

## BC Ski Team in Sweden - 2023 B-Tour Wrap Up

### Results - National Cup Final:

Friday March 24 skate sprint

1.5km: <https://ta.skidor.com/ResultList.aspx?eventid=13836&competitionid=23584&orgid=1206>

Saturday March 25 distance skate 10km men/5km

women: <https://ta.skidor.com/ResultList.aspx?eventid=13836&competitionid=23585&orgid=1206>

Sunday March 26 pursuit skate 15km men/10km

women: <https://ta.skidor.com/ResultList.aspx?eventid=13836&competitionid=23586&orgid=1206>





*Photos above: Gallivare Skidgymnasium*

## Coach Report 1

As we neared the end of our Tour in Sweden I was asked my thoughts on my experience throughout our trip, and which experience stood out. Even though we were only in Sweden for a couple of weeks, our hosts packed every day with experiences which ranged from the students leading us on a 45 km ski along ever-narrowing snowmobile tracks (while a few reindeer looked on licking their lips hungrily like we were tufts of grass), to an easy afternoon ski with Marcus Hellner, while we peppered him with questions. Of all the amazing things we had the opportunity to experience, the that stood out the most most was our adoption into a 'skidgymnasium' lifestyle, and the exceptional people we had the pleasure to meet.

The Gällivare Skidgymnasium, one of ten in Sweden, allows skiers who are 16 years old to begin four years of integrated skiing and school curriculum, thereby allowing the athlete to focus on their ski performance. Athletes in their final year at the Skidgymnasium acted as big brothers and sisters to our team - buying food, transporting athletes, and helping with day-to-day logistics. While the athletes were working on their future parenting skills, four coaches from the Skidgymnasium, in turn, took care of our BC coaches in much the same way.

The days were filled with taking us through the lifestyle of a coach/teacher at the gymnasium. This included morning workout sessions filled with intensity, games and social skis (see [Gällivare skidgymnasium längd on Instagram: "Dagens pass 🏂☀️ @lkabgroup #lkabgroup 🇸🇪: @Oscarsafstrom"](https://www.instagram.com/p/DOscarsafstrom/) [instagram.com](https://www.instagram.com)) followed by returning to the school for showers and our professionally made lunchboxes prepared by our fantastic host family. Our afternoons and evenings were filled with fika, ski and waxing education, team dinners, and more fika. Now I should stress that food is like a sport in Sweden, and they take it very seriously, with only up to two hours going by without some form of cheese, butter, cake, coffee or bread being consumed in vast quantities.

As a coach, my trip had goals: (1) to see how we can improve as a province by learning about new ideas and innovations that we can inject into our system, and (2) to find out how our BC skiers performed against a similar age group in Sweden. The trip exceeded my expectations in every way, starting with an excursion to Lulea University where the combination of research, school and skiing has been integrated, and where innovative research projects in ski base construction, grinding techniques and data sensor technology are being explored. The next source of helpful information came from my host family, whom I can't thank enough. Lina, who is in charge of the 'grade four' students (final year at the academy), is a 12-year former national team member and medalist at the Olympics, World Championships and World Cup. Perhaps more importantly, she is also house champion in the table hockey game (see photo below). Mats, who is a 22-year veteran wax tech for the Swedish National Team, is part of the innovation team at Lulea University. He is working on base grinds and base construction, and he volunteered many hours to helping our athletes better understand ski camber testing, giving waxing demos and helping us prepare all our race skis. Every night was filled with laughs, great food and discussions about sports systems and innovation in skiing, and this was among some of my most valuable take-home experiences.

So, two weeks have come and gone. I have eaten my weight in Swedish candy, learned from some of the best in the world, made a list of challenges and innovations that our province can learn from and, most importantly, learned that the development level of our BC Ski Team is competitive not just on the North American stage but the international level - even though we still need to work harder so that we can climb higher.

In an increasingly sophisticated sport system that analyzes athletes by numbers and values, it is easy to lose track of the true success measure of a program. Success can be results, participation levels, or testing metrics, and it is easy to forget that the most significant success of all is to have developed a system that cultivates athletes who have a passion for learning, and have evolved into people that are kind and show respect for others. After five continuous weeks of being on the road with different groups of BC athletes, I have been proud to watch our athletes support each other on and off the field of play.

