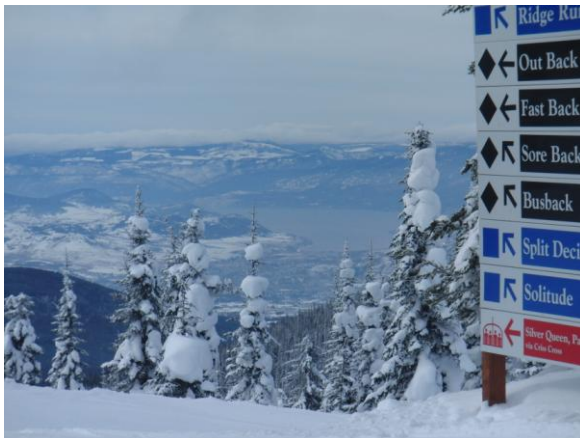


## **Masters World Championships 2011 – the best ever?**

It was a tricky matter trying to decide what should be the first photos this time after the hugely successful Masters in Canada; we had medals (of a sort), many PBs, a new BMCCSA record ... . In the end, though, it was the tracks and venue which were the real winners, so here's a few pictures of them and the general area. Sheer perfection (photos courtesy of A. Wilson).



**And if you want to see what we enjoyed, you can do a virtual tour of part of the circuit at [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CkeOuj2gwVE&feature=player\\_embedded](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CkeOuj2gwVE&feature=player_embedded).**

And now to the event. Most of the British Team arrived on Saturday night, in a heavy snow storm, having experienced various degrees of delay on the transatlantic flights! The eight of us from the UK were supplemented by BMCCSA members Norman Clark (deserting skiing for Britain and passing, instead, to the Dark Side (or the USA)), Patrick O'Connor and Steve Smigiel. Perhaps the only surprising absentee was our Canadian member Jack White from what was his 'home' event. Still, eight British skiers: Martin Arnold, Brian Adams, Alasdair Wilson, Chris Richards, Paul Moonen, Wendy McRae, Fiona Crossley and Y. Truly put us well ahead of several other European countries but, as might be expected, a large number of skiers were from Canada, with many from the USA to make the total of 1134, so a large MWC.

We were staying in a small town called Silver Star, which is about 5 kms away from the Masters venue in Sovereign Lake where the competition took place. If you imagine a Wild Western town, but covered with snow and with downhill skiers whizzing up and down instead of wagons, you will get a good idea of Main Street Silver Star, while if you imagine a very snowy area seemingly in the middle of nowhere with not much other than a car park and a large Ski Centre and stadium, you will have a good idea of Sovereign Lake. But do not let these first impressions fool you – Sovereign Lake was almost certainly the best-ever Masters venue we have been to although, on Sunday, we didn't quite manage to get to it.

There were three main ways of getting from Silver Star to Sovereign Lake: take a bus (but there were none of these before the event actually started), ski the 5 kms or so along the lower route, or take the chairlift up the mountain in Silver Lake and then ski down the black run (XC) to the race venue. Our first day, Sunday, though, it was snowing heavily and we were rather tired so, although we made an attempt to ski to Sovereign Lake, we got a bit lost and separated; Brian and Wendy found the way and got nearly there before they turned back, whereas Alasdair and I decided to ski around Silver Star which, itself, had extensive XC tracks ranging from the easy to World Cup standard! The conditions were just about ideal, something like 2 metres of snow, with a lot of new snow on top, and this made the skiing just so easy! Going down hills was done so much more competently than ever before, and conditions were spot-on for going uphill as well. It was on this day that I rashly decided to say "Goodbye" to the dreaded snowplough for ever; from now on all turns would be skidded or stepped, just like the good guys do ☺!

