



The Pennsylvania Nordic Skier

The Pennsylvania Cross Country Skiers' Association

PACCSA's snowmobile update

Written by Denny McDonough

It's here, finally!! The new Polaris snowmobile arrived on January 14, right before the snow flew. It's a fine and dandy machine. To those of you who donated, individuals and organizations, a big thank you, thank you and thank you! This project would not have been possible without everyone's generosity. Let's hope that we get plenty of snow so that grooming might take place for years to come.



We were not able to use the new machine for grooming (setting tracks) last winter, as it was in the process of getting modifications. However, you might have noticed us using it to pull the roller, which worked amazingly well while the old sled followed behind, setting tracks. We put approximately 35 miles on the Polaris, which was good for breaking it in, and the groom team to get used to the new dynamics. The old snowmobile is still running, but has much wear and tear on it. With that comes much upkeep and expense.

There's more to the grooming endeavor than meets the eye, especially with repairs on the old machine. The grooming team, led by Bob Mazur, makes it all possible. They are: Bob Mazur, Matt Weaver, Mike Burke and Denny McDonough.

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PACCSA's snowmobile update, continued

Written by Denny McDonough

Here's some information from Bob: The Polaris is one of the few 4-stroke snowmobiles that will not overheat in hard packed conditions. This model is used at and recommended by many xc ski centers, and used by ABR Trails in Ironwood, MI, who hold a grooming clinic. The snowmobile was not designed specifically for grooming (no snowmobile is), therefore we needed to modify it. The following work has been completed since spring:

- * Control unit constructed to run the actuators on the groomer (track setter).
- * Ball assembly made so groomer could be used with the gooseneck, which helps with turning.
- * Rear facing light added for grooming when dark.
- * Mount for chainsaw built.
- * Storage for winch cable and tow straps added.
- * For the shed, a kerosene torpedo heater was purchased to help us when we need to make repairs on equipment. It's darn cold in there during winter, when we have to work on the equipment!

Working on our equipment is one thing, but knowing how to use it is another issue, like when to groom or not; when to put the raking teeth down to break up snow or cut through deep powder or ice, etc. You just don't sit on the sled and expect to take off. And you must have control of it!!!

PACCSA is always looking for new people to help with grooming and maintenance chores, so if you might be interested, contact us.

Again, thanks to all who donated. Let's hope for a grand 2025-26 snow season which is long, and plentiful with snow!

Yellowjackets Registration is OPEN!

Written by Jim South



PACCSA is excited to announce that registration for this winter's Yellowjackets youth skiing program is now open! For over 15 years, our experienced group of youth coaches has taught kids between the ages of 4 and 16 the fundamentals of cross-country skiing through fun activities and games. Beginners learn basic skills such as falling and rising, diagonal stride skiing, turning, and hill-climbing techniques. Older kids learn more advanced skills, including the skating technique. Fun competition opportunities are also available with neighboring youth programs in Erie and Cleveland.

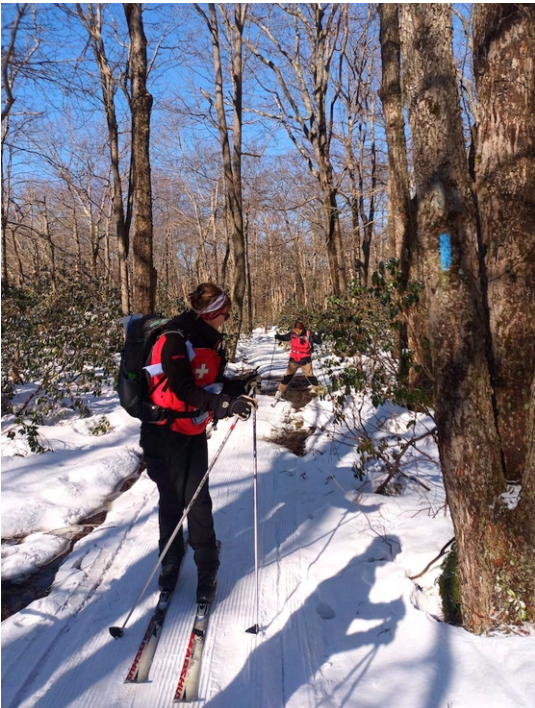
Yellowjackets skill sessions are held on Saturdays in January and February at the Laurel Ridge State Park XC Skiing Center. The program fee is very reasonable (\$40 for ages 5-6, \$50 for ages 7-16) and includes a Yellowjackets team hat, an instructional workbook with stickers, and hot chocolate after each session. Go to paccsa.org/yellowjackets to sign up your kids! **Registration closes on January 2nd**, so don't miss out on this opportunity to introduce your children to the joys of cross-country skiing!

