



## Report: 2011 Southern Ontario High Performance Training Camp

**Oro, ON, September 5, 2011** – Over 100 committed young cross country ski racers from across Ontario, as well as Quebec and Newfoundland, converged on Hardwood Ski and Bike last week for the 2011 Southern Ontario Training Camp, an intensive 5-day dryland training camp designed to help prepare them for winter competition. Joining them was a contingent of athletes from the National Development Centre (NDC) in Thunder Bay, led by coach Eric Bailey, as well as National Ski Team members Len Valjas and Michael Somppi. Also present were the athletes from the newly formed Southern Ontario Training Centre (SOTC), along with their coach, Petr Jakl. With high calibre guest athletes and coaches to attract participants, and following on the huge success of last year's camp, the 2011 installment turned into one of the largest and most successful dryland training camps ever conducted in North America!

Organized by Team Hardwood, in collaboration with Cross Country Canada, NDC, Cross Country Ontario, and Hardwood Ski and Bike, the Southern Ontario Training Camp aims to provide developing and high performance athletes with the knowledge, experience and skills needed to succeed at the highest levels of the sport. Camp participants engaged in a variety of training sessions designed to improve their physical strength, power, and endurance, as well technical and tactical skills on skis. The camp afforded athletes the opportunity to learn from some of the most experienced coaches in the province, including Bailey, Jakl, Pavlina Sudrich (Ontario Coach), Lisa Patterson (Cross Country Canada), Adam Kates (Big Thunder), Patti Kittler (Walden), Mike Vieira (Nakkertok) and Mark Doble (Team Hardwood), among others. In addition, participants spent the 5 days training alongside elite competitors like Valjas, Somppi, and the other NDC athletes, who served as role models and mentors to the younger athletes.



The camp was launched on August 27th with a dynamic stretching and strength session led by Brock Tadashore, a certified Athletic Therapist and Strength and Conditioning coach who consults for Team Hardwood. Brock's exercises targeted key muscle groups for cross country skiing, including the core, quads, hamstrings and glutes, and challenged the athletes to maintain good form while fatigued. Judging by the number of complaints of sore glutes the following morning, mission accomplished! The sight of over 100 athletes participating in this group strength and stretching session was truly something to behold!



Day 2 began with an endurance Classic rollerski on the smooth and quiet country roads surrounding Hardwood Ski and Bike. Athletes were split into groups and rotated through a series of technique stations where they refined their double-poling and diagonal stride technique, before carrying on with the rest of the rollerski workout. After lunch and afternoon recovery, athletes reassembled for an agility session

organized by Team Hardwood coaches Mark Doble and Graham Longford. Athletes were placed in groups of 10-12 and cycled through a series of 10 agility stations emphasizing athletic qualities such as speed, explosive power, balance, coordination, and proprioception. The athletes embraced the exercises eagerly, feeding off each other's enthusiasm and hard effort. Judging from the noise level and wattage from all the smiles, this workout was a definite hit! Day 2 concluded with an engaging presentation by 4 athletes from NDC-Thunder Bay - Mike Somppi, Erin Tribe, Andy Shields and Jordan Cascagnette - who shared their experiences competing in World Cup and World Junior/U23 Championship competitions last season.



Day 3 saw athletes test their fitness in a Zone 4 intensity skate rollerski workout on the hills around Hardwood, followed by a short technique session. The afternoon workout consisted of a technique session on ski-striding, followed by a light recovery ski-walk. NDC Head Coach Eric Bailey addressed the athletes in an evening presentation.

Day 4 began with an endurance skate rollerski workout, which included a number of technique stations along the way, where athletes worked on 1-skate, 2-skate and offset technique. All athletes also had a chance to work on their sprint technique and tactics with the NST's Len Valjas and NDC's Harry Seaton. Valjas and Seaton (2010 Canadian Team Sprint Champions) skied through a series of stations with small groups, here they gave tips on sprint starts, cornering, drafting and cresting. Late that afternoon Big Thunder coach, Adam Kates, ran all 120 athletes through a group stretching and core session that concluded with the infamous "Ring of Fire" group exercise. That evening Len Valjas gave an

entertaining slide presentation about his competitive skiing career, including his breakthrough World Cup and World Championships performances last year. The key message to athletes was simple: Never give up!