On Monday the conditions were rather better so we decided to ski the 5 kms or so to Sovereign Lake and have a look at part of the race track. The ski over there was a bit hard (lots of uphill!) but, when we arrived and went around the first 10 kms of the race track, this was just about perfect. There was nothing technical at all (i.e. no very steep climbs and, more importantly, no difficult downhill or corners, just one nice, long but almost straight downhill after 6 kms). Early impressions, though, can be misleading – as a training track it felt easy and fun; as a race track at 1 600 metres high, we were shortly to find that there were climbs to make it plenty hard enough. But I thought, and hoped, that this was a course just about ideal for me! It was around -8 °C that day, which again was just about right. 5 kms to the stadium, 10 kms round the first part of the track, lunch in the clubhouse and 5 kms home again were plenty enough, though.

The alternative way to Sovereign Lake was to take a chair lift up Silver Star mountain (we could ski down to the lift from just behind our hotel), from which there was a prepared track all the way down. On Tuesday we tried this. Wendy had never been on a chair lift before so, even though they slowed it right down, she fell as we were getting off at the top. But there was no harm done and we all had a good laugh about it. Once she had recovered, we set off down the track and it was fantastic - fast but very safe, with a few tricky corners which were easy to cope with except for the one 90° turn which came up rather unexpectedly! That aside, it was the sort of stuff that dreams are made of!

When we arrived in Sovereign Lake, we skied the final 5 kms of the race track. This had a couple of hairpin bends on it, one of which was a little bit tricky, in fact about the only technically difficult part on the whole track. But with my new-found downhill skill and confidence, I negotiated it without (too much) difficulty, although some others in our party opted to make it a place of sitting, or even lying, down and resting!

On Wednesday it was snowing and fairly warm, so we just skied around Silver Star once more, which was fun. I had my first fall in the morning, but this was going down a steep downhill slope in soft, deep snow (and I was trying to turn when I fell), so there was no damage apart from to my pride! After a while we tried a part of the World Cup track they have here, one steep downhill which was fun, and one equally steep uphill which I managed to ski all the way up very easily – I can't remember the last time I got up such a steep hill so easily, all very encouraging!

Thursday was nice again, so we took the chair lift up the mountain once more (Wendy fell while getting off, once more) and skied down to Sovereign Lake, where we skied the whole 15 km track, only stopping once. Brian timed the trip and, although I was trying to ski it as slowly as possible so that I was hardly getting out of breath, we did the whole 15 kms in just over one hour, which was surprising! I didn't do a very good job round the hairpin bend in the morning because it had started to get banked up, so some of us went back and tried it four more times in the afternoon, and this proved to be much better – one just needs to be careful and keep one's wits about one (which means concentrate)!

In fact, I tried to ski slowly all week, only going quickly on the downhills because this doesn't require much strength. In previous years I have skied far too fast during training, and just got myself worn out before the races – this year I think that I avoided doing this, although Martin in particular seemed to be working hard even during these training runs! By Friday, then, all in all, although I wouldn't actually say

that I was confident, I was looking forward to the first race, which started on Saturday. I had never felt quite so good going into a Masters competition as I did just then.

Friday came and I didn't train at all, because I had to go to the Team Captains' meeting in the morning, but this was good because it gave me a rest (I only did some stretching in the afternoon). Then it was the opening ceremony, where we met up with Steve, Norman and Chris for the first time and this was fine apart from the impossible queues for a meagre drink. And then everything was ready for Saturday's race one!

The morning air temperature was around -6 °C with snow temperature lower, maybe -14 °C. This meant molybdenum plus Toko pink, (-2 to -8 °C), for me at least, and I was happy with this (the official Toko information maintained that blue was consistently faster, but we didn't try this). Martin had the distinction of falling first, but this was walking on the way to the bus rather than on the track itself although, having got used to the idea, he followed it up in the race with a fall on the hairpin bend, a style copied by Alasdair! Most of us reported that the track seemed much harder at race pace than it had seemed during training and, with large fields, I experienced some minor congestion on the very first climb but, otherwise, everyone seemed very happy. There were certainly some good performances: Mark, who reckoned that he'd been training about 30 kms on snow almost every day since October, dramatically improved his performance (only three British male skiers have achieved a better percentage), Chris and Steve both put up their best performances by far, as did Martin, and so did Alasdair and me (best skating percentages). Paul, on his debut, recorded a personal best, although the report said "Could do better" which, indeed, he could!

