

# A Brief History of Cross Country Ski Racing in Australia

## Part 2

1976 – 1993

*by Paul L'Huillier*

### 1976

- A third junior trip to Norway was organised through the Raelingen S.C. (Norway) and the Telemark NSC (Australia). Helen L'Huillier managed the team assisted by husband Paul. The team was Tim Walpole, Trevor Paul, Joel Winter and Karen Wagner. Rolf Habberstad was again appointed coach and the team was billeted with Raelingen SC families.
- A senior team also went to Norway. Manager Carl Bongers, Coach Erik Olsen (Norway). Team members were Mike Bentley, Ken Baxter, Lauri Jortikka and Ian Bradley.

### 1977

- American coach John Caldwell visited Australia and conducted coach and racer clinics.
- Audun Endestad (Norway) made one of his six visits to Australia. In 1984 Audun became a US citizen just prior to the 1984 Sarajevo Olympic Games.
- Australian/Victorian Biathlon Association is formed and conducts its first events at Mt. Stirling.
- The inaugural meeting to form the ASF National Coach and Instructor Scheme (NCIS) is held in Melbourne. In attendance Barry Field, Peter Carter, Bob Cranage and Chris Hellerud.
- The Birkebeiner Nordic Ski Club (Mount Beauty) was formed. This club has been a catalyst for many X-C initiatives in the Falls Creek area.

### 1978

- The ASF X-C Committee's first official publication appeared - National Nordic News. It was edited by Jan Berry.
- Senior World Championship Team, Lahti, Finland. Manager Doug Thorne, Coach Erik Olsen. Team members were Lauri Jortikka, Gerry van der Ploeg, Chris Allan, Andrew Horsley, Ken Baxter, Ian Bradley, Peter Thompson, Jacquie Rand and Colleen Bolton.
- The ASF invites Rolf Kjaernsli, Norwegian coach to Australia to conduct its first Coach Level 1 and Teacher courses under the NCIS. Barry Field appointed the first Director of the NCIS.

- Peter Carter elected as the first Chairman of the ASF X-C Committee. Previously X-C was administered by a Nordic Director, Doug Thorne.

## **1979**

- John Caldwell (USA) makes his second visit to Australia and brings some USA racers with him. He conducts the first Instructor 1 courses under the NCIS.

- Pre-Olympics, Lake Placid, USA. Manager: Ken Baxter. Coach: John Caldwell. Team members were: Chris Allan, Stephen Smith, Wayne Pethybridge and Colleen Bolton.

- Junior World Championships, Mont St Ann, Canada. The three male skiers above participated. This was the first Australian team to compete at World Junior level.

- First Australian Birkebeiner (25km) held at Falls Creek (80 skiers).

- Bjarne Mjaaland, Director of Forestry Services, Oslo, Norway was invited to Australia to talk to those government authorities who managed our Alpine areas about tracks and trails and the recreational side of X-C skiing.

## **1980**

- Winter Olympic Games, Lake Placid. Australia has only one competitor, Colleen Bolton. Coach: John Caldwell.

- An Australian X-C Ski Trail Manual is produced through the efforts of Ken McFarlane, Ian Parfitt, Hartley Higgins and John Fay.

- First edition of the ASF X-C Handbook appears - editor Peter Carter.

- Chris Allan decides to spend 18 months living, training and racing in Norway.

## **1981**

- The NCIS Coach Level 1 Course is accredited with the Australian Coaching Council.

- Norwegian Coach Rolf Kjaernsli returns to conduct further Coach Level 1 courses and race clinics.

- Bill Koch (USA) 1976 Olympic Silver Medal winner in 30km wins both the Australian 15km and 30km events.

## **1982**

- Track setting comes of age at Falls Creek with the acquisition by the VSA X-C committee of a "Bombi" oversnow vehicle and track grooming equipment - an initiative of John Aitken.

- National Nordic News goes from a newsletter format to a printed magazine. Victorian editor: Jan Berry, NSW editor: Ray Murray.

- Sverre Kaaten Nordic Shelter, Perisher Valley NSW, opened.

