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**23 October 2020**

Biathlon Canada Divisions

Dear Biathlon Colleagues,

### **Biathlon Canada 2020 Presidents Report**

The 2019-2020 season saw continued progress and growth for our International teams and for the organization as a whole. 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. Throughout all of these areas I will also touch on how the overarching story of 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic, has played out, and what we can expect going forward.

Before I go any further though, I want to acknowledge and give profound thanks to everyone in our community, from our regional clubs though to the National Teams, on how you responded to the unprecedented events the pandemic presented. While podium placings, International medals and just having fun at our events is what motivates us, our number one priority is to ensure the health and safety of everyone within our Biathlon community. From where we sit right now and looking back to what the world was like in early March, you delivered on this. Thank you.

As we move into the next competition season, we will be facing many of the same challenges and undoubtably some new ones. However, I am confident that once again our Canadian biathlon community will rise to the occasion.

### **International Competition Program**

Last season saw the National Team leadership torch passed from Nathan, Rossana, Megan, and Brendan to a much younger national team, and they did not falter. Both the Men's and Women's teams retained their 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> place respective Nations Cup standing.

The strength and depth of this young team was demonstrated in the relay events in Hochfilzen. On 14<sup>th</sup> December, our Women's team of Sarah Beaudry, Megan Bankes, Nadia Moser and Emma Lunder, in one of the most exciting finishes of the season, finished in 5<sup>th</sup> place, just 0.1 seconds out of 4<sup>th</sup> and 5.2 seconds off the podium. The next day the Men's team of Jules Burnotte, Scott Gow, Aidan Millar and Christian Gow finished just off the podium in 4<sup>th</sup> place behind the powerhouse nations Norway, Germany and France.

Emma Lunder continued to have a breakout season with three top 10 finishes and finished ranked 34<sup>th</sup> in the overall Women's standings. Nadia Moser posted a personal best result with a 33<sup>rd</sup> in the Individual at the World Championships and Emily Dickson and still junior Adam Runnalls had their World Cup and World Championship debuts. The performance of this young National Team bodes well for the upcoming season.

As 2020 was also a Youth Olympic Games year, this provided opportunity for increased international competition. A full team of six, 3 youth women and 3 youth men participated in the YOG in Lausanne in late January. This was followed up with a team of 16 youth and juniors (8 men, 8 women) at the Youth Junior World Championships in Lenzerheide in late January – early February. Unfortunately, by mid-February the Covid-19 situation in Europe was accelerating, the wrong way, and we made the difficult, but correct decision to cancel the planned Junior IBU Cup tour. There were 9 additional athletes scheduled to compete in this tour, so overall, we would have had 31 youth and junior athletes from 6 provinces experiencing international competition. To me this demonstrates the quality of competitions, coaching and development that we are seeing across the country.

### **Domestic Program**

There was another strong domestic race program across the country with very well run NORAM races in Canmore, Hinton and Valcartier, in addition to the numerous local club and regional races across the country.

Nationals were scheduled for mid-March in Valcartier. Conditions and organization were looking great, however, the Covid-19 situation that had caused the cancellation of races and repatriation of our athletes from Europe was now starting in Canada. After much deliberation, the Valcartier OC, supported by FQB and Biathlon Canada, made the difficult but once again correct decision to cancel the event.

This was to have been the first year of 'open Nationals' with the ability for more athletes to participate. Due to the pandemic this was not to be. However, the unprecedented circumstances got several people thinking outside the box and within a few weeks a 'virtual nationals' was launched. No one was sure how this was going to work, or even if it would. While we didn't have head-to-head competition and hand out medals, we did end up having a virtual gathering of our Canadian Biathlon community and celebrated the achievements of our developing athletes. Feedback was resoundingly positive, and a special note of recognition is due to Jacqueline Akerman for being the primary driver of this event.

### **Biathlon Canada Organizational Developments**

This was a very busy year for the organization with major initiatives and projects around Sport Canada Safe Sport policy, increased and improved Division Outreach and Engagement, Fundraising, Nordic Strategy and continued Coach and Athlete development programs.

Briefly touching on each of these:

In March, Biathlon Canada, with support from Sport Canada developed and adopted a new 'Safe Sport Policy Suite'. This new suite of policies updated and replaced most of our existing policies related to conduct and harassment, conforming with guidelines established for all sports across the country by Sport Canada. Two workshops were held in June with the Divisions to review and explain this new policy suite.

We heard the call for more and better communication between Biathlon Canada and the Divisions, and driven by Heather Ambery, we adopted new modes of outreach. Several virtual Town Halls were run and a regular(ish) Division Insider Newsletter has been published (December 2019, May 2020 and October 2020) that outline the main activities of the Board and the Management of Biathlon Canada.

