

7.3.3 Athlete's Personal Race Plan

The objective of a personal race plan is to give an athlete purpose and direction, reduce tensions and prepare him/her for a competition.

The following outline has been provided as a possible handout for athletes who are interested in learning more about how to prepare for a competition. Some of your athletes may be ready for this information – others may not be interested until they are older.

Why Warm-Up?

An appropriate warm-up routine prepares you physically and mentally to execute a race to the best of your ability. It will gradually prepare you for skiing full out by getting your body's energy systems and muscles up to prime operating temperature. Points to note:

- ❑ your warm-up should include some hard work, but not hard enough for fatigue to set in;
- ❑ the timing of your warm-up is critical because you should be well warmed up for your race, but you don't want to lose the effect of the warm-up prior to the start; and
- ❑ your warm-up routine is part of your pre-race plan and should be monitored and improved from race to race.

Why Warm-Down?

An appropriate warm-down routine should relax tight muscles, help remove waste products from your muscles, help you recover quickly if you have another race later that day or the following day, and reduce your chances of getting sick. Point to note:

- ❑ if the weather is particularly cold, or if there are other indications that hypothermia could be a possibility, then it is important for you do your warm-down with another skier.

Preparing for a Race

For you, the athlete, the planning and implementation of a personal race strategy is an important component of your preparation for a competition. Each competition should be considered a learning experience - something to look forward to and an exciting challenge on the way to self-improvement! Here are some points to consider.

Pre-Race - The Day Before

The day before the competition, your main objective is to have your planning and preparations in good order so that your race day can run as smoothly as possible.

- ❑ When you arrive at the venue you will want to inspect your competition course, either by yourself or with team-mates that will be racing the same course. Depending on your familiarity with the site and conditions, your coach may wish to ski it with you. While checking the course, you should ski over the difficult downhill sections once or twice at race pace until you establish a comfort level; unless the course conditions change significantly overnight, this may be the only time you will ski the course prior to the competition.
- ❑ At some point during the course inspection, or shortly after it is completed, you should discuss your race strategy (tactics) with your coach. Tactical decisions depend on the race format, your

Nov 13, 2017

strengths and abilities as an athlete, the course conditions, your start position and the course distance/profile.

- ❑ Discuss a suitable warm-up routine with your coach. This will depend on your age, your physical fitness and the race format. For T2T and older athletes, a short “interval” should be included. At some point in time you will need to discuss and develop this procedure with your coach. Together you will learn through trial and error what works best for you.
- ❑ Discuss a suitable warm-down routine with your coach.
- ❑ The detailed club/team plan for race day (prepared by the coaches and understood by everyone on the team) is an essential part of your preparations, as is your personal race plan, and they need to be in harmony with each other in order for everything to fall into place the following day. Develop the habit of putting your plan in writing. The purpose of all this pre-race planning is to ensure that the morning of the race will be calm and well organized so that you can focus entirely on your preparations for your competition. Following the competition, you and your coach should review your personal plan and look for ways to improve it for next time.
- ❑ Ensure that you understand what the procedure will be for picking up your bib.

Pre-Race - The Morning of the Race

The morning of the competition your main objectives should be: (1) to be physically ready; (2) to be mentally ready; (3) to have all your equipment in good working order; and (4) to have your skis prepared properly.

- ❑ Follow the pre-race plan you developed the day before.
- ❑ Try a slow wake up run (10-15 minutes) soon after you get up in the morning. This may or may not work for you, but at some point you will need to test it out and see if it is the right thing or not.
- ❑ Eat appropriately. What you choose is a matter of individual preference, but keep in mind that the food you eat in the last few hours before a competition should be high in carbohydrate and low in fibre. You will need to experiment to learn what works best for you. Don't eat anything you are not used to on the morning of the race.
- ❑ Experiment to find out the best time for you to eat before a competition. This could be one to four hours before your start. Three important considerations to keep in mind are:
 - ✓ don't eat a full breakfast later than three hours before start time;
 - ✓ if you are eating just one or two hours before your start, use food in a liquid form to ensure rapid absorption; and
 - ✓ don't eat so long before the race that you feel hungry before you start.
- ❑ Your coaches will give you specific instructions on when you are to arrive at the venue. Generally this will be 1.5 hours before your start time in a classic race and 1 hour before your start time in a free technique race.
- ❑ When you arrive, go to your team headquarters and check in with the coaches. Find out how the skis are being processed on that particular day, and when you should pick up your warm-up skis. If you are waxing your own warm-up skis, find out the recommended wax and prepare them.
- ❑ The timing of your warm-up is critical because you want to be well warmed-up for your event

Nov 13, 2017

but you don't want to lose the effect prior to the start.