*CCBC Provincial Coach, Chris Manhard*





## **Coach Report 2**

“What has been your best experience with the trip?” asks Lina Andersson (head coach for the oldest students at Skidgymnasium in Gällivare. It is impossible to summarize the trip with only a few words, but I will try my best. A few summers ago, my close friend Lina and I sat down over a coffee at her summer house in Burvik, Sweden. We talked about how exciting it would be to organize an exchange with the high school athletes that she coaches in Sweden and our BC Ski Team athletes. In September 2022 that dream became reality when we welcomed nine athletes from Gällivare Skidgymnasium to our BC Ski Team camp in Whistler. In March it was our turn to be welcomed into the homes of those athletes when Cross Country BC brought nine athletes on a B-tour trip to the north of Sweden.

After the athletes had spent a few days in Gällivare, I met up with the team in Boden, the town I was born in and where my parents still live. I had not been to Sweden during the winter for more than 12 years, and never without my children. The competition in Boden was the Bauhaus National Cup Final. It was amazing to see the BC athletes compete on the same trails as I competed on (many years ago...). My parents came to cheer the BC athletes on, and they were very impressed by everyone’s performances. I was able to see so many familiar faces at the race site as most volunteers were the same people as when I raced (how this is possible I do not know as it was a long time ago since I was racing there). Even the same man that sold hamburgers when I was racing was still there... It was a memorable race weekend, the competitions were run very professionally, and our athletes had some amazing performances against the best juniors in Sweden. I feel so proud to be a part of the BC Ski Team and to watch them give everything they could for each competition. The team had a warm welcome by the race organizers, and I felt that everyone appreciated the Canadian influence at the competition.

After a tough weekend of racing we continued the journey to Gällivare, the town I moved to for ski high school when I was the same age as our BC Ski Team athletes. Much has changed since I lived there, for example there is a brand new school in the heart of Gällivare. The BC coaches stayed at coach Lina’s home, this way we were able to be a part of the daily life of their family. I enjoyed seeing our BC athletes take part in the daily training routine of a Swedish athlete living and studying at a ski high school. Some of my highlights are the long ski that we finished with a traditional outdoor lunch in the snow, a great ski with Marcus Hellner, and of course the visit to the ice hotel. I feel that we had a good mix between great training sessions and afternoon presentations - a great way to maximize our time to gain more knowledge and maintain good training.

This has been my best international trip as a coach, and I very feel so lucky to have had the opportunity to share it with nine amazingly talented athletes. The two weeks we have spent together will be memories for life. I would like to extend a big “thank you” to the coaches and athletes at Gällivare Skidgymnasium for making this B-tour a possibility.

*CCBC Assistant Provincial Coach, Maria Lundgren*





### **Monday, March 27<sup>th</sup>, Kiruna, Sweden**

After the long weekend of racing, the team got a chance to be tourists for a day. It started with a brisk walk to Gallivere station and an hour-long train ride to Kiruna. While some used the time on the train to be productive and catch up on homework, others preferred to get in some extra sleep.

When the team arrived in Kiruna, we met with the Swedes who drove the team vans there, and we were given a quick tour of the most northern town in Sweden. We stopped by the Kiruna church which is one of Sweden's largest wooden buildings, and was constructed in 1909. After that we made our way to the world famous ice hotel which was about a 15 minute drive out of the town.

Once we got our tickets to enter, we were let loose to roam around the hotel that was built entirely of snow and ice. The hotel has been in operation since 1990 and is said to have started when the French artist Jannot Derid built an igloo as part of an exhibition in Kiruna. One night when there were no rooms available in town so some visitors asked permission to sleep in the igloo in sleeping bags on reindeer skins. They become the first guests at the ice hotel. Now, every year the hotel is rebuilt in December, ready to welcome more guests before it melts in the spring.

We spent our time touring the hotel, and admiring the unique rooms sculpted by different artists. Some of the best included a Sauna-themed bedroom, and the fungal room that was dreamed up by Canadian artists. Every year a jury picks around 50 artists to create the interior of the hotel, so being able to design a room is a pretty big deal.

