



Idaho Nordic Interval Progression Program for Masters Skiers
by: Joe Jensen

Every year Eric and I get bombarded with questions about training. While neither one of us would claim to be a coach, we can give direction on our experience of how to approach ski training if you are a master skier that lives in Boise, Idaho. Most articles and programs are written or developed by former world class athletes (genetic freaks). While I respect these people for their accomplishments, most of them do not understand most of us with “genetic” disadvantage and balancing jobs and family AND living where there is not snow out our backdoor.

Before you start any training program reflect back on what you have done and try to decipher what works for you and what hurts your performance. Eric and I do train quite a bit together, but we have some differences on our training strategies. I personally respond better to harder intervals and rest. Eric doesn't seem to need much recovery between workouts and does not lose fitness. If we both trained identical and together every session we would both be slower. But... Both of us train on average 8 hours per week throughout the year. Large volume weeks during the fall might hit over 15 hours; but this is offset by several weeks lost to work travel and family obligations. During race season training may drop to as low as 5 hours to focus on rest and harder speed workouts. The point is, the volume of training is not what is important; it's all about QUALITY and this only happens with planning, organization and experience. Trust me; I have done monster hours and a lot of junk training. While this all looks good on paper, it only made me slower and ornery.

Key Workouts and Definitions:

Distance Training: Most of the distance training is based on fun activities – mtn biking, road cycling, trail running and rollerskiing. Fall combination workouts lasting 2 to 3 hours with rollerskiing and trail running is a favorite. There is always some speed or efforts involved in every distance workout – otherwise it would not be fun. The speed might consist of a 30 second increase in pace every 5 minutes or it might involve hammering a section of a climb. It's not just going out slow and watching your heart rate monitor....boring. Unless you are at altitude then you should use your heart rate monitor as a governor.

Strength workouts are short but hard both in the weight room, plyo-metrics and uphill double poling sessions. Rarely do they go over 45 minutes per session.

Intervals: Very specific and usually ski specific using ski walking/ bounding or rollerskiing. (or a second weekly session on bicycles going uphill in summer months)

Rollerskiing: Always focusing on a technique aspect; technique with speed, specific strength work-out (double poling or skating no-poles), or skiing some tempo for periods during long distance work-outs. Try to Rollerski throughout the winter if you cannot get on snow during the week.

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Three years ago, Eric and I started experimenting with an interval program that was based on the US Ski Team(USST) Interval Progression system. The USST system is obviously geared for full-time, world class athletes but using their systematic approach at

a reduced workload we have devised an interval plan to give master skiers some direction for the training year.

Before we get into the intervals and progressions, intensity levels need to be understood by you. Level 1 is an EASY pace. Level 2 is essentially a zone that taxes the body, but has minimal pay-off, yet I would guess most masters spend all of their training time in this zone. Level 3 or Aerobic Threshold, in simple terms, is your average heart rate for a one hour time trial. Personally mine is quite low at 156 to 166, where Eric's is 165 to 175. Level 4 or Anaerobic Threshold intervals the athlete is producing lactate faster than the body can remove it. Level 4 intervals are typically at 85% to 90% of max heart rate. There are numerous articles and opinions on what constitutes certain levels and we do suggest you do some field tests or use Physio Performance Lab to identify your levels.

The interval progression is broken into two intensity levels, Level 3 and Level 4. Once you have established your levels it is time to plan your week, month and year. For the week do a detailed plan for each day prioritizing interval sessions, strength, recovery and distance in that order. I also pay attention to my weekly hours that is derived from my yearly plan. I have found that sticking to a weekly schedule year round is the best way to go –

Monday – Strength or off

Tuesday – Distance

Wednesday – HARD DAY – Strength, **Level 4 or Level 3** Intervals

Thursday – Off or Distance

Friday – Strength and/or Distance

Saturday – Race or **Level 3** Intervals

Sunday – Slow Long Distance Day

While distance is important, we have learned that more gains and race efficiency comes from the interval sessions and strength. The older you get this becomes even more critical. Always ask yourself how each workout is going to increase your average race velocity. Too many people fall into the trap of doing everything medium speed. The hard days need to be hard and the easy days need to be easy or off completely.

