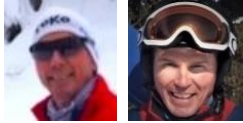


December 2024

## Whitehorse Skiers are Hardy!



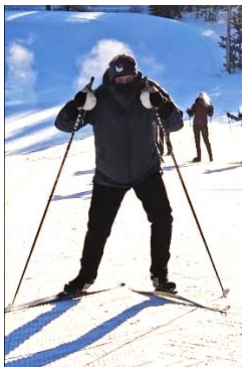
I was in Whitehorse recently for my annual trip north to conduct an XC refresher and a Level II and III preparation course. This year was unusual in that Whitehorse got snow early and many people were skiing in October. But one thing never seems to change—every time I have to do a course in Whitehorse their temperature dips into the deep freeze. This year was no exception.

A week before my trip, Whitehorse's 14-day weather forecast was showing temperatures around -15 to -18C for both days. I thought I was in luck... but no. I landed Thursday night with the temperature at -29C. When I went for a ski on Friday, it was up to a balmy -22C, which made for quite a nice ski as the sun was shining. But then Mother Nature decided we needed more of a challenge, and she dropped the temperature to -31C for the start of our refresher session.



You also need to know that the sun does not rise until about 10am in Whitehorse during the winter, so it was both dark and cold at the start of our session. Brrrrrrrr!

Like any experienced instructor, I knew we were not going to spend a lot of time skiing at these temperatures, so I planned for a number of indoor activities and presentations. I used ski videos to talk about technique changes and conducted some ski analysis. At 11:30am, I asked who wanted to venture outside. Well, they were a hardy bunch—all keen and excited, not to mention well prepared with many layers of clothing. We lasted about 25 minutes before returning to the warmth of the race building. We enjoyed great conversations over lunch, conducted more ski videos for skate manoeuvres and then once again at 2:30pm we ventured outside, this time for almost 45 minutes—skating, if you can believe it.



Skating in this temperature is like skiing on sandpaper. It takes a lot more effort to keep the skis gliding and they tend to grip when you don't expect it.

But the hardy group remained keen and enthusiastic. Look at the smiles on their faces at the end of the refresher course!



Saturday was a Level II and III preparation course. We were lucky as the temperature warmed up to around -23C by the time we were scheduled to be on snow, and we were able to ski both the morning and afternoon sessions. The secret is to keep everyone moving and to check in frequently to see if anyone is cold.



If you've never been to Whitehorse, consider a visit. They have fantastic trails and excellent grooming, and the temperature isn't always this cold. I'm told it's more like -10 to -20C, "except when Rob comes to town." They say I bring the cold weather, as this has been the pattern over the past three years. I might be starting to get a complex...



*Text and photos by Rob Henderson, XC Level IV, Telemark Level II*