- Senior World Championships, Oslo, Norway. Manager: Doug Thorne. Coaches: Eric Olsen, Rolf Habberstad, Rolf Kjaensli, Bob White. Team members: Chris Allan, Colleen Bolton and Ian White (9.4% behind, 30km C). Ian also competed in the World Junior Championships, Murau, Austria.

- Colleen Bolton finished second woman overall in the prestigious Norwegian Birkebeiner 55km worldloppet race. An outstanding achievement!

- Norwegian coach, Rune Midtun conducts the first Coach Level 2 and Instructor 2 courses at Falls Creek.

## **1983**

- Senior Development Team, Norway. Coach, Keith Jephcott, Team Members, Kate Crowley, Mike Edmondson, Mark Schultz, Amanda Murtagh.

- National Nordic News taken over by Ray Murray.

- ASF, through a grant obtained from the International Olympic Committee Solidarity Program, brings out Haldor Skaad, Norwegian coach and sports scientist, to conduct racer and coach clinics and public seminars.

- Australia hosts the 34th International (FIS) Ski Congress in Sydney

## **1984**

- Bob Cranage forms the first National Junior Training Squad.

- The National Squad attends the Australian Institute of Sport for a 5 day camp. This was funded under their National Sports Program. Since this inaugural camp two camps a year have been held for National Squad skiers.

- Winter Olympic Games, Sarajevo. Manager: John Aitken. Service Team: Lauri Jortikka, Andrew Horsley and Barry Field. Skiers: Chris Allan and David Hislop. Biathlon: Andrew Paul.

- Junior World Championships, Trondheim, Norway. Coach/Manager: Paul L'Huillier. Skiers: Chris Heberle (8% behind 15km C), Michael Welsh and Andrew White.

- Development Team, Seefeld, Austria. Coach/Manager: Keith Jephcott. Skiers: James Hamilton, Bill Hamilton, Camille Melvey, David Lee, Chris Halabut, John Amiridis, Shane Wills and Adrian Blake.

- Coach Level 3 course, Norway. Barry Field, John Aitken, Andrew Horsley and Paul L'Huillier attend.

## **1985**

- First ASF X-C Development Officer appointed - Ian Parfitt (Vic). Position funded primarily by the Australian Sports Commission.

- David Hislop sets the Perisher Valley to Kiandra Record at 6 hrs 18 mins.

- ASF X-C Committee puts together a 4 year plan.
- Senior World Championships, Seefeld, Austria. Manager: John Aitken. Coach: Lauri Jortikka. Skiers: Chris Heberle, Peter Tonkin, Tim Walpole, James Hamilton, Keith Jephcott, Vlad Skop, Wayne Pethybridge and Camille Melvey.
- Junior Development Team, Norway. Coach: Paul L'Huillier. Manager: Bob Flower. Skiers: Mark Gray, Peter Cranage, Paul Bilston, Jason Passioura, Dean Wild, Heather Mull and Sandra Walpole.
- Junior World Championships, Tasch, Switzerland. Coach: Paul L'Huillier. Manager: Bob Flower. Skiers: Michael Welsh, Chris Heberle, Peter Cranage and Mark Gray.
- World Student Winter Games, Italy. Manager: Bob Lawton. Skiers: Rod Hislop, Andrew Paul, David Lee and Chris Heberle.
- Australia's first FIS sanctioned X-C Ski Carnival held over nine days at Falls Creek. Director: John Aitken. Swiss, Finnish, USA and Norwegian skiers participated. Much support obtained from Victorian X-C Ski Clubs.
- Finnish coach, Marku Sorsa, with the help of a Rothmans Foundation Grant, is brought to Australia to conduct coach and racer clinics.
- Norwegian Biathlon Team trains for 5 weeks at Mt. Hotham- Whiskey Flat Biathlon Range and participates in FIS Carnival at Falls Creek.

## **1986**

- No official overseas teams formed. Skiers who competed individually overseas were: Chris Heberle, Michael Welsh, Janine Shepherd and Camille Melvey.
- David Hislop and Helen Schofield do well in the Euroloppet and Worldloppet race series.
- Paul L'Huillier appointed to the position of National Cross Country Development Officer/Coaching Director in July (salaried position).
- First edition of the ASF X-C News appears. Editor: Glynn Peters. An Ian Landon-Smith initiative.

## **1987**

- Norwegian Coach, Inge Andersen is brought to Australia for 5 weeks to conduct coach and racer clinics. Airfare paid by the Rothmans Foundation.
- World Student Winter Games, Strbske Pleso, Czechoslovakia. Manager: Bob Lawton. Skiers: Mark Gray, Lee Bygrave, Chris Heberle and David Lee.
- Senior World Championships, Oberstdorf, West Germany. Manager: Bob Lawton. Skiers: David Lee, David Hislop, Daven Timms, Mark Gray, Peter Cranage, James Hamilton, Chris Heberle, Stephen Smith.

- Audun Endestad (USA) and Christine Brugger (Sui) set new records for the Mountain Creek to Mt. Hotham crossing: 5 hrs 30 mins and 7 hrs 30 mins respectively. Danny Flynn had previously established the record at 10 hours 15 mins in 1975.

- Junior Development Team is based in Elverum, Norway. Manager: Jeanette McLaren. Coach: Rune Midtun (Norwegian). Skiers: Paul Gray, Tim Greville, Lynn Cranage and Jenny Smith.

- World Junior Championships, Asiago, Italy. Manager: Bob Lawton. Assistant manager: Jeanette McLaren. Skiers: Mark Gray, Paul Gray, Andy Pinkas, Peter Cranage, Tim Greville, Lynn Cranage and Jenny Smith.

## **1988**

- Olympic Winter Games, Calgary, Canada. Section Manager cross country/biathlon: Bob Lawton. Coach: Paul L'Huillier. Skiers: Chris Heberle (9.7% behind, 15km C) and David Hislop. Biathlon: Coach, Barry Field. Skier: Andrew Paul.

- Senior A in Europe. Coach: Paul L'Huillier. Manager: Bob Lawton. Skiers: Peter Cranage, Anthony Evans, Mark Gray, David Hislop and Chris Heberle.

- World Junior Championships, Saalfelden, Austria. Coach: Paul L'Huillier. Manager: Mark Gray assisted by Chris Allan and Tracy Ellis. Skiers: Peter Cranage, Anthony Evans, Matthew Murtagh, Tom Landon-Smith, Rupert Ansted, Sarah Iversen and Jessica Hromas.

- Ski Pool. Through the efforts of Harold Stueffer and Michelle Teska, X-C is now being supported by a number of suppliers.

- The inaugural Great Australian Ski Chase (5 races) was held in this the Bicentennial year. Swiss, Austrian and USA skiers participated. Overall winners were Mark Gray (Vic) and Sylvia Baumann (Sui).

- Solidarity Grants Program (IOC). Through funding obtained from this program, two 2-day Technical Delegates' Courses were conducted by John Aitken. The Norwegian Coach Inge Andersen was brought out again using funds from this program to conduct coach and racer clinics.

- Audun Endestad (USA) wins his sixth Charles Derrick Memorial Race from six attempts.

- USA Junior Ski Exchange program is started by Dave McGraw, Lake Mountain Ski School Director.

- Chris Heberle wins 'Skier of the Year.'

## **1989**

- World Student Winter Games, Sofia, Bulgaria. Manager: Daven Timms. Doctor: Jill Morrison. Skiers: Anthony Evans, Paul Gray, Finn Marsland and Andy Pinkas.

- Senior World Championships, Lahti, Finland. Manager: Carl Melvey. Assistants: Peter Smyth, Ian and Nan Landon-Smith. Skiers: Lee Bygrave, Paul Gray, Tom

Landon-Smith, Anthony Evans, Camille Melvey and Cheryl Power.

- World Junior Championships, Vang, Norway. Manager: Allan Marsland. Assistants: Ian and Nan Landon-Smith. Coach: Kennet Mossige (Norwegian). Skiers, Chris Rishworth, Tim Greville, Andy Pinkas, Finn Marsland, Anthony Evans and Paul Gray.

- Great Australian Ski Chase expanded to eight events. Winners Chris Heberle and Camille Melvey.

- The first edition of the ASF X-C Competition Guide (previously called the Handbook) is published. Editor: Paul L'Huillier. The previous editions of the "Handbook" were produced by Peter Carter.

- Barry Hopkins (NSW) and Tina Wilmett (NSW) became the first Australians to complete ten Worldloppet events (they did this over a number of seasons), and earn the Worldloppet Master Diploma, gold-plated pin and gold-plated medallion. As of the 1988 season only 481 skiers world wide had achieved this.

-The ASF Cross Country Committee establishes a formalised Ski Pool and appoints Paul L'Huillier (National Development Officer) as the Negotiator.

- Subaru Australia provides a car to the ASF Cross Country Committee for use by the National Development Officer.

- The Birkebeiner Nordic Ski Club submits a proposal to the ASF to have the annual Australian Birkebeiner Ski Race endorsed as Australia's candidate for Worldloppet accreditation.

- Through the initiatives of Bob and Norma Cranage the Wodonga Sports Mini Series of races (for ages six to seventeen years) is established at Falls Creek. A sub-committee of Telemark Nordic Ski Club successfully conducts these races today.

## **1990**

- Gillian Crundwell (NSW) becomes Australia's third skier to qualify as a Worldloppet Master (ten Worldloppet events completed).

- Osmond Iversen takes over from Glynn Peters as editor of the ASF Cross Country News. Glynn had been editor since June 1986.

- Senior Team. No senior team was formed.

- Chris Heberle competed on the World Cup circuit, Polar Cup and in Swiss Week by himself. A truly remarkable achievement.

- Mark Gray won a skiing scholarship to the University of Utah in the USA and competed in numerous races on the NCAA circuit.

- World Junior Championships, France. Managers: Tony and Sandra Greville. Skiers: Finn Marsland, Chris Rishworth, Piers Greville, Tim Greville, Mathew Murtagh, Steven Raphoz, Lynn Cranage and Alina McMaster. Owing to the postponement of the Championships until late March only Piers, Tim and Steven were able to compete.

- The NCIS Committee for the first time appoint Andrew and Mary Hall as National Coordinators on a paid part-time basis.
- The Birkebeiner Nordic Ski Club conducts a trial Worldloppet event (The Australian International Ski Marathon) which was assessed by three International Technical Delegates. The event was subsequently endorsed by Worldloppet as the twelfth member.
- The Victorian Alpine Resorts Commission trial a Rolba TurboTrac 150 nordic trail groomer at Falls Creek. An initiative of Peter Keage, ARC Manager of the northern resorts.
- Great Australian Ski Chase winners are Mark Gray and Lynn Cranage.

## 1991

- World Senior Championships, Val di Fiemme, Italy. Manager: Carl Melvey. Assistants, Peter Smyth and Luke Vanzino. Coach: Paul L'Huillier. Skiers: Chris Heberle, Mark Gray, Anthony Evans, Tom Landon-Smith, Paul Gray, Michele Wolfe, Camille Melvey and Lynn Cranage. Generous funding for this trip was received from the Australian Sports Commission and the Australian Olympic Committee.
- World Junior Championships, Reit im Winkl, West Germany. Coach/Manager: Len Budge. Skiers: Mathew Murtagh and Dean Gray.
- World Student Games, Sapporo, Japan. Manager: Davin Timms. Skiers: Chris Heberle, Mark Gray, Anthony Evans, Tom Landon-Smith, Paul Gray, Sarah Iverson, Alina McMaster and Jessica Hromas. This was the first time an Australian women's team had competed at a World Student Games.
- Australia's first Worldloppet event the Kangaroo Hoppet (42km) is conducted in ideal weather at Falls Creek. It had been postponed one day due to blizzard conditions. It is run in conjunction with the Joey Hoppet (7km) and the Australian Birkebeiner (21km) - 1,150 skiers participate.
- At the annual Australian Ski Awards Paul L'Huillier received the 'Coach of the Year' and Bob Lawton and David Biggs were recognised for their 'contribution to the development of cross country skiing'.
- The Victorian Alpine Resorts Commission purchase four Rolba TurboTrac 150 nordic grooming machines.
- Trail Head Fees were introduced for the first at all Victorian ski resorts.
- Great Australian Ski Chase winners are Anthony Evans and Michele Wolfe.
- Paddy Pallin (1901-1991), one of the great leaders and pioneers of Australian outdoor life, died aged 90.