Brian was only warming up for better performances later in the event, even if he did manage to beat me by almost 6 minutes (curse him). He was only a short way ahead of me for the first couple of kilometres, but I couldn't go any quicker to try to catch him and he pulled away. More disappointing was when Zac, from Australia, came past, but then he had been in Sovereign Lake for 6 weeks so was maybe better acclimatised to the altitude. I found that there was a funny 'feel' to this course; although I had skied it several times and could remember each section as it came up, I couldn't remember the whole track and never fully knew where I was relative to the stadium, for example (unlike some other Masters courses where I can still ski pretty much the whole course in my mind). Two parts of the track were particularly demanding, though, the first being the climb back to the stadium at the end of the 10 km loop (this was probably only 2 kms long but seemed to go on forever), and then the steeper climb at the end of the 5 km loop. Maybe I should have been braver and not subconsciously tried to save energy for these sections!

Fiona, in the ladies race (but this year on the same course as the men), was suffering a lot from a combination of altitude and asthma and, although her performance was still good, this was her worst Masters percentage to date. Patrick also had better to come later in the week and, surprisingly, despite a direct request, he had no printable comment for the Masters Newsletter! Finally, what should we say about Norman? He won his race, and a gold medal, with relative ease, but he was skiing for the wrong country! I think that we need a little referendum:

Question: What should we do about Norman if he continues to ski for the wrong country?

- a) Double his BMCCSA membership fee.
- b) Quadruple his BMCCSA membership fee.
- c) Raise his BMCCSA membership so that it starts to make a dent in Britain's national debt of £150 000 000 000.

Answers, as usual, on a postcard, please.

One thing which was rather disappointing at this Masters was the cost of official photographs; £15 a go! So we have to rely on photos from Alasdair and Fiona, and they aren't necessarily in the same order as the races themselves!



**L-R: Chris (behind flag), Brian, 2 x ignore, Wendy, Martin, Fiona, Paul, Steve and Adam**



**Top of the chairlift – L-R: Brian, Wendy, Adam, Martin; Wendy now upright!**

### **Men's M01-M06 30 km free technique, Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> March**

Fastest	Eric Martin	USA	M03	1.18:51.5	22.8 km/h		
1)	Aleksandr Pushkarev	RUS	M02	1.19:37.3	22.6 km/h		
27)	Paul Moonen	GBR	M02	1.50:47.0	16.2 km/h	39.1 %	(31 starters)
1)	Barry Makarewicz	USA	M04	1.22:37.9	21.8 km/h		
21)	Mark Llinares	GBR	M04	1.36:44.1	18.6 km/h	17.1 %	
40)	Martin Arnold	GBR	M04	1.52:21.5	16.0 km/h	36.0 %	(48 starters)
1)	Sergey Ivanov	RUS	M05	1.20:59.3	22.2 km/h		
38)	Brian Adams	GBR	M05	1.41:42.6	17.7 km/h	25.6 %	
48)	Adam Pinney	GBR	M05	1.47:27.0	16.8 km/h	32.7 %	(77 starters)
1)	Guido Masiero	ITA	M06	1.22:13.7	21.9 km/h		
50)	Alasdair Wilson	GBR	M06	1.52:30.1	16.0 km/h	36.8 %	(68 starters)

### **Men's M07-M09 15 km free technique, Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> March**

1)	Murray Banks	USA	M07	44:12.8	20.4 km/h		
51)	Chris Richards	GBR	M07	54:06.5	16.6 km/h	22.4 %	(80 starters)
1)	André Grob	FRA	M08	44:19.8	20.3 km/h		
19)	Steve Smigiel	USA	M08	54:40.2	16.5 km/h	23.3 %	
32)	Patrick o'Connor	USA	M08	1.09:44.4	12.9 km/h	57.3 %	(35 starters)