- ❑ This final pre-race period should be planned to the minute. Your warm-up routine should take your full attention and your entire focus should now be on preparing for your competition. From this point, there should be no time for anything but carrying out the plan.
- ❑ Follow the warm-up routine you planned with your coach the day before.
- ❑ You should do your warm-up routine alone so that you can be focussed on the upcoming race. Generally you would ski for about 20 minutes. You would extend this somewhat in very cold temperatures.
- ❑ Ensure that your warm-up is done correctly. This will become increasingly important as you get older. Senior athletes following a proper warm-up routine should be physically prepared for their event so that they are able to ski at the appropriate pace right from the start. Typically a good warm up increases the core temperature, uses muscles and techniques at the intensity level required during the event and sets the appropriate arousal level without your being fatigued at the start. If you are sweating when you finish a warm-up, you should change your toque and gloves before the start.
- ❑ In very cold weather, the "feeling" from the warm-up should be the same. What changes as the temperature drops is how the warm-up is done to get and maintain this "feeling". Often on a cold day you will be tempted to cut your warm-up short because you will be afraid of becoming cold. Instead, the warm-up should be long enough and intense enough for you to break into a sweat. To maintain this warmed up state, you need to minimize the amount of time you are in damp or wet clothing. In these conditions a well prepared athlete will put on dry gloves/mitts, underwear, hat (and perhaps socks) after the warm-up and before the start.
- ❑ Your warm-up routine should end about ten minutes prior to your start. Return to your team headquarters for your race skis. Test the wax out briefly before going to ski marking. Check that everything is in perfect order. This includes a final equipment check.
- ❑ Proceed through ski marking. This should take place approximately five minutes before the start.
- ❑ Once you are in the holding area you should do some dynamic exercises. You may also wish to jog or ski. It is important for you to keep warm and loose.
- ❑ It is important to concentrate on the start of the race. By keeping your focus on the start and the race process, you should be able to control anxiety effectively.
- ❑ You should enter the start gate relaxed and sweating lightly; your heart rate should be above its resting values.
- ❑ Your warm-up routine is an essential part of your pre-race plan. Evaluate it and improve on it from race to race.

Post-Race

The main objective of the period immediately following the competition is to ensure a good recovery.

- ❑ One of your team coaches should be at the finish line to meet you. If you would like him/her to have your recovery drink, snack or something else you need immediately following your race, plan for this ahead of time.
- ❑ Change your toque, gloves and other wet clothing as soon as you have completed your event

Nov 13, 2017

and before you do your warm-down.

- ❑ You should begin your warm-down routine as soon as possible.
- ❑ Go for an easy ski (approximately 10 to 20 minutes). If the weather is particularly cold or if there is any other indication that hypothermia could be a possibility, then it is important for you do your warm-down with another skier.
- ❑ For the best recovery, warm down at low zone one (approximate heart rate of 120).
- ❑ Note: you should not stretch for at least three hours following the end of your event.
- ❑ Within 15 minutes of the race, consume some high carbohydrate sport drink with protein and begin snacking on foods that will quickly replace the depleted fuel and nutrients from your system. The recovery drink should be at room temperature.
- ❑ The replacement of fluid is a high priority during the first hour after a competition; snacking should continue over a three to four hour period.
- ❑ Snacks should be selected from foods that are high on the glycemic index (the measure of how quickly foods are converted into fuel the body can use is called the “glycemic index”). This would include bagels, oatmeal, etc.

To better prepare for future competitions, you and your coach should analyze your race and determine whether you achieved the goals you had set. It is from this evaluation that you can develop a better strategy for next time.

7.3.4 Athlete’s Pre-Race Planning Sheet (example #1)

Athlete Name: _____

Check List:

- Skis Poles Gloves
- Recovery Drink Boots Clothing Change
- Toque Extra Food

Time Before Race Start	Activity	Notes
180 min		
150 min		
120 min		
100 min		
80 min	Pick up warm-up skis	Warm-up skis are waxed
60 min	Test warm-up skis	Give feedback on wax to coaches
40 min	Pick up race skis	Race skis should be prepared (target)
35 min		
30 min		
25 min		
20 min		

15 min		
14 min		
13 min		
12 min		
11 min		
10 min	Check in at ski marking	
9 min		
8 min		
7 min		
6 min		
5 min		
4 min		
3 min		
2 min		
1 min		
Start		

Nov 13, 2017

Athlete's Pre-Race Planning Sheet (example #2)

Name: _____

Goals (organization, warm-up, technique, etc.)

