

The Road to Biathlon World Youth & Junior championships 2011.

Obertilliach 15-16th January 2011. Sprint Race 1.

Race plan: Ski hard & Shoot Clean. Tick!

After returning from Valdidentro to our home away from home, Obertilliach Austria, Dyllan and I had to assess the plan on how to make a Q time for World Youth & Junior Champs. In the upcoming weekends races, the Alpen Cup he would have to ski a 10km Sprint course and against most of the Italians from the week before; mix in the Austrians, Russians, Slovaks and Croatians. It would be a tough field.

During the week Dyllan's ski times continued to improve and he performed well in his time trial with 75% accuracy at race pace. Comparing results from previous races and the talent in the field it was unlikely that the result would be under the required 10%.

Waxing skis has been compared to rocket science- on good days it not rocket science...on bad days, you wish you had taken the study class. We mulled over the options, consulted friend Alan Eason (who is wax technician for GB Biathlon team on the World Cup and knows the course well) and waxed.

On race morning we were pleased to find that in testing, the chosen race skis were running just as fast as the Austrians. **Tick!**

Time to Zero on lane 27. It's 9am, in the shade with fluctuating wind. Lane 1 in full sun and wind flags showing the opposite direction. Looking down the valley there fluffy clouds that block the sun periodically. Dyllan says he is not nervous but his trigger finger tells me otherwise with the groups he puts down. He settles down and I take a gamble on what the wind and light conditions will be at 10:30 when he will take his first shots.

The race plan- ski the course well, be as efficient as possible and shoot clean. Be Your Best!

Dyllan gets off to a good start. I watch him ski with great glide and the technique improvements we have worked on are evident. **Tick!**

He comes in for the prone shoot. Lane 15 in full sun and just a touch of wind. I peer through the scope and hold my breath. Hit, hit, hit, hit, hit! Clean prone! **Tick!**

After another good ski he comes in for the standing shoot. The first three targets go down with ease as they have been in training. Shot 4 & 5 are the ones that could come unstuck. Dyllan breaks his rhythm and settles. I know exactly what he is thinking and he comes good. Clean standing! **Tick!**

He is out of the range and off on his last 3.3km lap. I'm out on the track yelling encouragement. He is really going for it. On the track to the finish line I watch the Italians and Austrians absolutely hammer up the last hill and over the finish line. Dyllan does the same and collapses onto the ground. The officials check his rifle and he gets to his feet. Big high five. Null Null! Of the 124 competitors, 6 shot clean and 2 of these in Dyllan's category.

So now the anxious wait for the official results. 11th. Will it be under 10%..... 8.97% **Tick!**

We jump around and whoohoo! World Juniors here we come!

Toscha Stopar
Biathlon Coach

