

# Pro skiers share tips and tales with race team

## Lesson one: have fun

On a wide expanse of white, an epic battle is being waged: the Ravens vs. the Magpies.

Lined up in two rows across the ski-marked snow, the teams shuffle

expectantly as Raven captain Gudrun Pfleuger ponders what to say. Should her statement be true, her Ravens will race after the Magpies. Should it be false, the Ravens must turn tail and run – well, as fast as one can “run” with a boot on one foot and a ski on the other.

Finally, Pfleuger speaks. “Wayne Gretzky,” she intones, “is a great...” Magpie Ragnar Robinson (who, ironically, shares his name with a well-known raven) turns and starts to ski away. Then: “... skier!” shouts Pfleuger. Whoops! Back comes Robinson to join his flock as they tear after the fleeing Ravens with shouts of laughter.

It's nearly noon on a chilly Sunday at the Don Allen ski trails north of La Ronge. The day before, at the 2005 Don Allen Saskaloppet, Pfleuger and fellow cross-country race veteran Phil Villeneuve had broken the record for the 55-km race. Today, they're working with the local cross-country ski racing team (and a couple of enthusiasts from Saskatoon).

Their goals are simple: give the young racers a glimpse of life as a top-level skier, give them some pointers to improve their technique, and most importantly, show them how much fun skiing can be.

Villeneuve, 31, started like many of these youth as a Jackrabbit and then progressed to the competitive level. He spent two years on the national team and just missed the 1998 Olympics in Nagano because he got sick during the trials. He retired from the national circuit a few years ago, and in order to support his “racing habit”, he started a professional “development” team, the 10-member X-C.com Racing Team, based out of Canmore, Alberta.

He is the team's man-

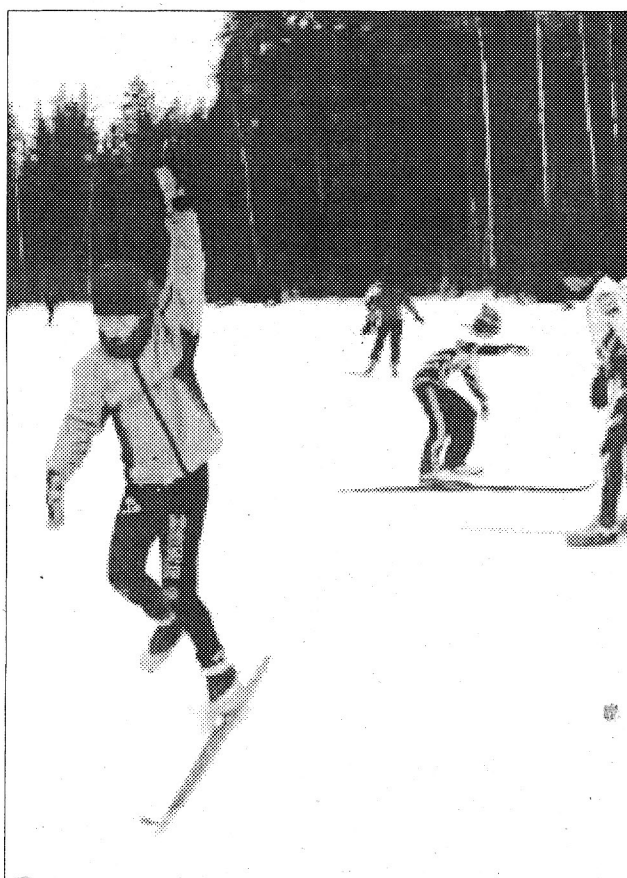


Photo by Carmen Pauls Orthner

**Ragnar Robinson and ski racers practice their balance by using only one ski in an exercise led by professional skiers in a training session after the Saskaloppet.**

ager, recruiting sponsors (such as ski manufacturer Salomon) and finding opportunities for his athletes to develop their skills, hoping they can traverse the costly, winding path from the club ski circuit to the national level.

“As an athlete, it's tough to promote yourself,” he explains. “A lot of clubs don't have the money... We bridge the gap.”

Part of the team's work involves participating in local events across the country, such as the Saskaloppet, and offering training workshops to younger skiers. This year, Villeneuve convinced Salomon to establish a

marathon series, linking loppets across the country and offering participants in the series a chance to win a cash prize. The series has given Villeneuve's team more chances to ski.

Unfortunately, this year the Saskaloppet coincided with the Canadian Ski Championships, so Villeneuve was on his own. He recruited Pfleuger, a friend of his from Canmore, to join him. While not a member of the X-C.com team, Pfleuger is no slouch: a former member of the Austrian national cross-country ski team, she was the top junior in all of Europe and is also a four-time winner of both the world

loppet and the world mountain running competitions.

However, success clearly hasn't gone to Pfleuger's head – when she speaks with the kids, none of those wins are even mentioned, and her talk focuses more on the sometimes goofy ways she and her colleagues built up their strength. “We did lots of crazy things,” she tells the kids. “We did lots of balancing – we had steel ropes between trees behind our houses, and after school, we're just balancing and juggling and whatever.” Cutting wood for the neighbours even fit into the regimen.

