



## CHALLENGING THE OLD REGIME

NCI student: Dan Proulx

Like a lot of the athletes he coaches, Dan Proulx got into competitive cycling by a unique route.

Proulx was heavily involved with the sport of triathlon for a number of years. He competed in the Ironman race nine times, headed up the University of Calgary Triathlon Club, and started the Triathletics Sport Club. It was during this time that he started to use bike racing more and more for training. His athletes enjoyed it so much that they all decided to switch to full-time cycling.

"From that original triathlon group there are five kids that have won at the National Cycling Championships," says Proulx.

In an ironic twist, Proulx now uses triathlon training for cycling training.

Proulx's diverse background is definitely an asset in his role as development coach with the Olympic Oval National Cycling Centre.

"Even though cycling is an old sport, elite level coaching is a relatively new thing," says Proulx.

Dan decided to attend the NCI after realizing that he needed to advance his coaching skills to match the demands of his athletes. "The athletes that have developed in our program need more and so I'm trying to advance my knowledge and skill level to meet their level of commitment.

"It's a lot of hard work, but the work you put into class is immediately applicable," says Proulx. "They're almost going through it with me."

Proulx brings a lot of enthusiasm, experience and a good sense of humour to this year's NCI class. He also brings the ability to pull a lot of different skills and tools together that are applicable to a wide variety of sports.

## SEARCHING FOR ANSWERS

NCI Graduate: Eric de Nys

Coaching is all about asking questions for recent NCI graduate Eric de Nys.

"A bad coach is someone who never questions anything," states de Nys.

Since graduating in May, Eric has been working full-time for the Foothills Nordic Ski Club and has had plenty of opportunities to question the way things are done and what it really takes to succeed.

"I'm taking the year to regurgitate everything I learned at the NCI. I question things and critically reflect about what's needed and why certain coaches are doing certain things."

De Nys has some good experience of his own to back up the knowledge that he gained while studying at the NCI. A four-year veteran of the National Development team, de Nys knows well what it takes to succeed in the sport of cross-country skiing.

When faced with the financial reality of his sport a couple of years ago, he had to

decide between continuing on in a sport where he didn't see himself reaching the top internationally and moving on to a coaching position in BC.

De Nys chose the coaching position and has been steadily improving his coaching style and knowledge since.

"The NCI made me more confident. It gave me the confidence to ask "Why?" and to research, and to not take for granted everything that I hear."

De Nys isn't sure where his coaching career may lead him - right now he's trying to decide what he really wants to do with his life. "I never have a weekend free," says de Nys, "and during the week we train in the evenings so it can make it really tough to have a life."

One thing Eric is sure of is his passion for the sport and the rewarding experiences that coaching has given him.

## THE MENTAL ADVANTAGE

NCI Instructor: Dr. Kimberley Amirault

*"You cannot teach a man anything. You can only help him to find it within himself" – Galileo*

"That's the foundation for my whole course," states Dr. Kimberley Amirault, head sport psychologist for the National Sport Centre Calgary and course conductor for Tasks 7 and 8, athlete and coach mental preparation at the NCI.

A former competitive alpine skier, Amirault has always been fascinated by human potential. That fascination led her to attain her Masters and Ph.D. in psychology (specializing in sport psychology) from the University of Ottawa and the University of Calgary respectively.

Amirault states that the most important lesson she wants the coaches to take away from her course is the ability to better know themselves. "The better you know yourself, the better you are prepared to compete at a high level."

"It's really important for both athletes and coaches to be aware of the demands placed on them and how to react in those situations."

Making the course very practical is also important says Amirault. "Coaches want to use stuff that works, so I get them to do the drills themselves so that they become familiar with using the skills."

The importance of mental training in sport can not be under-emphasized.

"Physically the athletes are prepared and performing at the top level, and then the next day they don't perform – if they're not in the right head space, they can't perform at their highest potential."

"It's also really important for the coaches to understand why they coach. They need to be aware of their own passions and desires to deal with the demands of being a coach."

## EMPOWERING THE ATHLETE

NCI Master Coach: Kurt Innes

"Coaching found me," says Kurt Innes, national cycling team head coach, and head coach for the Olympic Oval National Cycling Centre.

"I'm interested in helping people and coaching combines my knowledge of sport and my educational background," says Innes who has a sport administration diploma from Mount Royal College and who graduated from the NCI-Calgary in 1998.

Now a master coach for NCI student Dan Proulx, Innes states that the most important thing about working with a master coach while at the NCI is ensuring that the apprentice coach is, "always, each and every day, challenged in a way that will move them towards their personal best."

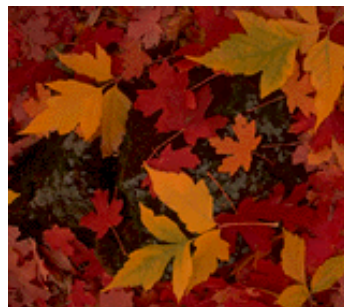
A member of the Canadian national cycling team from 1989 to 1994, Innes has a lot of personal knowledge and experience that he can pass on to Proulx. He can also pass

on his own experiences as a student in the NCI.

"I don't know if I would say it affected the way I coach," says Innes of attending the NCI. "How it affected me as a person was that it gave me the confidence in myself to take on challenges, or experiences that I would later utilize to learn and grow upon. I would also say that it strengthened the backbone of my coaching philosophy, and opened my eyes to the support system we have here in Calgary."

"The ability to maintain, or if need be – create homeostasis for the athletes, for the support staff and for yourself in the heat of the most intense moments makes an effective coach," says Innes.

But At the end of the day, says Innes, coaching is all about empowering the athlete to be able to make the best choices when it counts the most.



## NCI CLASS OF 2000-2001

**DERRICK CAMPBELL**  
*SPEED SKATING*

**WALTER COREY**  
*LUGE*

**NEAL MARSHALL**  
*SPEED SKATING*

**JADINE NIMMO**  
*SYNCHRONIZED SWIMMING*

**BERNIE ONTKEAN**  
*RUGBY*

**DAN PROULX**  
*CYCLING*

**BETH RICHARDSON**  
*BADMINTON*

**CHRIS SHELLEY**  
*SPEED SKATING*

**KEITH SIMMONS**  
*NATURAL LUGE*

**JASON SMITH**  
*FREESTYLE SKIING*

**JEFF SPIERS**  
*TENNIS*

**MARNIE TEMPLE**  
*ATHLETICS*

**AYAKO TSUBAKI-FRANCIS**  
*SPEED SKATING*

**STEVEN VANDERMEULEN**  
*SWIMMING*