### **Ladies F01-F06 15 km free technique, Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> March**

Fastest	Laura McCabe	USA	F03	41:12.3	21.8 km/h		
1)	Leslie Hall	USA	F04	42:26.3	21.2 km/h		
21)	Fiona Crossley	GBR	F04	58:53.7	15.3 km/h	38.8 %	(29 starters)

### **Men's M10-M12 10 km free technique, Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> March**

Fastest	Vitaly Kurochkin	RUS	M10	37:11.8	16.1 km/h		
1)	Norman Clark	USA	M11	40:37.2	14.8 km/h	0.0 %	(5 starters)

The following day, Sunday, was the classic race and Wendy was our only competitor. The conditions, and therefore the glide wax, were much the same as the previous day. The air temperature of -5 °C necessitated a grip wax combination of Blue (-2 to -8 °C) and Violet VR45 (0 to -2 °C) and this worked well throughout. The organisers had made one change to the course; because it had got very banked up during the skate race, and because some of the older men and ladies had to go round it, the hairpin bend was removed and replaced by a straight downhill section. This meant that, from then on, there was absolutely nothing to worry about on the whole course. Wendy set off from the front row of the start and was initially well up, with maybe 10 people behind her. In the end, it was her best Masters result ever (only 5 other British lady skiers have ever done better), and 24.4 % was exactly the result I'd been hoping for myself!

#### **Ladies F01-F06 15 km classic, Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> March**

Fastest	Svetlana Alekseeva	RUS	F01	49:16.1	18.3 km/h		
1)	Ginny Price	USA	F06	57:07.0	15.8 km/h		
18)	Wendy McRae	GBR	F06	1.11:02.5	12.7 km/h	24.4 %	(22 starters)

Monday dawned at -8.5 °C for the 10 km classic race in the morning and the skate race in the afternoon, by which time it had warmed up a bit. Previously, the coach transport had been pretty good, reliable and efficient, with three coaches circulating continuously; the only minor annoyance being that expensive and fragile ski poles had to be put in the baggage compartment with all the skis ('elf n safety reasons!). There had been a bit of a scrum at the end of the 30 km skate race (which meant that we felt it best to ski home after the race), but this was soon resolved when I suggested a queuing system at the Team Captains' meeting. This morning, though, was annoying; as I walked through Silver Star, I saw two coaches pull up at the same time and I didn't run because I was certain that the second one would wait. Wrong! It left at exactly the same time as the first, resulting in a 20 minute wait for the next coach.

10 kms is always hard right from the very beginning so a good warm-up is called for (I'd not really done enough before the 30 km race). I found the warm-up to be very hard, but the track was in excellent condition throughout and the grip wax, one layer blue stick, two layers violet, blue and then violet again, worked very well, as did red glide wax. Our youngest skier, Martin, recorded his best-ever Masters classic result, 3 minutes faster than his time in Falun a year ago. Brian and I started together, but I didn't spot him because he was sneakily wearing a different race suit so I wasn't sure where he was until the race ended, when I discovered that sadly he was ahead. But not surprising, really, because his 23.1 % set a new BMCCSA all-time classic record! I was involved in a good race with my friend Libor from the Czech Republic. Initially I was ahead but finding it very difficult to breathe so he came past me after about 5 kms. I was able to stay with him, though and, together with a Canadian, we continued as a group for a while. Up the last climb into the stadium I had nothing left, and Libor came between us, out of the tracks, and sprinted away. Now that's cheating! This was still my 4<sup>th</sup> best Masters result, but I had said that if I achieved 25 % or better I could retire and take up downhill skiing instead! Sadly I can't quite retire yet. In the M06 category, Alasdair was going very well, his 25.4 % moving him to joint 4<sup>th</sup> best British classic result in a Masters; it seemed as though, this year, he had found the ski technique to go with his high fitness level.