News from the Board of Directors

Written by Naomi Jarvis

We welcome Jim Anglin to the Board. Jim has been a PACCSA member for many years, he is a skate-skier and loves to race, cyclocross bike races form a substantial part of his training for the upcoming ski season. For the past two years he has handled the administrative side of the PA Nordic Challenge.

We thank Beth Beech for her years of service as a Board Member and Yellowjackets coach. Her introduction to PACCSA was around a decade ago, when she agreed to help out with the youngest Yellowjackets group in return for ski lessons. Beth soon became a fine skier and has given much more to PACCSA than the original 'helping out with the kids'. She is continuing our Social Media team and providing administrative support to the Yellowjackets and hopes to be back coaching again soon.



Skiing past Lippo's Lakes, 1 Feb 2025

Our attempts at holding the Kind-a-hard in 2025 were thwarted by the weather. The heavy rain that fell 2 days before the race date washed away a large section of the 6 to 8" thick snowpack and created a wide and fast-flowing stream that ran across the trail, as well as long puddles lying along the trail at many points on Lippo's Loop and Bill Albert's trails. The DCNR office for Forbes State Forest is well aware that the ski trails in that area have become worn, are now below the level of the surrounding woodland, and collect water, but unfortunately budget cuts have delayed the planned work to remediate the trails, as well as many other projects. We plan to try to hold the race yet again, hoping for better luck this time, on February 1st, 2026.

Many thanks to all of our hard-working volunteers! If you would like to help with any of our activities, or even back-office type work, please get in touch.

New Recreation Forester

Written by Naomi Jarvis

Travis Blankenbicker is the new Recreation Forester at DCNR's Laughlintown office, that manages Forbes State Forest. Several of us have already met him at Laurel Mountain Volunteer Group workdays, as he started in this post about a year ago, and it involves coordinating the volunteer work within the Forest. Travis has a degree in Forest Science from Penn State, and after graduation he took up a career in the construction industry; this combined experience provides an ideal background for the Recreation Forester role. Outside work, he's kept busy with his family and his beehives, he is a keen historian and enjoys hiking and metal-detecting.

DCNR Insurance Changes Threaten PACCSA's Laurel Mountain Grooming Project

Written by Jim South

This snow season marks PACCSA's 15th year of the Laurel Mountain Grooming project, which provides FREE groomed trails at Laurel Mountain. However, some of you may have noticed that trails at Laurel Mountain have yet to be groomed and tracked by PACCSA this season. This has occurred due to changes in the amount of insurance DCNR requires PACCSA to maintain. During the annual process to obtain authorization from DCNR to groom Laurel Mountain, PACCSA was informed by DCNR employees in Harrisburg that the insurance it had previously maintained for 14 years was inadequate, and PACCSA must now carry a policy with \$1 million dollars in liability coverage and \$300,000 in property coverage. This level of coverage is similar to what DCNR requires of for-profit businesses running concessions in State Parks and Forests.

PACCSA has been scrambling to obtain the insurance coverage demanded by DCNR and hopes to be able to resume grooming at Laurel Mountain soon. However, PACCSA's insurance costs for the Laurel Mountain Project have increased from less than \$500 to over \$2,600 per year, putting a massive hole in our budget. PACCSA remains committed to providing expertly groomed trails at Laurel Mountain that remain FREE to the public. However, **if you value the groomed trails at Laurel Mountain and wish to see this project continue in the future, please consider donating to PACCSA.**

World Cup Cross Country Skiing is coming to Lake Placid, New York March 20-22, 2026

Written by Scott Rugh

After the 2026 Winter Olympics in Italy, the Cross Country World Cup tour will move to North America. The State of New York has invested millions of dollars in upgrades to the Mount Van Hoevenberg Cross country ski facilities. The upgrades have made the course more accessible to spectators. Snowmaking has been added to a 5 km Loop.

