

## *Australian Junior Biathlon Team report 30th Jan 2009. Canmore, Canada.*

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We are now in the full swing of racing. Quite a lot has happened since the last report.

On Monday the 26<sup>th</sup> (Australia Day) we had the opening ceremony. The parade was lead by a Canadian MOUNTY followed by the Australian team. Giles Led the Aussies out carrying the flag. Ash and Dyllan had Aussie flags draped over their shoulders and Jackie and I followed. We were greeted by the cheers of the locals at the Canmore Civic Centre. Once all the teams from around the world had filed in (32 nations in total) there was a display of Native American Dancing and the local MOUNTY supervised. We were treated to a great fireworks display that went on for around 15 minutes. Then it was time to meet the locals and the other teams. Some went straight back to their hotels and others mixed for a while. During the parade out, all the countries had a young local from the Canmore Nordic Ski Club holding a sign with the country. We gave them all clip on Koalas as a thank you. We seemed to have quite a few still to give away and decided to give them out to everyone we could- it was Australia Day after all. A few people had sneaky Koalas hanging on to be discovered at a later time.

With preparation underway for the competitions, I gained another hat to wear. Nightly team captains meetings needed to be attended. Jackie has taken over the meal planning and shopping and is doing a great job. This keeps dinner or supper as it is known here at a reasonable time. It also gives the crew a break from my cooking.

Wednesday the 28<sup>th</sup>, was the first race for the boys. The 12.5km Individual competition. In this race it is better to take a bit of time and hit the target rather than have 1 minute added for each miss. Our guys are in the situation that it is their first international competition and that the youth category has competitors up to 18 years old, even 19 if their birthday falls in the right time of the year. Many have plenty of experience racing in Europe and even at World Cup level. And of course they ski fast! So for speed and experience we are at a disadvantage.

The other thing that has to be said to set the scene is that the range here at Canmore has a really strange wind pattern that flows thru it. The wind fluctuates from one end to the other. So if you get lane 23 of the 30 to zero on, your zero may not be right for prone on lane 2 or 3. There are also gusts that come through on a regular basis that change everything. Much of my time on the range is spent watching the wind flags and getting the crew to understand what is going on and how to react to it so they hit the targets.

So the plan was to ski the course well, shoot well and take a bit of time in the range, and of course give it all on the final lap. Giles came in for his first shoot and only missed 1; we were off to a good start. Dyllan came into the range and shot clean; All good. 2 penalties each on the first standing; Not bad. 2<sup>nd</sup> Prone; 1 penalty for Giles and 2 for Dyllan. At this stage it was looking good but I knew Giles was getting tired and in other races his last standing was the weakest bout of shoot. With only 2 misses I was wrapped. He now needed to turn it up and ski as hard as he could on the last lap. If he skied hard enough it would lift him out of being the final finisher. Then Dyllan came in for his final shoot. On the start line, one of the things I had told him was "no chasing until the last lap". He came in right behind another athlete and was breathing hard. This made me very nervous. Not a good set up for him to shoot well but he pulled it together with only 1 penalty. Jackie and I jumped up and down with excitement. A great result on the range. I received congratulations from other coaches on their performance as I passed them to now get out on the track to cheer them home. The final result; Dyllan 48<sup>th</sup> 0+2+2+1 47:46 and Giles 53<sup>rd</sup> of 54 1+2+1+2 49:32.

Thursday it was Ash's turn. I was a bit concerned as her groups in training were not so great and we didn't have reading the wind as sorted as the boys. She was just finishing zero when she brought to my attention her barrel was loose in her stock. S\*\*t! I had a mild panic attack, composed myself and went onto the range to get it sorted. Luckily we were not sharing a lane and it was just before paper change. I calmly said to Ash "now we start to zero again". With the range reopened we did exactly that and had a great zero. Again my advice on the start line was to ski the course well and concentrate on the shooting. No chasing until the last lap. Ash did just that. She shot brilliantly and had Jackie and I jumping up and down again. The announcers had a bit of a problem with working out how to say Ash-Leen, even though it has been spelled out on a sheet that we had been asked fill in with athlete's details. They also mentioned that Ash has a shoulder problem and will be going back to Australia to have another operation on it. Ash is the second youngest competitor in the Youth Women at this competition, so there is plenty of pressure. I'm really proud of how well she kept her head and stuck with the race plan for a great result. She even had the second fastest shooting result which "Herman the German" (the commentator) announced to everyone at the conclusion of the race. The final result 38<sup>th</sup> of 40. 1+2+2+1 45:56

The medals were awarded at the Athletes Dinner at the Silvertip Golf Club on Thursday evening. It was a short evening with an interesting bus ride back to town onboard with the celebrating Germans who wanted to party.

Friday has been a day of official training so I have been on and off the range as each division has a different training time. I managed to fit in a ski and explored some of the trails and see some of the local wild life along the way. Jackie and I came across a deer grazing not far off a track and earlier in the week a squirrel ran out in front of us on the track. It looked at us expectantly for some type of food offering but when nothing was forthcoming it ran off the track and up a tree.

This is one of the locals who wandered down the track opposite our house.



We are now resting up for the Sprint & Pursuit races on Saturday and Sunday.

More news soon. Until then, stay cool (we here it is very hot in Melbourne & Wang at the moment!)

Toscha. Coach - Australian Junior Biathlon Team.