#### **Men's M01-M06 10 km classic technique, Monday 7<sup>th</sup> March**

Fastest	Biagio Di Santo	ITA	M01	28:16.5	21.2 km/h		
1)	Jon Arne Enevoldsen	NOR	M04	29:12.4	20.5 km/h		
30)	Martin Arnold	GBR	M04	41:06.6	14.6 km/h	40.8 %	(32 starters)
1)	Giampaolo Englaro	ITA	M05	29:21.9	20.4 km/h		
28)	Brian Adams	GBR	M05	36:09.3	16.6 km/h	23.1 %	
36)	Adam Pinney	GBR	M05	37:39.7	15.9 km/h	28.3 %	(53 starters)
1)	Ferdinand Kraller	GER	M06	31:33.1	19.0 km/h		
24)	Alasdair Wilson	GBR	M06	39:38.6	15.1 km/h	25.9 %	(40 starters)

Having recorded her worst Masters result two days earlier, Fiona proceeded to record her best ever Masters result in this race, breathing problems or not, shaving 0.1 % off her previous best from Krasnogorsk. Because she decided not to race the longer, final, race, this might have been (she claims) her last Masters race, but I think that we will wait and see about this. Back with the blokes, Patrick put up his best performance of this event; not his best ever but far from his worst, though.

#### Ladies F01-F06 10 km classic technique, Monday 7<sup>th</sup> March

Fastest	Liliya Vasilyeva	RUS	F03	31:17.7	19.2 km/h		
1)	Leslie Hall	USA	F04	33:14.9	18.0 km/h		
18)	Fiona Crossley	GBR	F04	42:28.0	14.1 km/h	27.7 %	(22 starters)

#### Men's M07-M09 10 km classic technique, Monday 7<sup>th</sup> March

Fastest	Alexey Khvostov	RUS	M07	30:55.3	19.4 km/h		
1)	Klaus Weiss	GER	M08	33:13.3	18.1 km/h		
28)	Patrick o'Connor	USA	M08	48:55.8	12.3 km/h	47.3 %	(31 starters)



Right result, wrong country, Norman



Celebratory hug, L-R: Jerry (the moose), Fiona. They will be married soon, although the children might be interesting!

The skate race started nice and sunny and -5 °C. Using his dramatically-improved fitness, Mark stormed to his best result of this event and his best Masters result ever, behind Shaun Marshall-Pryde who a few will remember double-poling his way around the tough Folgaria course in Italy. Paul, in his second Masters race and clearly having pushed the right button, also recorded his best-ever result, 27.9 % moving him comfortably into the ranks of 'good British skier'. Norman just missed gold in a sprint finish with his long-time rival Ahkmed, but beat Einer Svendsen, author of the well-known "Ski skating with champions" book.

Chris just shaded his 30 km result, improving by 0.1 % and thereby setting his new personal best while, perhaps surprisingly, this was Steve's least good result of this year; maybe stamina is more his thing rather than sheer speed. Wendy slipped a little from the heights of 24.4 % but, when you consider that her previous best skate result had been 38.8 %, 29.5 % was a very good step in the right direction! All in all, an enjoyable and good day.

#### Men's M01-M06 10 km free technique, Monday 7<sup>th</sup> March

Fastest	Pavel Petr	CZE	M03	25:24.9	23.6 km/h		
1)	Luca Bortot	ITA	M02	25:48.1	23.3 km/h		
27)	Paul Moonen	GBR	M02	33:00.7	18.2 km/h	27.9 %	(24 starters)
1)	Shaun Marshall-Pryde	USA	M04	26:48.0	22.4 km/h		
18)	Mark Llinares	GBR	M04	31:07.2	19.3 km/h	16.1 %	(40 starters)

**Ladies F01-F06 10 km free technique, Monday 7<sup>th</sup> March**

Fastest	Nancy Burden	CAN	F04	29:34.9	20.3 km/h		
1)	Franziska Helm	SUI	F06	34:55.2	17.2 km/h		
20)	Wendy McRae	GBR	F06	45:12.8	13.3 km/h	29.5 %	(22 starters)

**Men's M07-M09 10 km free technique, Monday 7<sup>th</sup> March**

1)	Raymond Pequignot	FRA	M07	29:05.6	20.6 km/h		
42)	Chris Richards	GBR	M07	35:35.5	16.9 km/h	22.3 %	(62 starters)
Fastest	André Grob	FRA	M08	28:57.8	20.7 km/h		
17)	Steve Smigiel	USA	M08	36:39.4	16.4 km/h	26.6 %	(32 starters)