Three World Cup races are planned for the March weekend:

Friday March 20 are the men's and women's 10 KM Classic races.

Saturday March 21 are Free Style Sprints.

Sunday March 22 are Men's and women's 20 KM Mass Start races.

If you like to watch Cross Country ski racing, don't miss the excitement of seeing a race in person. Diane and I were able to go to the Minneapolis World Cup races last winter. It was a fantastic experience to be able to see these racers up close and be part of thousands of American spectators cheering the team along.

If you want to watch Jessie Diggins, Johannes Kjaebo or your favorite skier from 10 feet away, this is the place to be.

I watch the world cup by subscribing to the U.S. Ski Association's streaming service. It's available at <https://www.skiandsnowboard.live/>. Last winter I could watch all the Nordic events live or recorded for \$ 11.99 per month. This service didn't cover the World Championships or the Winter Olympics.

From Sicily to the Alps

My Journey to the Italian Masters Rollerski Cup 2025

Written by Riccardo Monaco

Winning the **Italian Masters Rollerski Cup 2025 – Next Pro** still feels surreal. When I look back at this long, demanding season – 20 races, 18 counting for points, thousands of kilometres on the road and two intercontinental flights – I realise how much passion, fatigue, and teamwork it took to get there. I represented the **Winter Sport Club Subiaco**, a ski club in my Lazio region, and for the second year in a row I've brought home the **Coppa Italia M2** title. After winning in 2024, repeating the success in 2025 is even more satisfying. It means consistency, commitment, and a love for this sport that keeps me pushing forward, season after season.

Leading from the Start

I started strong in June. After the third race, I was at the top of the standings and managed to stay there all the way to the end. After nine races, I had to return to **Pittsburgh (USA)**, where I live most of the year for work. That meant skipping two races in the middle of the season. Even so, the early points I'd earned kept me in the lead.

When I went back at the end of September for the **uphill race in Sovere (Bergamo)**, I felt immediately that, despite the jet-lag, the form was still there. I held the lead through the final stage in **Caneva (Pordenone)**, where the Cup came to an end on October 26th. I finished the season with **1280 points, 83 ahead of the second and 101 ahead of the third** – a small margin on paper, but one that took months of effort to build.

The Title in Sicily

One of the most emotional moments came in **Linguaglossa (Catania)**, on the slopes of Mount Etna, where I won the **Italian Uphill Championship** for the M2 category. It was a tough race: 10 kilometres and 670 metres of elevation gain up to **Piano Provenzana**, where excursions to the Etna Summit Craters begin. The kind of race that tests everything – endurance, technique, and focus. When I crossed the finish line and realised I had won, I felt proud not only of the result but of the journey that led me there.

That same month, I also raced in **San Marino**, in my **first international FIS race**, valid for the **SES Cup** (Small and Evolving Nations). The circuit includes countries like Latvia, Serbia, Ireland, Romania, Greece, and others that are developing in Nordic skiing. It was a new experience – racing with many younger athletes from such diverse nations, all sharing the same passion for rollerski.



Awards ceremony at Piano Provenzana (next to the lava field), where I won the Italian Uphill Championship (M2). One of the key moments of my 2025 Coppa Italia Next Pro season.



Team Winter Sport Subiaco

On the Road with the Team

Behind every result there's always a story of travel, people, and friendship. Throughout the season, I travelled with **two minivans** full of equipment and 15 kids from Subiaco, two coaches, the president of the ski club and several family members. Together we went everywhere — from Sicily to the Aosta Valley, from the Apennines to the Alps. Most times it took us **six or seven hours** just to get to a race venue.

It wasn't always easy — long drives, early Saturday mornings, sometimes rain waiting for us at the start line, and late arrivals on Sunday nights. But we turned each trip into an adventure. Watching the younger athletes gain experience and enthusiasm made every kilometer worth it.

And their results mattered too: Giacomo and Sara also won the Under 12 title and Sara lost the Under 16 title despite having the same total points as the winner (number of first places used as the tiebreaker). Thanks to everyone's effort, our club, **Winter Sport Subiaco**, won the **Team Cup for the second consecutive year**. That collective victory means as much to me as my own title.

