to allow for full recovery and time to enjoy life. Another important part of recovery is massage and stretching. Schedule a massage after a hard week and stretch regularly to prevent injuries.

Have FUN!: The most important part of this whole process is to have FUN. Do workouts that you enjoy, get out with friends when you can and don’t take bad days or workouts too seriously. None of us participate in the CSM to earn a living so enjoy the process and have a good time.

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