**Men's M10-M12 5 km free technique, Monday 7<sup>th</sup> March**

Fastest	Vitaly Kurochkin	RUS	M10	18:06.4	16.6 km/h		
1)	Akhmet Siraziev	RUS	M11	19:48.5	15.1 km/h		
2)	Norman Clark	USA	M11	19:49.4	15.1 km/h	0.0 %	(5 starters)

After a day's rest on Tuesday, when some of the team skied to Paradise and back, came the relay. We don't always manage to put forward a relay team but this year we did and, in the end, we did well and, in fact, between us we took 0.2 % off the previous best relay team of me, Alasdair, Brian and Chris in Brusson 2006. Things were a bit worrying at first; it was snowing heavily and the tracks hadn't been cut at all. The classic skiers had maybe the slightly easier track, the first part of the 10 km loop (the skaters did the lower 5 km loop), and I decided to ski all round this, going for a longer and less intensive warm-up than before to add to the nice ski down from the chair lift. There was no need to worry, though, as I was coming back the piste machine was out cutting the tracks and, of course, these were in excellent condition afterwards. They put together the M04, M05 and M06 groups so, although we were last in the M04s, we were well ahead of a couple of other teams which started at the same time, including the Netherlands and Australia. Funny how a small remark can sometimes make a big difference! My equivalent, National Director of Estonia Andres Hakkinen (see the discerning man in the "Jury" bib in the following photo), came up to me after the race and said "You're a good skier after all." I'll accept that, even the "after all"!

**Men's M01-M06, 4 x 5 km relay, Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> March**

Fastest	Russia	M01	Anton Shevchenko	14:24.2			
			Pavel Trubetckoi	13:17.8			
			Alexander Klinov	13:17.0			
			Vitaly Chernov	12:31.6	54:20.9		
1)	USA	M04	Barry Makarewicz	15:14.3			
			Rune Harkestad	15:03.7			
			Kent Murdoch	13:23.3			
			Shaun Marshall-Pryde	13:07.8	56:49.2		
4)	GB	M04	Adam Pinney	18:51.4			
			Alasdair Wilson	19:23.0			
			Mark Llinares	15:48.1			
			Martin Arnold	18:03.6	1.12:06.2	26.9 %	(4 starters)



**If this had been taken 0.5 seconds earlier, it would have been good – Alasdair comes in to change to Mark**



**If this had been taken from the other side, it would have been good – Mark changes to Martin for Leg 4**

On such a track, the 45 km races were always going to be tough and this is reflected in some of the finishing times and winner's percentages. Martin, in particular, ran out of steam, Alasdair was a bit down on earlier performances (although still a big improvement on his previous best of 40.6 % in Brusson) and this was the least good performance by Paul. Not the case for Brian, though, who looked very strong throughout and finished with his best percentage of the event; not quite the heady days of the 15.6 % of Quebec but certainly an improvement on the last couple of years. To us spectators, it seemed as though only the very last climb was hard work, for Mark as well, although he skied very much to current form.

We had gone out early, specifically, to get a photo of Steve who has never appeared in this Newsletter before. Something went wrong, though – the silly sod either skied so fast on the first lap that he got through before we arrived (*unlikely! Ed.*), or he slipped through by cunningly disguising himself as a good skier. Anyway, for whatever reason, we missed him! Never mind, next year! Steve, like Mark, skied to form in this race to record an impressive 25.3 %, meaning that all his races had been done under 27 %; not bad considering that his previous best ever was 31.2 %!

