

The Competition Plan

By Susan Ellis

Many of you at a sub elite level are now coming in to the most important competitions of your season – National Age Class championships, Provincial or State championships, etc. How you approach these competitions and prepare for them may be a determining factor in your success. Such things as having the right taper in to the competition (see Tapering – March 2006), getting enough rest and sleep, eating a healthy diet, and reducing outside stresses such as homework loads, workloads, family and friends issues, are important to help you prepare well. Along with these things, writing out a plan for the actual competition days can help you to be well prepared, have all the little things taken care of in advance, and allow you to focus on the racing itself.

The previous three month's tips should have served to help prepare you in terms of what strategies you will use and the tactics that will help you to carry out your race plans. (If you haven't read them yet, go to Strategy and Tactics – Part 1 – Overview – December 2008, Strategy and Tactics – Part 2 – Controlling the Pace and Track – January 2009, Strategy and Tactics – Part 3 – The Moves and Counter Moves – February 2009.) Now the actual Competition Plan will help to prepare you physically and mentally in the days leading up to, and during, the competition as well as taking care of nutrition, rest, and equipment.

The Competition Plan can be as detailed as specifying what you will do anywhere from a week before the competition to just days before. The longer out you plan the sooner you get on track towards success. Writing out your plan will help you to take care of the little details that otherwise might be forgotten. I can't tell you how many times an athlete's day has gotten off to a bad start simply because they forgot to set the alarm, so they had to rush, rush, rush, didn't have time for the refreshing, relaxing shower and missed breakfast too now mymindisspinningandeverythingisrunningtogether.....Get the picture? Oh, ya, and it was dad's fault cause he forgot to set it, hey wait, no, it was YOUR responsibility to take care of your own plan! OK, OK, no problem. Dad will go out and get you something to eat while you warm up. But wait! Dad, you have to sharpen my skates right after warm up and you won't be back in time! Dang, I knew we should have sharpened them last night. Do you have my water bottle? No, I thought you brought it. Oh, dear!!!!!!

The competition plan can help you to take care of the little, but important, details such as these as well as help you to think through and write out warm up plans and race plans. Writing things out helps to make it clearer for you and helps you to commit to really following the plan.

The sample competition plan below might help you to think of some things you might want to put in your competition plan.

Download a blank form to start writing your own plan.

Good Luck and Happy Skating!

Competition Plan – Name: Speedy Skater

ONE WEEK PRIOR TO COMPETITION

<i>PHYSICAL PREPARATION</i>	<i>Actions/Thoughts/Cues – Write your own plan here and save it in a different file name.</i>
<p>Eg: taper, feel good, solid at high speed, feel good ride on blades</p> <p>Do one last preparation TT early in week</p>	<p>Lots of stretching – especially hips – before and after every session</p> <p>high speed quality laps – Feel your Speed!</p> <p>reduce quantity</p> <p>feel pressure all the way through left leg push (ride)</p> <p>Monday: Time trial 7L – goal – build and maintain speed. Feel ride/ pressure + 3 x 12 L easy</p> <p>Tuesday: 2 x 3 x 2L Speed! Lots of rest in between, 3 x ½ L starts – feel hips forward on starts</p> <p>Wednesday: 6L, 5L, 4L ,3L feel some lactate but lots of rest in between, feel good pressure, build on exits</p>
<i>MENTAL PREPARATION</i>	
<p>Eg: What I want to feel in my training: Positive, strong thoughts in training, no doubts, imagery, minimal stress</p> <p>Make a competition plan for race day</p>	<p>Make list of cue words for training to help me feel strong, solid</p> <p>Imagery of TT each morning. Feel what I want to feel and think in TT. See a positive TT.</p> <p>Ensure daily mental prep goals are met during the training sessions.</p> <p>Comp plan includes wake up time and what I need to do to feel good, breakfast time, leave for rink time, off ice warm up (content), on ice warm up (content), equipment and nutrition checks, pre-race warm up (content), general race plan and cue thoughts for race</p>
<i>EQUIPMENT</i>	
<p>Check:</p> <p>rocker, bend, back up blades in shape, boots (any repairs), extra laces, washers, wrenches, stones</p>	<p>Buy anything that needs buying and fix what needs fixing.</p>
<i>NUTRITION</i>	
<p>Balance – protein, carbs, hydration, avoid junk, take regular meals, make list of what to bring to competition for food.</p>	<p>Plan meals – what makes me feel best and gives me the most energy. What is the plan in case of rushed meals? Where will I eat, what will I eat? What will I avoid.</p> <p>Make list of food to bring to comp and purchase in advance if possible</p>

<i>REST/ RELAXATION</i>	Hours sleep? Clear schedule early in week to reduce running around at last minute Find time to relax and enjoy some of your favourite relaxation things/ activities Keep social stress to minimum
<i>OTHER</i>	
<i>OTHER</i>	

TWO DAYS PRIOR TO COMPETITION

<i>PHYSICAL PREPARATION</i>	<i>Actions/Thoughts/Cues</i>
Eg: feel good, solid at high speed, feel good ride on blades A bit of lactate content	Lots of stretching High sp quality laps A couple of 6 – 10 lappers to keep lactate buffering system sharp Reduce overall quantity Feel pressure all the way through left leg push (ride) Thurs program and training goal: Fri program and training goal:
<i>MENTAL PREPARATION</i>	
Eg: Positive, strong thoughts in training, no doubts, imagery, minimal stress Go over race day competition plans and imagery of specific races, strategies, tactics	My specific words/ thoughts for training are: Imagery of TT and specific races. Feel what I want to feel and think in TT and races. See positive results.
<i>EQUIPMENT</i>	
All equipment has been checked, bought, repaired. Go over list again to make sure nothing missed.	Keep skates very sharp.
<i>NUTRITION</i>	
Balance – protein, carbs, hydration, avoid junk, take regular meals, make list of what to bring to competition for food.	For breakfast I plan to have (general idea of what will work for you) For lunch: For dinner: Nutritious snacks: Hydration:

<i>REST/ RELAXATION</i>	<p>Sleep:</p> <p>Find time to relax and enjoy some of your favourite relaxation things/ activities</p> <p>Keep social stress to minimum</p>
<i>OTHER</i>	
<i>OTHER</i>	

DAY PRIOR TO COMPETITION

<i>PHYSICAL PREPARATION</i>	<i>Actions/Thoughts/Cues</i>
<p>Goal: feel good, solid at high speed, feel good ride on blades</p>	<p>Ensure good off ice warm up:</p> <p>Describe off ice warm up here, eg: jog, stretch, accels, jumps, etc</p> <p>Feel zip, snap, explosiveness, unstoppable</p> <p>On ice program:</p> <p>Eg: 2 x 10 L feel ice, feel ride</p> <p>3 x 3 L quality accels</p> <p>2 x 2L max sp</p> <p>3 x starts building on each one.</p> <p>Easy skate to finish off and feel position, confidence, ready.</p> <p>Off ice warm down</p>
<i>MENTAL PREPARATION</i>	
<p>Goal: Wake up feeling refreshed and ready for a solid days preparation in which I feel good mentally and physically. Positive, strong thoughts in today's practice, no doubts, imagery, minimal stress</p> <p>Go over race day competition plans and imagery of specific races, strategies, tactics</p> <p>Decide today what time to wake up, refresh, breakfast, arrive and rink and warm up for competition.</p>	<p>Wake up at: and take refreshing shower</p> <p>My specific words/thoughts for training are:</p> <p>Review and Imagery of TT plan and specific races. Feel what I want to feel and think in TT and races. See positive results.</p> <p>Find enjoyable relaxing activity to occupy free time.</p>

<i>EQUIPMENT</i>	
All equipment has been checked, bought, repaired. Go over list again to make sure nothing missed.	Keep skates very sharp.
<i>NUTRITION</i>	**Make sure whatever you plan to have is available
Balance – protein, carbs, hydration, avoid junk, take regular meals, make sure food for competition is bought.	For breakfast I plan to have (general idea of what will work for you) For lunch: For dinner: Nutritious snacks: Hydration:
<i>REST/ RELAXATION</i>	Sleep: Find time to relax and enjoy some of your favourite relaxation things/ activities Keep social stress to minimum
<i>OTHER</i>	Set alarm for wake up. Leave plenty of time so not rushed.
<i>OTHER</i>	