Back outside we took turns on the ice slide and found a few kicksleds. Of course, since we're all skiers, we decided that a competition to see which country had the fastest kicksled team was in order. Soon enough we were racing around the courtyard outside the hotel, causing just a little bit of chaos but also having a ton of fun.

After we wrapped up our racing, toured all the rooms and took our share of photos, the team headed to lunch at a nearby restaurant (after hearing that our planned lunch of delicious midget reindeer had to be cancelled due to the kitchen staff being sick, which was devastating news to all of us). However, after some meatballs, shrimp, fish and Fika, we were feeling better and made our way back to the hotel.

At the hotel we visited the fancy gift shop and ordered drinks from the ice bar that came in ice glasses, as we slowly froze while sitting on our ice chairs. After our drinks had turned to slush and frozen to the inside of our cups, it was time to head back. The van ride home was quite sleepy after a hard day of touring, and we met with our hosts to have dinner at the ski club before going back to our apartments to get rest for the long ski tomorrow.

*By Eamon Wilson*

Fun fact: Kiruna is Sweden's official spaceport and is home to the European Space agency's space tracking network (ESTRACK), the Swedish institute of space physics, and the Department of Space Science belonging to the Lulea Institute of Technology.













### **Tuesday, March 28<sup>th</sup>, Gallivere, Sweden**

After our eventful day spent at the world-famous Ice Hotel, we awoke bright and early to set out on a great adventure ski. We were fortunate enough to have a beautiful, sunny, crisp spring day. We started out on 21km of sled highway, before climbing up onto the plateau. Once on the plateau we skied on smaller sled tracks that some of our Swedish friends had groomed the day before. We rolled through the remote Swedish Lapland, with very few, or small trees, and miles of marshlands. After skiing 45km, we reached our destination. Some of our coaches and the Swedish coaches had driven the vans there. They then dug out couches in the snow. Once we had all arrived, we had a campfire. We ate some much needed and delicious burgers cooked by Lina and Helena. We hung around for a while before heading home.

The tired crew had a relaxing evening after a dinner of pasta. Some of the team went in the sauna, and others played board games with the Swedes. We are super excited for the rest of the week, which is sure to have many more adventures and good times.

*By Finn Redman*









**BC Ski Team in Sweden - 2023 B-Tour, Update #2**

**Monday, March 27<sup>th</sup>, Gällivare, Sweden**

To wrap up our both our ski season and the race weekend in Boden, our team crushed the Free Technique Pursuit with 3 top 5, 3 top 15 and 3 top 30 performances. This added to the success of the previous two days of racing, with everyone moving up from their starting position and chasing down the leaders.

Following the race, we were back on the move right away in a packed van, and beelining it to the “Max Hamburgare” joint for some burgers and milkshakes (where some kids decided to push their limits off the course just as much as on). Then a quick stop at the candy store before starting the two-and-a-half-hour drive back to Gällivare. After settling back into our apartments, we went up to the famous Hellner Stadion for some “korvstroganoff” made by our hosts from the Gällivare Skidgymnasium (with some hints of Canadian cooking). Before we knew it 10:30 had rolled around, as we had now experienced our second time change forward this spring. We headed back to our beds for some much-needed sleep, with a busy weekend behind us and an early morning train to catch ahead of us.

*By Raleigh Tarte*







## **Saturday, March 25<sup>th</sup>, Boden, Sweden**

This week in Sweden, we have expanded on our skiing knowledge and racing experience. This began with a waxing clinic run by Mats Eklund who is currently a waxer for Frida Karlsson and others, and he has been waxing for the Swedish national team for over 20 years. We learned about glide and grip waxing techniques like using a thin klister base and high fluorocarbon powders. Mats was able to perfectly predict the glide and grip for the coming weekend of racing in Boden. He also shared some valuable knowledge in regards to selecting and ordering skis. Later that day, we packed up the vans and hit the road for Boden.