The table provided has dates tied to the intervals. These dates are a reference of what type, duration and repetitions to be completed during that week. BUT, do not go to the next progression until you have mastered the current progression. If you miss more than 3 weeks of training you should go back a few progressions until you are comfortable completing the workouts. Better to be under-trained than over-trained once ski season rolls around.

The **Level 3** intervals should not be a total suffer-fest. You should be able to complete the workout using proper technique the entire time. Also at the end of the workout you should feel like you could do one more. If you struggle throughout the workout either go back a progression or evaluate if you are going too hard. Take the progressions seriously and do not advance too quickly to the next step.

Level 4 can be fun, but usually it hurts. About halfway through the interval you should suffer, but maintain technique. By the last one you should hate your training partners and start to question why you don't bowl or golf. Level 4 intervals are money in the bank but most people avoid them because they hurt. You need to go into this workout rested and prepared to reap the benefits. I like to do Level 4 workouts with a training group to push myself.

The Interval Table:

| Week of: | Level 4 Workout | | | Level 3 Workout | | |
|------------|-----------------|--------------------|----------------|-----------------|--------------------|----------------|
| | Repetitions | Duration (minutes) | Rest (minutes) | Repetitions | Duration (minutes) | Rest (minutes) |
| 6/2/2008 | None | | | 2 | 6 | 6 |
| 6/9/2008 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 2 | 6 | 6 |
| 6/16/2008 | None | | | 2 | 6 | 6 |
| 6/23/2008 | None | | | 2 | 6 | 6 |
| 6/30/2008 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 2 | 7.5 | 6 |
| 7/7/2008 | None | | | 2 | 7.5 | 10 |
| 7/14/2008 | None | | | 2 | 7.5 | 10 |
| 7/21/2008 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 1 | 15 | 10 |
| 7/28/2008 | None | | | 1 | 15 | 10 |
| 8/4/2008 | 3 | 3.5 | 4 | 1 | 15 | 10 |
| 8/11/2008 | 3 | 3.5 | 4 | 2 | 11.25 | 10 |
| 8/18/2008 | 3 | 3.5 | 4 | 2 | 11.25 | 10 |
| 8/25/2008 | 3 | 4.25 | 4 | 2 | 15 | 10 |
| 9/1/2008 | 3 | 4.25 | 4 | 2 | 15 | 10 |
| 9/8/2008 | 3 | 4.25 | 4 | 2 | 15 | 10 |
| 9/15/2008 | 3 | 5 | 4 | 1 | 22.5 | 10 |
| 9/22/2008 | 3 | 5 | 4 | 1 | 22.5 | 10 |
| 9/29/2008 | 3 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 11.25 | 10 |
| 10/6/2008 | 3 | 6 | 4 | 3 | 11.25 | 10 |
| 10/13/2008 | 3 | 6 | 4 | 3 | 15 | 10 |
| 10/20/2008 | 3 | 6 | 4 | 3 | 15 | 10 |
| 10/27/2008 | 4 | 6 | 4 | 3 | 15 | 10 |
| 11/3/2008 | 4 | 6 | 4 | 2 | 22.5 | 10 |
| 11/10/2008 | 4 | 6 | 4 | 2 | 22.5 | 10 |
| 11/17/2008 | 4 | 6 | 4 | 2 | 22.5 | 10 |
| 11/24/2008 | 4 | 6 | 4 | 1 | 33.75 | 10 |
| 12/1/2008 | 4 | 6 | 4 | 1 | 33.75 | 10 |
| 12/8/2008 | 4 | 6 | 4 | | | |

**Highlighted workouts will be done at Wednesday Dry-land Training.

Recommendations:

- During a race week replace the Level 4 workout with your race.
- By Mid-August all intervals should be ski specific. (Ski-walking, Ski-Bounding, Roller Skiing and Uphill Running)
- Do not be afraid to load a week up with three to four interval workouts as the winter gets closer. As long as you are rested and can recover this can have big pay-offs come race season.
- Integrate your strength and intervals into the same workout such as Double Pole Intervals
- While doing Level 4 if you cannot get your HR to Level 1 by 1 minute in the rest period you need to stop.
- While doing Level 4 if your pace falls off dramatically from the first repetition you need to stop. – BE SMART