Fundraising was and continues to be one of the highest priorities for the Board and the organization. The past year was the first full year where we had our Registered status, enabling us to issue tax receipts for donations. A number of fundraising initiatives were launched (e.g. 'Double Your Impact' donation drive, 'Shoot For Gold Silent Auction') led by both Directors / management and National Team Athletes, resulting in over \$200,000 of new funds. This was a fantastic achievement and I offer sincere thanks to all who helped do this.

With respect to the Nordic Strategy, I had mentioned in last year's President's letter that we had been working with Own The Podium, Nordiq Canada, Ski Jumping Canada and Nordic Combined Canada to examine ways we could all 'do more' and 'be better' by working together. This year, this project gained some additional momentum with the inclusion of the Canadian Olympic Committee around the table. The COC is providing dedicated project management resources to enabling this project to advance. In June we reached the stage where the four National Sport Federations signed a formal Memorandum of Understanding to undertake a study to see how by working together, in whatever form that may be, we can achieve the goal of getting more Canadians on Nordic skis, in the air, on the range and consistently on international podiums. It is still early days, but the project has identified and is working on four main areas: Revenue Generation, High Performance Coach & Athlete Development, Membership and Participation and Back of House / Administrative efficiency.

The Covid-19 situation caused a major rethink of how we would deliver the planned Coaching and Athlete development camps and seminars. However, as we saw with the virtual Nationals, the adoption of virtual training sessions and a limited number of smaller focused camps, Jacqueline Akerman and Roddy Ward were able to execute a high quality training program through the summer months and into the fall.

This was the second full year of our focused U20/U24 development programs and on May 1<sup>st</sup> we named a total of 42 athletes from 8 different provinces and territories to our Senior Development, U24 and U20 training teams. Again, I believe this shows the growth and success of our sport and programs across the country.

Last year I concluded this segment of the President's letter with the recognition that Biathlon Canada had once again ended the year with a significant operating cash deficit of approximately \$200,000. The Board established a requirement to operate through the 2019-2020 fiscal year without an operating deficit. I'm pleased to report this year that we ended with an operating cash surplus of approximately \$183,000 while maintaining athlete fees at the same levels for the most part. This significant improvement was due to diligent planning and cost control by all Biathlon Canada staff and the very successful fundraising drives undertaken. I am particularly proud of their achievement given the Covid-19 upset we saw in March. Being able to change plans and programs almost overnight across several countries and tours, and maintain costs and budgets was a tremendous achievement.

My final comments regarding the Biathlon Canada organization developments are to acknowledge and thank Heather for her continued strong leadership throughout the year. Much of what I have written about in this letter has been a result of her management of the organization.

## **IBU Organizational Changes and Updates**

Last October Heather and I attended the extraordinary IBU congress in Munich where the new IBU Strategy and Constitution were adopted, plus the creation of an independent Biathlon Integrity Unit to oversee the overall integrity of the sport.

This was a necessary major step forward for the IBU and we believe it will provide opportunity to grow our sport in North America.

It is still early days in the roll-out and application of the new IBU strategy, and it has also been heavily impacted by covid-19. Notwithstanding this, we have seen progress on a number of the strategic initiatives. Like us, the IBU has made extensive use of 'virtual' meetings and development programs to engage with the National Federations, and they have been very supportive financially with additional support to the NF's to cover covid-19 related costs.

While our first priority is always to look after our sport in Canada, it is important to ensure that we are represented and heard within the IBU. In this regard, I'm pleased to note that Heather Ambery has been asked to be the North America rep on the 'IBU Regional Events' working group and that Board member Sarah Dentry has likewise been asked to be part of the IBU 'Gender Equity' working group.

On the event front, you probably have already seen the announcements regarding the World Cup, IBU Cup and Junior series (or lack thereof). We are planning our National team program around the latest announcements, however changes to the program are almost inevitable. As we did last year, we will have to be nimble to adapt.

## **Biathlon Canada Areas of Focus Looking Forward**

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

- Safe Sport – fully embed and implement the Safe Sport policies.
- Marketing and Revenue Generation – we must continue to work to fill the program vs funding gap through raising funds through donations and corporate sponsorship.
- Financial Discipline – we will operate to a balanced budget, making difficult choices in expenditures and program as and when required.
- Nordic Strategy – this is potentially a once in a generation opportunity to see if and how our Nordic sports can work together to make us all stronger.
- Last, but most important – focus on health and safety as we execute our programs and events in an ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. What we expect to happen will change. The strength of our people and organization will show itself once again in how we collaboratively adapt to those changes.

I look forward to having an open discussion on these and other topics at the open forum post the 26 October 2020 AGM.

Sincerely,  
Lyle McLeod  
President, Biathlon Canada

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