#### **Men's M01-M06 45 km free technique, Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> March**

Fastest	Donald Farley	USA	M03	1.55:50.5	23.3 km/h		
1)	Aleksandr Pushkarev	RUS	M02	1.56:03.6	23.3 km/h		
23)	Paul Moonen	GBR	M02	2.50:28.0	15.8 km/h	46.9 %	(24 starters)
1)	Kent Murdoch	USA	M04	2.04:42.0	21.7 km/h		
19)	Mark Llinares	GBR	M04	2.27:10.7	18.3 km/h	19.6 %	
33)	Martin Arnold	GBR	M04	3.02:56.2	14.8 km/h	48.3 %	(35 starters)
1)	Hans Schwendinger	AUT	M05	2.03:09.1	21.9 km/h		
26)	Brian Adams	GBR	M05	2.31:27.4	17.8 km/h	23.0 %	(51 starters)
1)	Guido Masiero	ITA	M06	2.01:07.8	22.3 km/h		
41)	Alasdair Wilson	GBR	M06	2.43:44.7	16.5 km/h	35.2 %	(52 starters)

#### **Men's M07-M09 30 km free technique, Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> March**

Fastest	Alfred Parson	CAN	M07	1.28:04.3	20.4 km/h		
1)	André Grob	FRA	M08	1.29:36.9	20.1 km/h		
21)	Steve Smigiel	USA	M08	1.52:15.2	16.0 km/h	25.3 %	(27 starters)

Something may or may not have gone wrong with Norman. He'd been complaining about having dizzy spells for some time, but his first two laps were just over 20 minutes each, so his final time was difficult to believe. An appeal was made by the US Team Captain but no revised results have been received. Norman didn't contest that he was third, but nonetheless it was a shame to finish on such a note!

#### **Men's M10-M12 15 km free technique, Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> March**

Fastest	Vitaly Kurochkin	RUS	M10	54:28.0	16.5 km/h		
1)	Akhmet Siraziev	RUS	M11	1.00:46.4	14.8 km/h		
3)	Norman Clark	USA	M11	1.52:07.6	8.0 km/h	84.5 %	(3 starters)

For those of us in the 45 km classic race, watching the skate race was a bit panic-inducing! With temperature close to zero, fog and 99% humidity, the tracks had become very glazed and the track back to Silver Star was hard and almost icy; funny how a bit of ice can completely balls-up one's resolution to eschew the snowplough forever! There was even talk that if things stayed like this, it would be klister, or at least klister covered by stick, the following day! Anyway, the skis were glide-waxed (this time with a hefty rill) but a worrying night followed as I couldn't sleep for thinking about the grip wax! As with many worrying things, though, it was unnecessary (a bit like a bomb scare – the bomb part nearly always turns out to be false, but the scare part is always very real); the tracks had been very well prepared and the trusty VR45, purple, worked extremely well again throughout.

Maybe, as in the 30 kms, I should have been a bit more wary about the difficulty of this course and taken things easier early on. But the skiing seemed to be going well for the first two laps, and I passed Arne Stornor from Denmark (who had beaten me in the same race in Autrans) easily at the start of the second lap. Brian reported that I completed the first two laps in about 1 hour 56 minutes but I had a feeling that I was going to run out of steam on the last lap, and this is exactly what happened! The same thing occurred in Autrans two years ago; note to self – must do more LSD training this year once my knees stop hurting. The last 8 kms or so, from the bottom of the long downhill, felt very hard, but I was in a good battle with a Canadian, Larry. He was ahead starting the last 5 km loop but then, with about 3 kms to go, he just stopped and I thought that I had him. He caught me just before the entry to the stadium but, after all that effort, I wasn't going to let him win and, as we came around the last bend, I was shaping up for a heroic last ditch sprint. Then I don't quite know what happened; one moment I was looking heroic and bracing myself for the final sprint and the next moment I was horizontal and looking like a bit of an a\*\*e, really – I think that my legs just gave way! I picked myself up soon enough but, of course, Larry was gone by then.

Chris reported that he found the whole race rather tough and this was not his best performance of the week, and nor was it for Wendy. Strange, really, when she'd gone so well in her earlier classic race. Finally there was Patrick, not quite at his best and, in fact, a little slower than Wendy on the same track. Shall we just put that down to different conditions?

