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**15 September 2019**

Biathlon Canada Divisions

Dear Biathlon Colleagues,

### **Biathlon Canada 2019 Presidents Report**

Once again, the 2018-2019 season was one of considerable change and growth, building on the foundational changes undertaken in the previous year. In this note I want to touch on the following areas: The International competition program; the Domestic competition program; organizational developments in Biathlon Canada; organizational developments within the IBU; and finally, our areas of focus for the immediate future.

#### **International Competition Program**

This season saw the retirement of four outstanding Canadian Biathletes, Nathan Smith, Rosanna Crawford, Brendan Green and Megan Tandy. These athletes contributed so much to our sport over their careers as they continued to set the standard of excellence that our younger athletes can look up to and aspire to. On behalf of Biathlon Canada, and the entire Biathlon community across the country, we thank you for what you accomplished and we hope to see your continued involvement in our sport.

With these retirements, the nextgen athletes picked up the challenge and achieved personal best results on both the World Cup and IBU Cup series. Christian Gow led the way for the men. For much of the year Christian was right in the mix in the top 25 men's ranking and was at times the top ranked, or very close to it, shooter on the World Cup. Christian posted his (then) personal best result with a 10<sup>th</sup> place in the Short Individual in front of his hometown crowd in Canmore. To top this, Christian then placed 8<sup>th</sup> in the Pursuit one week later at Soldier Hollow, Utah, starting with Bib 44.

Scott Gow had another solid year with three top 20 results, including a 14<sup>th</sup> at WC1 in Pokljuka. Nathan and Brendan's retirement opened WC positions for Jules Burnotte and Aidan Millar and they took up the challenge. Jules posted a 33<sup>rd</sup> place in his first ever WC race in the Sprint followed by a 35<sup>th</sup> place in the Pursuit at Nove Mesto. Aidan, after many solid results including two 8<sup>th</sup> places on the IBU cup, moved up to the WC and showed steady improvement including a 20<sup>th</sup> place in the Sprint at Soldier Hollow. Very impressive rookie results and it bodes well for the men's team. Even with the retirement of Canadian legends Nathan and Brendan, the men maintained their overall Nations Cup ranking of 14<sup>th</sup>.

On the Women's team, Emma Lunder was pushing Rosanna as the top ranked Canadian woman all season long. Emma had a strong season with five top 30 WC results, finishing the season in Oslo with a personal best 9<sup>th</sup> place in the Sprint. Not to be outdone, Sarah Beaudry also posted a career personal best with a 12<sup>th</sup> place in the sprint at WC3 in Nove Mesto. Junior aged athletes Megan Bankes and Nadia Moser gave a strong indication that our women's' team is very well positioned for future success. Megan posted two career best 26<sup>th</sup> place results, one in the Sprint at WC6 in Antholz and then she followed that up front of her hometown crowd in the Short Individual in Canmore. Megan also had a podium result on the IBU circuit with a 3<sup>rd</sup> place in the Sprint at IBUC3. And finally, fellow Junior Nadia Moser stood atop the podium, winning the Sprint at IBUC3 in Obertilliach and she narrowly just missed the podium in the Junior World Championships with a 4<sup>th</sup> place finish in the Pursuit. Just like the men, the women held onto their 15<sup>th</sup> place Nations Cup ranking during this year of transition as Rosanna passed the leadership torch onto Emma, Sarah Megan and Nadia.

While our HP focus is mostly on the WC and IBUC athletes, this was a big year for our organizing committees and officials when Canmore played host to WC 7 in early February. The races were very well organized and executed receiving high marks from WC Race Director Borut Nunar. What was even more impressive is this all took place as the infamous Polar Vortex that was gripping most of North America hit Canmore, plummeting the temperatures into the -30 c range. Two of the scheduled six races were cancelled due to the temperature but the skill and flexibility of the OC and the volunteer base enabled four races to run, including the world debut of the Short Individual format.

In conjunction with the WC races, development camps were run with athletes from across the country. In addition to their camp activities, the athletes were able to participate in the WC races as forerunners and to volunteer in many capacities during the races.