1) _____

2) _____

Plan - Evening Before Race

- Good supper
- Team meeting
- Wax skis
- Talk to my coach and finalize my personal plan for race day
- Pack equipment and clothing
- Go to bed early at _____

Plan - Race Day:

- Get up at _____
- Eat a healthy breakfast
- Leave for the race site at _____
- Go to team headquarters and check in with the coaches when I arrive at the venue
- Test my skis as per instructions from the coaches
- Check if I need to change my clothing, go to the bathroom or have a snack
- Ski my warm-up routine as discussed with my coach
- Arrive at the start area ten minutes before my start time
- Start at _____
- Ski hard, but with the focus on good technique
- Behave fairly towards other competitors
- Feel proud of myself
- Replace fluid and begin snacking within 15 minutes of the finish of my race
- Change clothes as necessary before doing my warm-down
- Ski ten minutes in a slow, easy warm-down with my ski-friends
- Cheer for my team mates and other competitors
- Talk about my race to my coach
- Pack up my personal belongings
- Thank one of the race volunteers for hosting the event

7.3.5 Athlete's Warm-Up Plan (example)

Nov 13, 2017

My start time is: __11:22___. I will start my warm-up routine at: _10:45_____

Time	Activity	Comments
10:45	Skiing	15 minutes of "Endurance" skiing
11:00	Skiing	2-3 minutes of "Intensity" skiing
11:03	Skiing	4-5 short sprints at 5 seconds each
11:04	Skiing	4 minutes "Easy" skiing
11:08	Changing clothes	Change to dry clothing if needed (i.e. top, toque, gloves, socks); add additional clothing (i.e. overcoat) - depending on temperature - to wear up until my start
11:12	Ski marking	Get my skis marked at the ski marking station; ten minutes prior to start
11:13	Holding area	Skiing back and forth and or doing a few dynamic exercises according to the plan I worked out with my coach
11: 18	Removing unnecessary clothing	Remove warm-ups four minutes before my start; if the weather is cold, keep my jacket around my shoulders until just prior to my start
11:22	Starting my race	Follow my race strategy as discussed with my coach

Notes:

- I can only retain the benefit of my warm-up routine for a maximum of ten minutes.
- Prior to the start I can keep warm by moving and wearing clothing suitable for the weather/ temperature.

7.3.6 Athlete's Warm-Down Plan (example)

Time	Activity	Comments
	Meet up with team coach in finish area	Pick up my recovery drink and snack as soon as I finish my race; begin drinking and eating within 15 minutes
	Pick up my clothes	Pick up my clothing from the coach and/or the station where the race officials have put them
	Change my clothes	Change out of my wet clothing
	Start warm-down	As soon as possible
	Ski	10 to 20 minutes easy "Easy" skiing
	Leave for home/hotel	Pack up and take all of my personal belongings with me when I leave

Notes:

- The reason I warm-down in Zone 1 is to get the best recovery.
- I should consume some high carbohydrate sport drink with protein within 15 minutes of the finish of my race. The drink should be at room temperature.
- I should begin snacking on foods that will quickly replace the depleted fuel and nutrients from my system within 15 minutes of the finish of my race. My snacks should be selected from foods that are high on the glycemic index (bagels, muffins, oatmeal, etc.).
- The replacement of fluid is a high priority during the first hour after my race; snacking should continue over a three to four hour period.
- I should not stretch for at least three hours following my event.

7.3.7 Athlete's Race Evaluation Form

1. Discuss my race goals with my coach and write them below:

2. Compete in my race.

3. At the finish line, briefly discuss my race with my coach (i.e. "Two Stars and a Wish").

4. Follow my race warm down plan.

5. Later in the day meet with my coach (and possibly my team mates as well) to review the race. Discuss:

- a.) my "Two Stars and a Wish" for the race I just completed;
- b.) whether or not I achieved my race goals (why? why not?);
- c.) what I might want to change next time;
- d.) my overall thoughts and feelings about my race; and
- e.) feedback from my coach.

6. Record one key point I would like to remember for next time:
