

XC Running Advice

By Andy Newell

This time of year, many skiing athletes also run cross country. We have athletes ask us all the time whether or not running xc is good idea for their skiing and unfortunately the answer just isn't that simple. Yes, there are aspects of the xc running season that will be GREAT for cross country skiers, but there are also drawbacks to focusing so much training time and intensity on running.

The obvious pros are that xc running provides a really effective (and hopefully fun for most) way to get in L4 and race pace intensity. It refreshes a skiing athlete with the process of racing and provides a competitive atmosphere to log some great fall intensity. Doing a lot of racing in September and October will certainly get you fit.

The obvious cons are in order to be competitive xc runners must log the majority, if not all, of their fall intensity running instead of rollerskiing which has its implications on specific strength, technique, and training skiing efficiency.

Yes, the xc running season adds a lot of L4 intensity into the fall schedule but if the athlete/ coach has periodized their training with some forethought runners can also extend their fitness and race successfully all winter long too. The best way to do this is to have open communication between athlete, running coach, and ski coach and try to find some common ground.

The bottom line is that if an athlete wants to be competitive in skiing as well as xc running they are going to need to log SOME ski specific training during September and October. Even if you are the fittest athlete in the world you still can't afford to take two months off from rollerskiing. I recommend skiing athletes discuss an option to have at least two – three ski specific workouts

per week, this might mean convincing the xc running coach that it's ok for skiers to do a rollerski workout instead of a running practice mid-week.

Depending on how much racing the xc runners are doing it might not make sense to add in any additional roller skiing intervals but try to focus on rollerskiing distance training, especially double pole, to maintain upper body strength. If an athlete can get in one skate rollerski per week and one DP only workout per week this will help them maintain ski specific fitness.

We asked US Ski Team coach Jason Cork to give us some additional thoughts.

Jason: "The general pattern is that XC running programs don't train much volume, probably less than 10 hours per week. I'd make sure runners came into the season with a good base of easy training and threshold training under their belt. This way they'd be more likely to tolerate higher speed "easy" sessions and could absorb the L4+ intervals and race loads better."

Jason: "After the season, especially if XC running rolls into November and snow, it's a good idea to get a week or two of recovery, depending on how much you raced and how fatiguing training was. Long, slow distance with a lot of double-pole and V2 (to get the upper-body back up to speed) can let the legs and mind recover before hitting it hard again with ski-focused intensity."