

## **Coach Nancy Goes to School**

I recently had the good fortune to attend the 2009 USSA Coaches Conference in Minneapolis. During the weekend, I listened to many hours of information delivered by some of the top coaches and ski educators in our country. We are in an exciting time right now, on the eve of the Olympics in Whistler, and with probably the best prepared U.S. Ski Team in the short history of our sport in this country. The overall tone and mood of the conference was of great hope, and I left with renewed inspiration to be the very best coach that I am able.

I would like to share what I learned with Far West coaches. It is impossible to regurgitate every lecture I listened to. However, I can do my best to distill the important points, and I would like to do this in two or three installments. First, I will summarize the technique portion of the information. To follow will be information on methodology and some general information.

I am happy to report that Far West is generally very current in the latest technique trends. I will say that we can always improve at teaching these techniques better; mainly being able to deliver the proper technique instructions to the various levels of skiers that we work with. I think we sometimes throw the “finished product” at the skier, leaving behind the fundamentals. In other words, asking a skier to throw his hands high and forward won’t work without proper body position! Likewise, until a skier can complete a particular technique cycle at a slow speed, he can’t possibly perform that technique at sprint speed. These are my personal observations, and they were backed up by many things I heard in Minneapolis.

Justin Wadsworth gave an excellent lecture on technique using the Dartfish video software. We observed U.S. Team athletes skiing in New Zealand and rollerskiing at Whistler. We began with classic skiing, and we were treated to images of Andy Newell skiing. No one else demonstrates effective body position the way he does. The following information is a combination of Justin’s words and my words.

### **MAIN POINTS OF DOUBLE POLING**

Starting arm position 90 degrees or greater.  
Initiate with rounded upper back and hips high and forward.  
Strong initiation of power.  
Don’t let hips drop back before poles hit the snow on initiation.  
Finish with “straight” arms. No bending at elbow at finish!!!!  
No wrist flick in back!  
SWING hands forward, keep hands low (don’t pick up).  
Use the swing forward with hands to get up on toes, not calves!!!!  
Let hands bring hips up (don’t jump with calf muscles).  
Don’t use legs too early (causes hips to go back).  
No “A framing” with poles.

Don't come up before poling phase is finished!

Consistent elbow angle, no collapsing.

\*\*\*A flat back=Hips back\*\*\*

#### MAIN POINTS OF CLASSIC STRIDING

Starting arm position ~60-85 degrees at elbow angle.

Forward, rounded upper back position.

Keep back rounded when pole hits the snow.

Use early kick (the heel should be already up on kicking foot before the other foot passes).

Hip position stays forward during whole phase (again, flat back=hips back).

Finish with straight arm position and good leg extension. No bent elbow or knee!!!

No "A framing" with poles.

Relaxed shoulders and hips (will rotate slightly).

#### SPRINT STARTS CLASSIC

Start with striding, staying low before gradually coming up.

Start with a short double pole push. Feet are in stride position, weight on back foot.

Look at optimizing striding vs. DP.

#### V2 SKATE

Poles flex immediately upon initiation.

Same application of upper body as in DP.

Initiate with upper back (rounded)

Tight arm angle

Good use of core

Good knee drive as foot hits ground ~60-70 degree angle

"Tall" forward starting position.

Full weight transfer from side to side.

Double pole motion down the middle.

Without a good, rounded back, a diluted impulse to poles and kicking leg will result.

#### V1 SKATE

Power and weight directly onto the hang arm.

Initiate with rounded back

Good forward lean into the hill. Ankles!

Good sharp shin angle as soon as the ski sets down, then press more into the hill.

5-10% turn of hips to poling side.

Symmetrical lets from poling to non-poling side.

Stay pressed into the steep hills, don't stand away!

Keep hips moving side to side over the feet.

Wide foot stance.

Head, shoulders, and hips move together from side to side~5-10 degrees.

Hang arm parallel to track and weighted.

Sharp knee angle on steep hill.

Don't reach too far to side with hang pole.

Hip to pole (create a strong platform).

## V2 ALTERNATE

Same application of upper body as in DP (rounded back).

Initiate with upper back.

Tight arm angle

Good use of core.

Relaxed forward arm swing. Hands low.

Good knee drive as foot hits the snow~60-79 degree angle.

Tall, forward starting position.

Weight transfer side to side.

Double pole motion down the middle.

## SPRINTS STARTS SKATING

Using V1, stay low, then gradually move up.

When up to speed, pop up and begin using V2.

Pre-load legs. First motion should be forward, not backwards to load legs.

Pay attention to pole position in start. Keep right hand pole in front of the wand!

## FINISH LUNGES

Don't start too early.

Use full extension.