## 1992

- Olympic Winter Games, Albertville, France. Section Manager cross country/biathlon: Bob Cranage. FX Officials: Brian Keeble(cross country) and Lynn Cranage (biathlon).



Coach-cross country: Paul L'Huillier. Skiers: Anthony Evans and Paul Gray. Coach-biathlon: Andrew Paul, Skiers: Kerryn Pethybridge and Sandra Paintin-Paul.

- Under guidelines set down by the Australian Olympic Committee (AOC) Australia qualifies a relay team at the Cogne, Italy World Cup (8.1% behind, 11/15 nations). Subsequently the AOC denies entry.
- Australian Olympic Squad (men), Canada and Europe. Manager; Brian Keeble. Coach: Paul L'Huillier. Skiers: Chris Heberle, Mark Gray, Paul Gray, Tom Landon-Smith, Anthony Evans and Dean Gray.
- The Australian relay team of Anthony Evans, Chris Heberle, Paul Gray and Mark Gray win the Swiss Relay Championships from 26 teams.
- At the Silver Star World Cup in Canada Australian skiers achieve their best World Cup results ever in the 15km (F) pursuit race. Paul Gray 50/101, 4.5%; Anthony Evans 64/101, 6.1%; Mark Gray 67/101, 6.2%.
- Australian Women's A Team, Canada and Europe. Manager: Carl Melvey. Coach: Peter Smyth. Skiers: Camille Melvey and Alina McMaster.
- World Junior Championships, Vuokatti, Finland. Coach: Len Budge. Manager/Assistant Coach: Lee Bygrave. Skiers: Miffy Cross and Piers Greville.
- Alina McMaster is awarded a skiing scholarship to the University of Alaska. She gains double All-American honours for her performances in the NCAA Championships.
- Birkebeiner Nordic Ski Club awarded 'Ski Club of the Year' at the Australian Ski Awards for its efforts in gaining Worldloppet status for the 42km Kangaroo Hoppet Ski Race.
- Mark Gray is appointed the Victorian Development Officer for skiing. A part-time position funded by the VSA X-C Committee, Victorian Sport and Recreation Department and the Alpine Resorts Commission.
- Keith Jephcott is appointed the NCIS National Co-ordinator. A part-time paid position.
- Great Australian Ski Chase winners are Anthony Evans and Camille Melvey.

## 1993

- World Senior Championships, Falun, Sweden. Manager: Brian Keeble. Assistant Manager: Carl Melvey. Coach: Stefan Eklov (Sweden). Assistant Coach: Peter Smyth. Skiers: Mark Gray, Anthony Evans, Finn Marsland, Tom Landon-Smith, Mathew Murtagh, Camille Melvey, Jo Bourke, Sandra Paintin-Paul and Lynn Cranage.
- World Junior Championships, Harrachov, Czechoslovakia. Manager/Assistant Coach: Mick Sullivan. Coach: Robert Findlay. Skier: Ben Derrick.
- World Student Games, Zakopane, Poland. Manager: John Purnell, Assistant Manager: Martin Soust. Skiers: Tom Landon-Smith, Finn Marsland, Lucas Molloy and Joanna Bourke.



- The annual Worldloppet meeting is held in Australia for the first time. All twelve member nations attended as well as two other nations who were trying to get their races accredited.
- Laurie Fitzsimons and Rex Gibb became the first Victorians to complete ten Worldloppet events (over a number of seasons), and earn the Worldloppet Master Diploma, gold-plated pin and gold-plated medallion.
- Ski di Femme program?? Lisa Lamberg-Nordin plus two Swedish girls.