Being able to see and participate in the highest levels of the sport 'at home' is invaluable to all our athletes (witness the PB results of Christian and Megan at Canmore) and Biathlon Canada remains committed to continue to pursue hosting world class level competitions.

## **Domestic Program**

There was another strong domestic race program across the country with very well run NORAM races in Canmore, Valcartier and La Patrie, in addition to the numerous local club and regional races across the country. 2019 was also a Canada Winter Games year and Red Deer played host to the nation in February. The Biathlon events were held at the new range constructed the previous year at the Nordic venue. Once again, the weather was cold but with creative and flexible scheduling by the OC and the teams, all planned races were run. This was the first Canada Winter games that I have attended and I was struck by the level of comradery and cooperation between the teams. All athletes and results were valued and celebrated and importantly, our sport was showcased in an area that has not traditionally hosted Biathlon. All twelve of our Divisions were represented and four, BC, Alberta, Saskatchewan and Quebec achieved podium results.

Nationals were held in March at Whistler. Conditions were great, the races and associated events were very well run and there was tremendous atmosphere of 'fun' involved. The Organizing Committee scheduled the first ever Single Mixed Relay format into Nationals, and it was a great success. The scheduling of the event after WC also allowed most of the National Team Athletes to compete and participate in workshops with our younger skiers. This was really appreciated by all the athletes.

## **Biathlon Canada Organizational Developments**

Change and moving forward was a continuing theme through this season. After many years of leading the National Team, Head Coach Matthias Ahrens left and took up the leadership of the Biathlon Alberta Training Centre. We thank Matthias for his dedication and work in developing Canada into a competitive biathlon nation and we look forward to seeing the results of his coaching and mentoring with our younger athletes.

Justin Wadsworth took over as the interim Head Coach and together with National Team Shooting Coach Pavel Lanstov, has been working with the National Team training squad throughout the summer focusing on ski speed. Recent 'Festival' results suggest good progress in this area. The real test will be on the snow next season but the team is excited and motivated to show what they can achieve.

Ex-Olympian and biathlete Sarah Murphy also joined the organization during the summer taking up the revamped role of High Performance and Office Coordinator. Having a person who has been a member of NT as an athlete in this role will bring a fresh perspective that will pay dividends in the execution of our HP program.

This last year was the first full year where we had coordinated and focused camps across the country for our U20 and U24 athletes. I was very encouraged by the feedback we have received on these camps and thank Jacqueline Akerman and Roddy Ward for their efforts at getting these initiatives off the ground.

One other area of major progress this year was the re-establishment of Biathlon Canada's status as a Registered Canadian Amateur Athletic Association (RCAAA). We re-obtained this status on 1 April 2019 after losing it almost 9 years ago. Having Registered status allows Biathlon Canada to issue tax receipts for qualified donations. Nearly every other Olympic level sport has this status and Biathlon Canada is now able to compete on a level playing field for much needed funding.

In my Presidents Report last year I also mentioned that OTP was going to be leading a Nordic Strategy initiative with Nordique Canada (formerly Cross Country Canada), Biathlon Canada, Ski Jumping Canada and Nordic Combined Canada. There were several working sessions between us through winter and spring. Although there have not yet been any concrete proposals or initiatives to emerge from this work, there is a high degree of openness and cooperation between the leadership of these organizations. All of this is focused on 'what can be done to create greater opportunity for success for our athletes'. One small example of this co-operation that has been done is alignment of training and competition calendars to allow athletes the opportunity to compete in both Cross Country and biathlon events. I am hopeful that much more will emerge from this project.

My final comments regarding the Biathlon Canada organization developments are to acknowledge and thank Heather Ambery for her leadership throughout the year. Heather came into the GM with no prior experience in Biathlon but with enthusiasm, openness, skill and an abundance of hard work, quickly came up the learning curve and established herself as the leader of the organization. Much of our focus through the 2018-2019 season was on enhancing the communication and clarity of decision making with the athletes. While this will be an ongoing process, through Heathers leadership and direct engagement with our athlete's tremendous progress was made in this area.

