



## **2023 Interski Report**

***By MC Baron***

### **The Road to the Interski Selection**

Interski has always been a secondary goal for me. It was not my main professional goal as the chance to get on the team and be able to be selected at one try out every four years is realistically very hard. We all know how life works and with timing, especially with the pandemic, I knew I could miss the selection because of an injury, a worldwide spread virus or even by me not performing well enough on that given day compared to all the strong skiers in our organization.

Instead of putting all my hopes and dreams on the wish to participate to the Interski experience, I have put a lot of effort and time on other professional opportunities. I have worked overseas in different countries. This brought me to meet a lot of other professional Ski Instructors and Course Conductor as passionate as myself. I participated in discussions that were sometimes way above my understanding and tried different movement patterns that were also way above my skill level. All these experiences were for me a small Interski. I tried to understand a language that was not from my own school and tried movements that were not necessary spoken about by the skiers around me in Canada. I came back from these trips always a lot more curious about what I didn't know and motivated to improve.

I believe that a combination of these experiences + the right timing helped me make it to Finland. I could not be more grateful for all that brought me to be selected for the Canadian Interski Team. I believe we should push younger Course Conductor to work internationally and promote CSIA courses in other country as well. Just like what we are already doing in New Zealand, China and Andorra.

### **The Training**

It was not the first time that I was working in a team for a skiing event. I participated for 3 years in the Whistler Blackcomb Demo Team for a synchronized skiing event in Aspen, Co. I knew that it is not always easy to work with 11 other skiers that have different physiognomy, style and personality. To my surprise, I found a team with a lot of respectful members, humble and professional. Everyone had the same goal, and it was to represent our country by showing strong skiing and solid understanding of our material. Our coaches did a great work at helping us build a great team. They made us bond through small team skiing and basic formations. Then they made us break the ice by leading the Course Conductor training at the start of the season. Presenting in front of our mentors and pioneer of our industry is definitely a good way to

gain confidence before presenting to the world! And finally, for the last training before the big trip, we got our pass figured out and made it happen in a short period of time.

On our training in Orford, the pressure was starting to build. It was our last training before flying to Finland and we felt like we had to nail our demo runs right away. I appreciated the input from our coaches to remind us that what we had achieved in 2 days was phenomenal and that we still had 2 days in Finland to get the details aligned. And they were right. In Finland, the Team was high on energy, focused and determined to get things done efficiently as soon as we clipped our skis on for our 2 days of ski training. Once the skiing part was rehearsed, we spent time in small group talking about our clinic presentation to make sure everyone was on the same page and confident... and then, BOOM! The event started!

### **INTERSKI 2023 – Levi, Finland**

I was extremely excited. It took a lot for me to control my performance anxiety. Every morning, I had a stretch and enter a meditation routine. Breathing exercises to try and control my head and heartbeat. Starting the day this way was a great way for me to bring it back on the slope when I could feel the wheels spinning too fast. It helped that it was not the first time I had to perform under pressure. A few examples could be the Level 4 exam, Technical Championships, Aspen Synchronized Championship and recently the selection. I did not want to be the one who falls or messes up during the Opening Ceremony or our Demonstration runs.

Looking back at the opening ceremony, all that pressure and worrying was not that necessary. Of course, we want to do well. But the ambiance was not to judge other teams on their mistakes. It was about sharing our passion for skiing and the industry of ski teaching. Everyone was so positive and supportive. It was all about smiles and fun turns. All teams did great. There were some innovations, some wow moments and undeniable time and effort put into this by all teams.

I am proud of our Team for skiing fast and well and showing a great sportsmanship spirit with all the other countries.

When it was time to present our material to our peers, my main focus was to stay on track to present clearly on What we do and How we do it. I needed to bring information at a slow pace, one thing at the time. I found other countries were open to what we had to say and very interested in our choice of word or methodology. In my clinics, I chose an approach with a lot of skiing, pairing people up (often on the T-bar) to promote exchanges and conversations. I was mixing the pairs often so each skier could exchange with as many people as possible. Before sending them on the T-bar, I would give them one assignment to exchange about. Asking them to use our methods. This way, I found it easy to keep the group engaged.

Our groups were small. I had groups of between 10 and 14 people during the week. I found challenging to remember everyone's name, especially with the different pronunciation of different countries. Personally, I would have liked to have little stickers to write people's name and stick it on their jacket. With the stress of wanting to deliver well the clinic, I feel it would have helped me to still create a connection with the people in front of me. Also, I forgot to take a group picture with every group. It would have been awesome to show to the members and look at it a few times so I could remember later in the week who was in my clinics. Things go so fast

during that week, and you meet so many people! I think this could be easily done at the next Interski Congress.

I was assigned great clinics to attend: USA Teaching, Belgium Short turns, Switzerland technical, Denmark technical and New Zealand Freestyle.

*Note that the only countries in this report are Belgium, Denmark, and Switzerland.*

### **My Reporting Plan**

- a. Belgium progression to short turns. Niels C.
  - b. Why they have a progression to short turn and how they get the skiers to achieve it quickly.
  - c. Written essay
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- a. Denmark: Round turns and patience
  - b. Why do they focus on these 2 topics?
  - c. Interview with the Technical Director of the association.
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- a. Switzerland, 3 fundamental movements
  - b. Why are these 3 movements so important in all types of turns?
  - c. Interview with one of the presenters.

