



Bio of Chris Blanchard:

- Born in Montreal in 1971; started skiing at age 2, both downhill and cross-country
- First skied in the Canadian Ski Marathon at age 6; at age 12, was the youngest to complete the Marathon with a pack
- In 1985, as a first year juvenile competing in his first Canadian Junior Championships (held that year in Whitehorse, Yukon), won three silver medals; won medals in virtually every Canadian Championship race thereafter
- Skied as a forerunner at the 1988 Olympic Winter Games in Calgary
- Competed for Canada at two Junior World Championships – 1990 (Les Saissies, France) and 1991 (Reit im Winkle, Germany)
- Competed for Canada at three World Nordic Ski Championships – 1993 (Falun, Sweden), 1995 (Thunder Bay) and 1997 (Trondheim, Norway)
- Competed for Canada at the 1998 Olympic Winter Games in Nagano, Japan
- Best international result – 32nd, 30 km freestyle at the World Championships in 1997
- Best marathon result – 1st, Gatineau 55 (at that time, Pierre Harvey was the only other Canadian to have won this race)
- After retirement from the National Ski Team in 1998, skied independently in 1998/99 and won every race at the 1999 Canadian Championships

For 26 years, Chris devoted a major part of his life to skiing, and was a mainstay of Canada's high performance program through a ten year period.

Training tips and advice for the 2015 CSM

By: Chris Blanchard

Introduction: As the 2015 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)

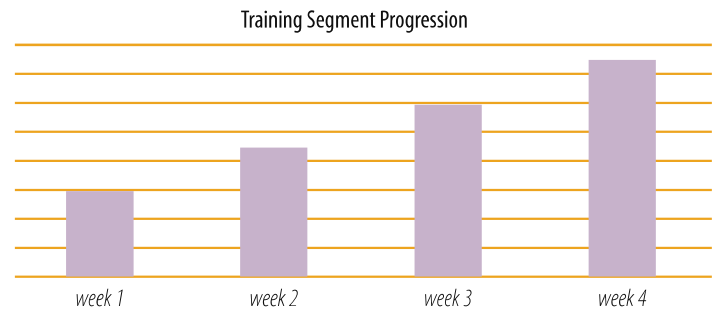
General tips: The following are some helpful tips that should come in handy between now and the CSM.

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 couch. 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.



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.

Special thanks to: Ian Aitken, Lori Baird, Peter Blanchard, Robin Blanchard, Cynthia Joy and Marc Ricard for their input and their assistance in helping me refine the included tips and training advice for the CSM.

Period 1: General Conditioning

(Sept & Oct.)

The goal of this period is to begin a systematic method of training which will ease us gradually into our regular training program for the season. This period serves to form a base from which the rest of the ski season will develop. A popular misconception is that you can't train for skiing if there is no snow. Not true. In fact, some of the most important training for the ski season begins before snow even hits the ground. With 20 weeks to go until the CSM we have plenty of time to prepare but it's important to start as soon as possible.

Easy Workout: This is an important training component for developing an aerobic endurance base. It is typically 20-40 minutes (but will increase as we get closer to the CSM) workout at 65-75% intensity. It can be a mixture of running, rowing, biking, cross trainer/elliptical trainer, swimming or even walking to work. Although this may not seem like much now, the cumulative effect of several of these workouts by the time the CSM arrives must not be underestimated.

General Strength Training: Before the ski season it's important to strengthen the muscles and tendons that we will be using. Proper strength training will help prevent injuries such as tendonitis and strained muscles. At this time of year I head to the gym and get myself on a general strength program. My suggestion would be to have a qualified trainer at your local gym help you out with a program. Some things to consider:

- general strength should last 6 – 8 weeks in length;
- workouts should be 2 -3 times a week;
- in addition to major body groups, focus also on ski specific muscles such as: abs, lower back, shoulders and triceps;
- if you have specific weaknesses (i.e. knees, back, shoulders) now is a good time to strengthen them;
- variety is good . . . mix up your exercises so you don't get bored.