Pfleuger and Villeneuve talk about the travel that's often a major part of competition, as well as the physical benefits of the demanding sport. They also share tips on preparing for – and recovering from – long-distance competitions, and even some exercises to develop agility. For example, after a big event like the loppet, it's important to get out skiing again the next day so you get the blood flowing. “It really increases the speed of recovery and you'll feel a lot better tomorrow as a result,” Villeneuve said.

As she watches her kids, Haley and Ragnar Robinson, playing alongside the other ski team members, Hilary Johnstone can't help feeling pleased. “They've got the role model (here) of the top skiers, who are beautiful skiers. They put everything into it, they are passionate about what they do, they work really, really hard at what they do,” Johnstone says.

“And then, (there's) the idea of having fun. It's so important too. These top skiers, they're not worrying about their skis or their next race – they're just having fun. And of course, if you want your kids to stay in a sport, you want them to always have fun with it.”

That message has clearly gotten through. “It was pretty awesome,” enthuses Keewatin Trotter. “A lot of the other coaches are just out there to train us really hard. ... They (Villeneuve and Pfleuger) make skiing fun.”

Carmen Pauls Orthner, for The Northerner

## Environmental Impact Assessment Notice Section 11 of The Environmental Assessment Act (Saskatchewan)

**AREVA (Cogema Resources Inc.)  
Sue E Project**

AREVA (Cogema Resources Inc.) is proposing to mine a new on-site uranium ore body, Sue E, at its approved McClean Lake operation. This proposal is a change to the existing environmental assessment approval for the McClean Lake Uranium Development.

AREVA requires an approval under *The Environmental Assessment Act* (Saskatchewan) and the *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act* before it can proceed to licensing the project. AREVA was directed to conduct an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and document the results in an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The EIA is required in order to assist the governments of Saskatchewan and Canada and the public to evaluate the environmental implications of the proposed project. AREVA has prepared the EIS and submitted it to Saskatchewan Environment and the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission (CNSC) for technical review. Based on the EIS, an environmental assessment screening report has been produced in accordance with the requirements of the *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act*.

**Public comment on the Environmental Impact Statement, Technical Review Comments and the Environmental Assessment Screening Report is invited.** Interested individuals may view the documents at the following locations: the University of Regina and University of Saskatchewan libraries; the Legislative and Saskatchewan Provincial libraries in Regina; the public libraries in Regina, Saskatoon and Prince Albert; the offices of the Town of La Ronge, Northern Village of Air Ronge, Northern Village of Cumberland House, Northern Village of Pelican Narrows, Northern Village of Pinehouse, Northern Hamlet of Stony Rapids, Northern Settlement of Brabant Lake, Northern Settlement of Camsell Portage, Northern Settlement of Southend, Northern Settlement of Uranium City, and the Northern Settlement of Wollaston Lake; and the following First Nation offices: Cumberland House Cree Nation, Black Lake Denesuline Nation, Fond du Lac Denesuline Nation, Hatchett Lake Denesuline Nation, Lac La Ronge Band, Peter Ballantyne Cree Nation, and the Prince Albert Grand Council.

Full documentation relating to the environmental assessment of this proposal is available at the Environmental Assessment Branch office in Regina and the CNSC office in Saskatoon. Copies of the executive summary of the EIS and the Technical Review Comments are available on request.

To ensure consideration, written comments on the documents should be submitted to Malcolm Ross at the address below by **April 15, 2005**.

Under the Canada-Saskatchewan Agreement on Environmental Assessment Cooperation, the review processes of *The Environmental Assessment Act* and the *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act* are coordinated. Information in the EIS and the environmental assessment screening report addresses the environmental concerns of both the Government of Saskatchewan and the Government of Canada.

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**VOTE for CHIEF  
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(Chief, Councillor, Principal, Teacher-V.P., KDC Operations Manager, Vocational Training Coordinator, Self-Gov't. Worker, Cree Language and Culture Curriculum Developer, Land Claims Coordinator)

### Commitments to the LLRIB members:

- ✓ Honour, Respect and Build on the Community Financial Transfer Agreements
- ✓ Management of our Financial Resources in an Accountable, Fair and Balanced way
- ✓ Provide Respectful, Reliable and Experienced Leadership for Band Stability and Progress
- ✓ Work with Councillors and Communities (also Brabant and Pinehouse) to continue to lobby for additional Treaty lands (a lengthy process and continued patience is needed)
- ✓ Honour, Protect and Maintain our Treaty, Treaty Rights and Aboriginal Rights
- ✓ Continue to diversify and enhance our economic development programs; continue to lobby for additional Resource Benefits from our traditional lands
- ✓ Work with all the Band Councillors and our excellent staff in order to ensure the success of programs, services and our laws for all children, youth, adults and elders
- ✓ Support Cree Language and Cultural Activities, and traditional life-styles



**Saskatchewan  
Environment**