The next morning, we woke up to a nice sunny morning in Boden, and made our way to the ski trails to pre-ski the courses for the sprint and distance races coming up. The sprint course was longer than our usual distance at home, at 1.7km long. The course consisted of two hills, a fast banked downhill and a long finishing straight. The distance course was 5km and had the infamous “toboggan hill”, known for its steepness, followed by a long fast downhill before a rolling section and returning to the stadium.

After we skied the courses in Boden, we made a quick stop for a delicious lunch just outside of Boden before making the half hour drive to the coastal city of Luleå, to visit the Luleå University of Technology. We made our way to the ski technology lab, where we had a fika followed by a presentation about the contact pressure between ski and snow, conducted by Kalle Kalliorinne, a Ph.D student at the University. After the presentation, we had a tour of the school, before heading back to Boden for the night.

On Friday, we raced a 1.7km skate sprint. It was quite a long and challenging course and it was very interesting how the Swedish race in sprints. It was much more strategic and technical in comparison to the more Canadian way of going as hard as possible for the whole sprint distance. The heats were especially fun and at one point, a group stopped at the top of the down to the finish because no one wanted to lead and then get passed off of a draft! Most of us did one or two heats.

On Saturday, we raced a distance classic race. The boys did 10km and the girls did 5km. This course was extremely challenging as it included a very steep and long climb that made its way up a sledding hill, then a more gradual pitch to the top of the course and a long, resting downhill. This was the first race any of us had ever done where the coaches did not have to test any wax on the day of the race! It was all done perfectly when we arrived and very little tweaking was required. All raced well with some finishing in the top 10-15 in their categories. The results and times from today will determine the starting times for the race on Sunday in the Pursuit.

*By Adam Heale*



**Wednesday, March 22<sup>nd</sup>, Gällivare, Sweden**

Our Swedish adventure started with a 22-hour travel day when we left the Canadian Ski Nationals in Thunder Bay, Ontario and travelled to Gällivare, Sweden, which at 67°N is all the way up in the Arctic Circle!

The team was exhausted after getting little sleep on the planes, but security went swimmingly. Thankfully, Air Canada clutched up and everyone's skis and bags arrived with us. We were picked up at the Kiruna airport by our host team, the Gällivare Skidgymnasium, which is the most northern ski academy in Sweden.

Our first night in Sweden ended with a bang as we met decorated Swedish World Cup skier (and Gällivare Skidgymnasium alumni) Marcus Hellner, and he gave us a presentation about his World Cup career!





The next day we woke to a brisk morning and headed up to the ski trails with our new Swedish friends for a ski in some deep pow. We got to experience the 5km World Cup course for

ourselves at the Marcus Hellner Dundret Lappland Ski Centre. After our ski, we were pretty tired and we headed back to our apartments for a rest. The time change was really beginning to catch up with us!







Day two began with another authentic North Sweden experience: Gällivare is the mining capital of Europe as it is the site of the LKAB iron mine. We took a tour of the mine that brought us over a kilometer beneath the town's surface to explore the Forskning Center and the Verkstad (Research Center and Workshop in English). We learned lots about what LKAB is doing to make mining more sustainable!







After this morning of sight seeing, we headed back to the Nordic Center to do race prep intensity in our flashy, speedy, ultra pro, matching race suits - to get dialed in for Swedish Junior National Championships next weekend in Boden.

Of course, our first few days were not complete without indulging in some Swedish candy as Sweden has the highest candy consumption rate of any country on Earth!

That's all from the BC Ski Team B-Tour kiddos over here in Sweden! Looking forward to some fun racing.

*By Breagh Bridge*

-  
**Athletes**

- Adam Heale (Black Jack Cross Country Ski Club)
- Aidan Hay (Hollyburn Cross Country Ski Club)
- Breagh Bridge (Telemark Nordic Club)
- Dustin Hay (Hollyburn Cross Country Ski Club)
- Eamon Wilson (Hollyburn Cross Country Ski Club)

Finn Redman (Telemark Nordic Club)  
Maeve Macleod (Revelstoke Nordic Ski Club)  
Raleigh Tarte (Kimberley Nordic Ski Club)  
Sadie Demars (Kimberley Nordic Ski Club)

**Coaches**

Chris Manhard (Cross Country BC)  
Maria Lundgren (Cross Country BC)