Long Distance Workout: Once a week it is important to incorporate one long distance workout. This workout will be your longest workout of the week. The reason behind this being that we need to training our muscles for the continued long effort of skiing two days back to back during the CSM. With the autumn leaves in full bloom this is my favorite time of year to road bike, mountain bike, run (trails and road) and hike. These workouts can be anywhere from 1hr to 3hrs in length but remember that we want to progress (go longer) from week to week (i.e. your longest workout should be in week 4) Some other tips:

- Keep it slow when going long. A good indicator that your pace is right is if you can carry on a conversation. If you can't talk . . . slow down!
- Keep your heart rate at or below 65% of your maximum heart rate;
- Carry plenty of food and water if you're going for a long time;



Intensity: We'll focus on this more in future periods, however, for now it is good to push the body at a higher intensity once every couple of weeks. The easiest way to do this would be to enter a competition of sorts (i.e. a cross country running race). Other options include group runs with planned intensity or running or biking hills. Most importantly, remember to recover after intensity workouts.

Sample week:

Monday:	Rest
Tuesday:	Strength
Wednesday:	Easy workout
Thursday:	Strength
Friday:	Rest
Saturday:	Easy workout or Intensity (Intensity only once every 2 weeks)
Sunday:	Long distance workout



Period 2: Extending the Base

Nov.



The goal of this period is to build on what we've already started and to slowly introduce some specific training. The weekly training structure remains the same, however, the emphasis turns to slightly longer workouts, complemented by continued strength work and the occasional (every couple of weeks) intense workout. The most difficult part of this period is dealing with colder weather, shorter days and boredom of dry land workouts. Keeping the motivation during this period is imperative and will definitely pay off when the snow begins to fall.

Easy / Long Distance Workouts: This type of workout remains the base of our training and is meant to continue developing our aerobic endurance base. The intensity level remains the same, 65–75% of your maximum heart rate, but the average length should now increase to 30–50 min. Again, it can be a mixture of running, biking, cross trainer/elliptical trainer, swimming or even walking to work. A common mistake for those of us with busy schedules and limited time is to rush the workout attempting to pack more into less time. The result of this is fatigue and in extreme cases overtraining. Easy workouts should be done as often as 4 times a week. Long distance workouts, which are done at the same intensity but for a longer period of time (1–3 hrs) should be done once a week. Tip: You should be able to carry on a conversation during your easy workouts. If it means walking the hills, do so. Slow and steady gets the job done. Remember, no one has ever completed the marathon in 40 minutes!

General Strength Training: We're approximately half way through our 8 week program. This type of workout remains unchanged during this period. Again 2–3 times a week is sufficient. If at this point you are getting tired of the gym try mixing in the occasional outdoor strength workout with exercises such as push ups, sit-ups and jumping. Playgrounds are an excellent setting for these workouts with your imagination being the only limitation.



Specific Exercises: Although we will focus more on specific training in the next period this is a good opportunity to introduce a couple new exercises to add to the training arsenal: ski striding and roller skiing. Roller skiing for advanced skiers can be useful for working on technique, however for the weekend skier, it may be more trouble than it's worth (Equipment is expensive, safe training locations are few and far between, and if you don't have a coach to help out with technique, there is a good chance that you will end up acquiring incorrect technique). Ski striding with poles is a good alternative to roller skiing. Ski striding is a dry land simulation of classical skiing. It requires regular running or hiking attire supplemented with ski poles. It is best done on hilly terrain which is well suited to using your ski poles to help you climb. Some good web sites for additional ideas and tips during this training period include: <http://www.nordicskiracer.com> and <http://www.masterskier.com>.

Dressing for the Weather: With temperatures dipping towards freezing and rain, sleet, and snow becoming more common, it's time to pay attention to what you're wearing. Luckily for us, technology now allows us to battle the elements more effectively than our great grand parents (although they were tougher for it!). Layering is always the key, which allows us to peel of clothes as we heat up and add back as we cool off. Base layers are commonly made from polypropylene and can be supplemented with tights, vests, and jackets of differing warmth levels. Other good accessories include a light weight synthetic toque and gloves. Good places to shop are Mountain Equipment Co-Op (www.mec.ca) or your local ski / sporting store. Proper attire leads me to my next point which is to get out regardless of the weather. The CSM will take place on February 12–13 no matter what the conditions and everyone should be prepared!

Sample week:

Monday:	Rest
Tuesday:	Strength
Wednesday:	Easy workout
Thursday:	Strength
Friday:	Rest
Saturday:	Easy workout or Intensity (Intensity only once every 2 weeks)
Sunday:	Long distance workout



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MARATHON
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NAME: DATE:		GOAL FOR WEEKS				HRS
DAY:	Workout Description (Include: type, length and intensity)	HOURS OF SLEEP	MORNING HEART RATE	TOTAL HOURS	COMMENTS	
Monday						
Tuesday						
Wednesday						
Thursday						
Friday						
Saturday						
Sunday						
Weekly Totals						
Yearly Totals						