#### **Men's M01-M06 45 km classic, Friday 11<sup>th</sup> March**

Fastest	Anton Shevchenko	RUS	M01	2.10:34.4	20.7 km/h		
1)	Giampaolo Englaro	ITA	M05	2.15:38.6	19.9 km/h		
29)	Adam Pinney	GBR	M05	3.03:15.8	14.7 km/h	35.1 %	(38 starters)

#### **Men's M07-M08 30 km classic, Friday 11<sup>th</sup> March**

Fastest	Alexey Khvostov	RUS	M07	1.37:12.8	18.5 km/h		
42)	Chris Richards	GBR	M07	2.09:44.7	13.9 km/h	33.5 %	(55 starters)
1)	Klaus Weiss	GER	M08	1.40:27.9	17.9 km/h		
22)	Patrick o'Connor	USA	M08	2.30:22.6	12.0 km/h	49.7 %	(26 starters)

### Ladies F01-F06 30 km classic, Friday 11<sup>th</sup> March

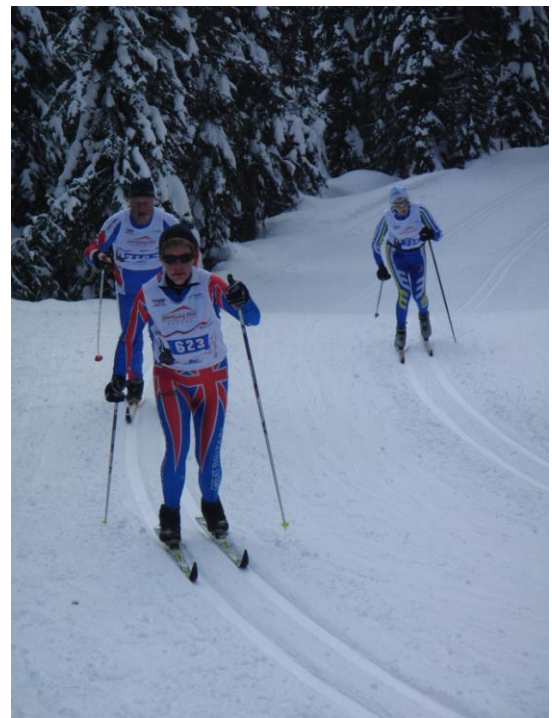
Fastest	Liliya Vasilyeva	RUS	F03	1.36:35.8	18.6 km/h		
1)	Marg Fedyna	CAN	F04	1.47:01.2	16.8 km/h		
	Fiona Crossley	GBR	F04	DNS			
1)	Pat Pearce	CAN	F06	1.49:42.1	16.4 km/h		
17)	Wendy McRae	GBR	F06	2.28:57.7	12.2 km/h	35.8 %	(20 starters)

So that was it for the racing. We were driven down for the banquet to Vernon (where, funnily enough, there was no snow whatsoever, even if it wasn't that far down into the valley), which was okay but not exceptional; plenty of main course but rather disappointing puddings. And then it was home, spoilt only by the fact that West Air charged twice as much as they had done on the way out for baggage, thereby adding another £50 or so to the total cost. Hmmm, okay, if airlines want to play silly buggers, then in future I will do the only sensible thing left and pack everything into my ski bag!

It is certainly true that, as a nation, we have been getting progressively better as each year passes, but I wonder what the reason was for such good performances this year. I'm sure that the track had something to do with it. With no difficult sections and nothing to fear, it certainly favoured our way of training on roller skis and not so much on snow, and it is also certainly true that the tracks were in perfect condition on every day of the event. But I think, too, that it may be because we are always looking at our performances, trying to improve our training, and also having fun while we're skiing. Long may this continue!



Chris, once it was all over



Wendy, ahead of Frenchman Michel. Funny, in this picture they look almost the same size!



**Hmmm, Paul, not the coolest racing suit, my friend**



**Alasdair, on form and having his best Masters by far!**



**Up the last climb – Mark on form**



**Tired but nearly home – Martin**



**All hail the new BMCCSA classic champion (but not in this race) – Brian**



**I had pride at this point – move over, Larry, I'm heroic and you're toast, mate (or maybe not ...)**