COMPETITION Day 1

<i>PHYSICAL and Mental Preparation</i>	<i>Actions/Thoughts/Cues</i>
Wake up at --:-- Shower Stretch 10' Breakfast at: --:-- Leave for rink: --:-- Off ice warm up:--:-- On ice warm up: --:-- My first race is at: --:-- Check equipment immediately after warm up.	Wake up and refresh immediately. Relaxing breakfast Off ice warm up: Describe off ice warm up here, eg: jog, stretch, accels, jumps, etc Feel zip, snap, explosiveness, unstoppable On ice warm up: Eg: 2 x 5 L feel ice, feel ride 2 x 3 L quality accels, feel power 2 x 2L max sp, feel acceleration of weight, strong pivots. Feel zip, snap, explosiveness, unstoppable. 2 x starts building on each one. 5 L easy, reassuring I am ready, I feel great Sharpen if necessary.

<p>Hydrate and nutrition</p> <p>Stay loose and relaxed during wait time.</p> <p>While in bullpen, review a few critical moments of TT or race plan. See what I want to see and feel it.</p> <p>Execute according to plan</p> <p>Prepare for next race: warm up, go over race plan in head</p>	<p>Drink some water and eat a little</p> <p>Easy jogging, another few sprints, jumps, stretching Allow 5' down time before heading to bullpen. Use cue words / thoughts to stay up and confident.</p> <p>Imagery</p> <p>After race assess good and bad points. Keep good to take in to next race. Bad is history, throw it away.</p> <p>Jog, stretch, etc Hydrate / nutrit Positive imagery</p>
<p><i>EQUIPMENT</i></p>	
<p>Bring all equipment in to rink, including jig, stones, back up blades, extra skin, change of underwear, socks, extra warm clothes.</p>	<p>Check skates immediately after warm up and immediately after each race. Sharpen if necessary right away.</p>
<p><i>NUTRITION</i></p>	
<p>Breakfast at --:-- Eat something every hour, drink every ½ hour</p>	<p>For breakfast I plan to have (general idea of what will work for you) For lunch: For dinner: Nutritious snacks: Hydration:</p>
<p><i>REST/ RELAXATION</i></p>	
<p><i>OTHER</i></p>	<p>Set alarm for next day wake up leaving plenty of time to wake up feeling good and refresh if necessary. I gotta leave time to wash my hair!</p>
<p><i>OTHER</i></p>	<p>Check skates to make sure no major problems for tomorrow</p>

COMPETITION Day 2 -

<i>PHYSICAL and Mental Preparation</i>	<i>Actions/Thoughts/Cues</i>
You know the drill now. Fill in the rest....	
<i>NUTRITION</i>	
<i>REST/ RELAXATION</i>	
<i>OTHER</i>	
<i>OTHER</i>	

TIME TRIAL PLAN – write in your lap time projections, cue words, technical cues, physical cues, track strategies. This is a sample. Write your own.

Lap 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
12.2 Open hard, accelerate pretty hard out of 1 st turn, 4 strides on 1 st straight, accelerate in to first corner. Affirm good opener after 1 st lap	9.4 continue acceleration in to and out of turns, 2 in 2 out, build speed, ride left, feel pressure	9.3 feeling strong, continue to push it, affirm it's going well, I have power, feels good, 2 in 2 out	9.4 feeling relaxed but strong, I'm doing well, working exits, switch to 1 in 3 out	9.4 good work, keep it up, strong, ride, work exit, feel the power	9.5 Refresh now, new energy, ready to build it up again	9.6 OK, here we go, the final sprint, 333, strong, tempo out, ride blades, feel the exit lean,	9.6 Going well, stronger now, pick it up! I can do this. Work the exit. Now 2 in 2 out again. Give it everything	9.6 Great! Last Lap! Give it everything! Pick it up. Charge to the line.

General Race Refocus Plans:

If this goes wrong I

If this happens I.....

If I am not feeling what I want to feel on the ice I.....

If I am feeling tired I....