Notwithstanding all the positive changes and progress noted above, the finances of the organization continue to be challenging. For the fiscal year, we incurred an operating deficit of \$200,000,

continuing the year on year trend of drawing down our capital reserves. Our capital reserve is now at the lowest limit the Board is comfortable with and no further operating drawdowns should be done.

While some of this deficit was incurred due to unplanned events (e.g. smoke camp, legal and recruitment costs) there is structural imbalance between the programs we undertake and the funds available to pay for these programs.

To balance program expenditure with available revenues, which the Board has decreed must occur for the upcoming fiscal year, we are faced with three choices:

- Cut programs
- Increase fees, principally for the WC program
- Generate additional sources of funds through donations and corporate sponsorships

The last 'choice' is the optimal way forward, and we will be dedicating Board resources to this. However, there is no guarantee that we will be able generate enough funds to close the current funding gap. This has resulted in resorting to a 'base line' plan of increased fees, mainly for the WC program. All effort will be made to raise additional funds through donations and sponsorships to minimize this fee increase impact. The option of cutting program was reviewed with the NT athletes and it was not seen as a viable option.

## **IBU Organizational Changes and Updates**

As everyone is likely aware, the IBU underwent a major organizational change last year. This year saw them undertake a major strategic review and a complete renewal / revision of the IBU constitution.

All national federations were asked to input into this process through various surveys and workshops. Biathlon Canada participated in several of these including completing a review and feedback on the final drafts of the new IBU constitution and Strategic Plan. The new constitution and strategic plan will be presented at the upcoming Special Congress in Munich on October 18-20 2019. These documents will become public after that and will be made available to all divisions.

The key deliverable of the new constitution will be the creation of a new Biathlon Integrity Unit (BIU) separate from the IBU executive and reporting to the IBU Congress. The BIU will have broad audit and investigative powers and will be demonstrably independent from the IBU. This will position the IBU at the leading edge of sports governance.

With respect to the strategic plan, it will focus on 5 core areas with specific objectives for each:

- Empowering Federations with one of the objectives being to 'establish a more effective system of financial support for NF's'
  - This will be important for Biathlon Canada
- Enhance our Events with one of the objectives being 'enhance the experience of athletes and support teams at IBU events'
  - This will be important for the health and welfare of our teams
- Extending our reach with one of the objectives being 'increase the opportunity to showcase Biathlon internationally'
  - This will be extremely important to Biathlon Canada and we will work with Biathlon US to push for regular NA events
- Upgrading our Governance with one of the objective being 'increased engagement of stakeholders in decision making'

- Innovate for the Future with one of the objective being 'establish Street Biathlon as a unique discipline
  - This can be an important avenue for extending our reach into non-traditional areas and growing our sport

### **Biathlon Canada Areas of Focus**

While not an exhaustive list, these are the area's that we will be devoting energy and resources in the upcoming year:

- Safe Sport – sports organizations have been mandated by Sport Canada to adopt Safe Sport principles and programs. This is an important thing to do in its own right and is a condition of funding from Sport Canada
- Marketing and Revenue Generation – we must fill the program vs funding gap through raising funds through donations and corporate sponsorship. The reestablishment of RCAA status will allow us to now compete on a level playing field and we will have dedicated Board committee resource allocated to this.
- Enhanced Domestic Program and Outreach – this last year our focus was on HP program and communication. We will be putting in place a Divisional outreach program to better engage with the needs of the Divisions. We will also be working to support enhancements to the domestic competition program, e.g. Open national's initiative and alignment of National Team Program (NTP) with the domestic calendar.
- Financial Discipline – we will operate to a balanced budget, making difficult choice in expenditures and program as and when required.

I look forward to having an open discussion on these and other topics at the open forum post the 16 September AGM

Sincerely,



Lyle McLeod  
President, Biathlon Canada

cc: Heather Ambery, GM Biathlon Canada  
Directors, Biathlon Canada