### **BFSI – Belgian Federation of Snowsport Instructors – Progression to Short Turn Session Leader: Niels Craenen**

Belgium has no ski resorts or ski hills. But they have indoor ski slopes. They called them domes. Most of their visitors are training for a bigger ski trip in the Alps. Because of the limited space inside these domes, the instructors chose to teach a shorter radius turn. With the use of exercises and games, they help skiers to ski short, linked turns in just a few lessons.

The first part of the session was indoors, in a conference room on the main slope in Levi. Niels presented the context of the session content and presented the shortcut to short turn progression. The second part was on the snow. We skied mostly the demo run. We were about 15 to 20 skiers. Niels got the group involved for each step of the progression. The exercises were presented with a touch of humor. They were presented in a fun context, so each drill became a game.

#### **Step 1: Rhythm**

Getting the skier to maintain a rhythm while skiing. This is very important on a crowded slope, and it is a very important step towards a good short turn.  
Worked with funnel turns, auditory cues or synchronize skiing.

#### **Step 2: Separation**

The separation comes as a result of the rotational effort. The Belgian system considers inclination and angulation as a lateral separation. They also include rotation separation as a result of the leg turning effort. This can be worked with hockey stops, J turns, and garland turns towards the fall line.

### Step 3: Steering Refinement

Adding some edge grip to the rotational effort will help the skier to gain control and performance. The pressure management is also included in this step to help the ski bend and maintain a smooth transition.

The task used to work on these skills was side slipping (bracquage), a dynamic hockey stop and jumping J turn.

### Step 4: Silhouette

The Belgians assess this with an overall picture of the body. A disciplined upper body would help with the above skills.

Neils made us ski with our poles in a window position and ski short turns in a tuck position. We also did some short turns with double pole plant.

### **How Does it Compare to our System?**

The BFSI chose to present a linear method of teaching. This method can be efficient and easy to teach to new instructors in a situation where there is less environmental variant. For a ski lesson in an indoor ski resort, this method can make sense.

By setting goals and using games, the BFSI involves the student and puts him or her at the heart of the lesson. Their engaging method is a great way to keep them motivated even if they ski the same slope repeatedly.

### **Den Danske Skiskole – The loss of patience Session leaders: Mads Vinter and Klaus**

The delegation of Den Danske Skiskole was huge. The demonstration team was made up of 14 skiers (4 women and 10 men) and some of their top examiners joined them for the event presentations. It allowed them to have many sessions all presented on one of the days of Interski.

The theme of their session was the use of round turns at all levels of skiing and the patience at the top half of the arc to achieve the round turn.

The 2 leaders set the group with questions and allowed us to have reflection about their questions in teams and in the chair ride. It brought a nice cooperative ambiance. After some discussions that helped us understanding why a round turn is optimal in skiing, they got us to try two exercises:

- Stork turns to get an early transfer of balance onto the new outside ski. This leads us to have an early grip on edge at the top of the arc and the proper alignment to complete the arc.
- White pass turns to get inclination in the first half of the turn instead of a quick twist of the ski.

The drills were easy to present, and the time spent on task was adequate to get a proper understanding for each skier.

## **How Does it Compare to Our System?**

I found a lot of resemblance between our teaching methods and the Danish one. They really want to put the student at the heart of the lesson and bring cooperation between the teacher and the learner. In parallel with this, their teaching methods are influenced by the Austrian system where drills and exercises are priorities over body movements and internal cues.

I observed the examiner priming us into what we should feel before each task. This way, when it was time to connect the benefit of the task, we knew what we were supposed to feel. I noticed the desire to avoid vague questions like: how did it feel? And the true desire to create a great understanding from the learner.

Even though the session started with the focus on the importance of the round turns in all levels of skiing and the patience required to achieve it, the session was mostly built so we could experience the cooperative teaching method that Den Danske Skiskole was using.

## **Switzerland – Three Fundamental Movements Presenters: Killi Webel and Thomas**

The Swiss Team presented their clinics in teams of 2. The main leader was presenting the clinic and the other one was used as a demonstrator. For the clinic I attended, Thomas was the leader and Killi was the demonstrator. The groups were made of 20 skiers. Each time a group was complete, they would leave and start forming another group at the base of the mountain.

In the Swiss system, there are 3 technical fundamentals that can be found in all levels and all type of skiing.

The first one is the ability of extending one leg and shortening the other during the transition. This will create a slight rise of the center of mass, but it will also help the skier to move their mass inside. The mass moving inside the turn is their second fundamental movement. This will provide an early edge grip and the ability to steer no matter what outcome is desired.

The third fundamental movement which we can find in the technical portion of the Swiss system is the rotation of the hip in the first half of the turn. The rotation is in the direction of the new turn (inward). This rotation must happen in the top half of the turn. They spoke about this rotation of the hip as an active rotation. This is the key element for a strong grip on the snow with the outside ski. This movement helps to maintain a strong alignment and balance with the feet and the skis. It is always happening in the first half of the turn but will change in the second half of the turn depending on the steepness of the terrain, the desired turn shape, and the performance of the turn.

## **How Does it Compare to Our System?**

The third fundamental movement is a great one to share and reinforce into our association. I find that we do not talk about it enough in our current Skills Framework. CSIA's previous technical reference even moved us in the opposite direction when there was an emphasis on leading the turn with the lower body.

If we apply and encourage the Swiss third fundamental movement, we get skiers to lead the turn with the skis in a more powerful and effective way.

Leading the turn with the lower body does not require a lot of leg turning effort at the start of the turn. If the skier does, it creates a counter rotation that brings the skier into a weak alignment and a poor lateral balance. This then blocks the skier from an effective steering effort in the second half of the turn.