

Midland's Don Foster gives tips for cross-country skiing enthusiasts

by Chris Knowles
Don Foster, part-owner operator of Mountain View Ski Hills, is perhaps Midland's premier cross-country skier. He's raced in the North American Cross-Country Championships against the best in the world and was picked for the All Ontario Winter Games ski team. A box full of trophies indicate the extent of Foster's skiing talents. We talked to Don about proper skiing techniques, choosing equipment and

generally picked his brain concerning all aspects of cross-country skiing. To what would you attribute the sudden popularity of cross-country skiing in Canada? In the last two or three years everyone has become interested in improving their physical fitness. People have been bicycling, running and skiing for exercise. In this past year Canada was the second biggest importer of cross-country skis

behind Russia. But cross-country skiing isn't new, we've had trails here for 15 years. Is it as good exercise as it's advertised to be? I certainly think it is. It exercises your arms and legs and helps your breathing. I do a lot of running and play soccer, but skiing is better exercise because you use every part of your body. You've caught my interest Don, and I'd like to buy a cross-country package. As a beginner

what should I buy and how much will it cost? Well, basically for touring you should stay away from the real wide skis or the real narrow ones. The wide skis are for use in deep snow, the narrow ones (44 millimeters) are for racing. Look for something 55-60 mm wide. Racing skis are not good for everyday touring as they are designed for a good track with ruts already worn in.

For starters a wood ski will get you by but make sure it has a hickory or ash base to avoid gouges. Plastic based skis are faster so it is even more important to get a good wax so you don't slip backwards. I would put a touring wax on all skis but you can get by without wax on wood skis. But what about the different patterns you see on the bottom of cross-country skis? There are now several types of patterns on the base of skis, designed so you don't have to wax them. On some conditions these work but they usually make the skis a bit slower and you really still have to wax them.

because they don't breathe. Look for poles made of onkin which is light and sturdy. Cross-country poles have a knife or curved tip end and should come up to under your arm. The skis should be long enough so they reach your wrist with your arm extended straight up. And the price of skis, boots and poles. A good price for a starters package is between \$65 and \$80. What about the more experienced skier or racer? You're looking at maybe \$150 for the better racing skis and \$65 for boots. Racers use fiberglass skis with a stiff camber that are faster and allow you to double pole (pushing off with both poles at the same time). I use alpine wax on both ends of the skis and kicker wax underneath my feet for traction. What type of clothing do you recommend? As far as ski clothing is concerned I don't think you should get too bundled up because you work up quite a sweat out skiing. I've seen people come in snowmobile suits and by the end of a run are just dripping. On my feet I wear a thin knicker sock with a heavy sock underneath. What is a good type of terrain to cross-country ski on? For your basic tourers I'd avoid downhills because they break a lot of skis. A flat area with packed snow and ruts already in is good to start.

different land forms encountered while skiing? When skiing downhill you basically keep your weight back. If you don't you'll go right over if you hit a little bump. A more experienced skier should be able to crouch into a downhill stance with poles tucked in. On steep uphill you'll have to sidestep or herring bone (one ski 90 degrees to the other). You should be able to go straight up small hills if you've waxed your skis properly. Weight shift is the important thing to master when skiing on a flat area. Push off on the ski you've put your weight on, keeping your heel down. At the same time push off with the opposite ski pole. Then after gliding, plant the pole opposite the toe of the gliding foot and push off again. Try to get as long a glide as possible and ski relaxed. And now for one of the more important skills to master when cross-country skiing - stopping. The snowplow is the easiest to use when learning, but make sure you keep your weight on your heels. The more advanced skier will use the stem or skating turn, but once again you must be careful because there are no edges on cross-country skis.

Can you give a few tips on how to handle the

roller-skipping

roller-skipping



How it's done

Don Foster shows the correct positioning of cross-country skis and poles when pushing off with the left leg.

Staff photo



Roller-skipping

To keep in shape for cross-country skiing during the summer, Don Foster roller-skis along the roads of Midland.

Staff photo

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Monsignor Castex sweeps eight game volleyball tourney

The boys' and girls' volleyball teams from Monsignor Castex School in Midland swept all eight games in winning the Hillcrest Elementary School Volleyball Tournament in Owen Sound.

Not one of the seven participating teams were able to reach double figures on the scoreboard against the disciplined Midland school. The favoured Hillcrest teams were beaten in the finals by Monsignor Castex, both times by 15-9 scores. The Midland girls met Hillcrest's B team in the opener, winning handily 15-6. Dundalk fell next, the victim of a 15-9 score. Meaford was whipped by Midland 15-4 and in the final Hillcrest A was downed 15-9.

The boys from Monsignor Castex were just as consistent as they beat Hillcrest a 15-9, Hillcrest B 15-5, Dundalk 15-7 and Hillcrest A again in the finals, 15-9.

The big winners

The girls' volleyball team from Monsignor Castex School won all their games on the way to winning the Hillcrest Elementary School Volleyball Tournament. Back row (left to right) are: Cheryl Weber, Cheryl Desroches, Margaret Hamelin, Darlene Dusome, Betty Anne Laurin, Michelle Lafreniere, coach Henry Wozniak, (middle) Mary Pat Quilty, Susan Lamere, Nancy Asselin, Monique Dorion, (front) Janice Fortin, Kelly Swales, and Kelly Denis. Tracey Shuman was absent.

Staff photo

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