The final day of the camp brought all the athletes together to compete in a friendly but competitive mass start trail running race over a hilly and technical 4km course. Each NDC athlete led a group of juniors through a warm-up and talked about pre-race preparation. Once the gun went off, however, it was every athlete for him/herself. Big Thunder's Adam Kates prevailed in the mens' race, followed by Gavin Shields (Waterloo Region) and Mike Somppi (NST). It was a 1-2 finish for Team Hardwood's Jenn Jackson and Erin Tribe (NDC) in the women's race, with Daphne Haggarty (Big Thunder/Lakehead University) a close third. After a cool down and quick clean-up we ate pizza and sang "Happy Birthday" to Eric Bailey, who served cake before everyone said their good-byes and headed for home.



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All told, the 2011 Southern Ontario Training Camp was a huge success, attracting 120 athletes and 30 coaches from across Ontario, in addition to contingents from Quebec and Newfoundland. That we were able to pull off such a high quality camp with so many athletes and coaches bodes well for the future of competitive skiing in the province. Obviously the presence of NST athletes like Len Valjas and Mike Somppi, along with the rest of the NDC training group, made a huge difference. "Outreach by Cross Country Canada groups is necessary for growth and development of young athletes," said CCC Eastern High Performance Coordinator, Lisa Patterson. "Having the NDC athletes attend was crucial for aspiring younger athletes to see what it is like at the 'next level'. The Training Centre athletes role model their physical ability, technical ability, nutrition, attitude, and attention to detail both while training and during recovery...all the positive aspects required to being 24 hour athletes. The Southern Ontario Camp is just one example...one big example...of outreach. If the younger athletes absorbed at least one good athletic habit from their heroes during the week, then the outreach was successful."

It is important to point out that on most days during the camp, while athletes were engaged in rest and recovery prior to late afternoon workouts, coaches participated in the Cross Country Ontario Coaching Symposium, a coaching development event jointly organized by Mark Doble (Team Hardwood), Pavlina Sudrich (Ontario Ski Team), Lisa Patterson (CCC) and Eric Bailey (NDC). Afternoon sessions included a presentation on the subject of overtraining by Tim Taha (Canadian Sport Centre - Ontario), a practical workshop on functional movement screening, and a lively discussion about designing yearly training plans for junior athletes. In addition to the coaching symposium, a coaching mentorship system was used during the camp, whereby "mentor" coaches were paired with one or more "mentee" coaches during workouts in order to share knowledge and practical coaching tips.



No camp of this size can succeed without the support and cooperation of many organizations and individuals. We at Team Hardwood are enormously thankful to everyone who helped to ensure the success of the 2011 Southern Ontario Training Camp, including: Cross Country Ontario; Cross Country Canada; NDC-Thunder Bay; Canadian Sport Centre (Ontario); and Hardwood Ski and Bike. The hardworking staff at Hardwood Ski and Bike deserve special mention for their daily efforts to keep our athletes and coaches happy, safe and well fed! Many thanks to Judy Doble, Juergen Schubert, Jack Sasseville, John Sustersic, and Margaret Hulton and the rest of the kitchen staff. We are also grateful for the

participation of National Ski Team athletes Len Valjas and Mike Somppi, and the other NDC mentor athletes. Many Team Hardwood parent volunteers helped out in various ways, from working in the kitchen to shuttling athletes and coaches. Still other families from the Hardwood community generously made their homes and chalets available to billet athletes. Last but not least, we are indebted to all of the club athletes and coaches who gave up precious days at the end of the summer in order to join us for the camp. We hope we see you again next year!

For photos from the camp please click here: <http://bit.ly/pmJfzL>

For video highlights of the camp click here:  
<http://www.youtube.com/user/TeamHardwoodTV>