A Long and Varied Calendar

The **Coppa Italia Next Pro 2025**, sponsored by *NextPro*, was one of the most complete and challenging editions ever. The season took us through **ten venues** and **twelve race weekends**, mixing sprints, pursuits, mass starts, and climbs.

The **format** was almost always the same: a **sprint on Saturday afternoon** and a **distance race on Sunday morning**. Sprints are always in **skating technique**, ranging from **200 m** (the really explosive ones) to **1.6 km** (the longer versions), often held in **city centers** or on **rollerski tracks**. Distance races can be **10–15 km** on **flat urban roads** (usually skating), or **uphill climbs on mountain roads** in **classic technique**, typically **8–10 km** with **600–800 m** of elevation gain.

I raced in **20 events in total**: 7 sprints, 4 distance races (including 2 on rollerski tracks) and 9 uphill races. Each one taught me something — about pacing, recovery, and focus.

The **point system** is the same as in the FIS World Cup: **100 points for the winner**, down to **1 point for 50th place**. That means consistency is everything — one bad day, a hard fall or a missed race can change the standings completely. Luckily, I had a top-five finish in every race.



Sharing the Road with the Best

One of the things that make the Italian Rollerski Cup special is the presence of elite rollerskiers from the national team, former and current world rollerski champions and even **World Cup cross country skiers**. In **Sovere**, I raced alongside **Francesco De Fabiani**, who competed in the classic uphill. In **Pedavena**, **Federico Pellegrino**, the Olympic champion, joined us for the skating uphill race and **Maria Gismondi**—raised in the Winter Sport Club Subiaco—claimed victory in the women’s race. Other national team athletes also took part as part of their training for the **Milano–Cortina 2026 Winter Olympics**. Racing next to them is always inspiring — it raises everyone’s level and reminds us what’s possible with dedication.

Categories, Championships, and Growth

The Italian Cup doesn’t just have the general men’s and women’s standings — it also includes categories for young athletes (from **Under 10 to Under 20**) and **four Masters divisions (M2 to M5)**. That’s what makes Rollerski unique: kids, seniors, and even international champions can all race in the same weekend, on the same courses, sharing the same passion.

Some of the races also assign **national titles**: the **Italian Sprint Championship**, the **Flat Terrain Championship**, and the **Uphill Championship**, which I won in Sicily for my age group.



*Map of race locations,
with the blue dot indicating Home*

The Calendar – A Journey Across Italy

- **June 14–15 | Sgonico (Trieste)** – Sprint SK & Mass Start SK
- **June 21–22 | Linguaglossa (Catania)** – Sprint SK & Uphill SK (*Italian Uphill Championship*)
- **June 28–29 | Maranello (Modena) / San Marino** – Mass Start SK & CL Uphill TL (*FIS SES Cup – my international debut*)
- **July 5–6 | Cicagna & S. Stefano D’Aveto (Genova)** – Sprint SK & Uphill CL (Cancelled)
- **July 26–27 | Valle Pesio (Cuneo)** – Long Sprint SK & Individual SK [*Same rollerskis for all provided by the organization*]
- **August 2–3 | Verrayes (Aosta)** – Sprint & Prologue + Pursuit SK
- **September 20 | Sovere (Bergamo)** – Uphill CL – with **Francesco De Fabiani** among the starters
- **September 27–28 | Bobbio (Piacenza)** – Sprint SK (*Italian Sprint Championship*) & Individual Uphill CL
- **October 5 | Pedavena (Belluno)** – *Trofeo Sportful* – Uphill SK – with **Federico Pellegrino, Davide Graz, Martino Carollo** and **Maria Gismondi** racing before the Olympic season
- **October 11–12 | Pescocostanzo (L’Aquila)** – *Criterium Interappeninico* (2 days, uphill SK & uphill pursuit CL)
- **October 18–19 | Trento / Monte Bondone** – Sprint SK & Uphill SK
- **October 25–26 | Valdobbadiene / Caneva (Treviso / Pordenone)** – Long Sprint SK [*Same rollerskis for all provided by the organization*] & Uphill CL (*Final Round*)

From the warm roads of Sicily to the cold mornings in the Alps, each race left its mark.

What This Victory Means

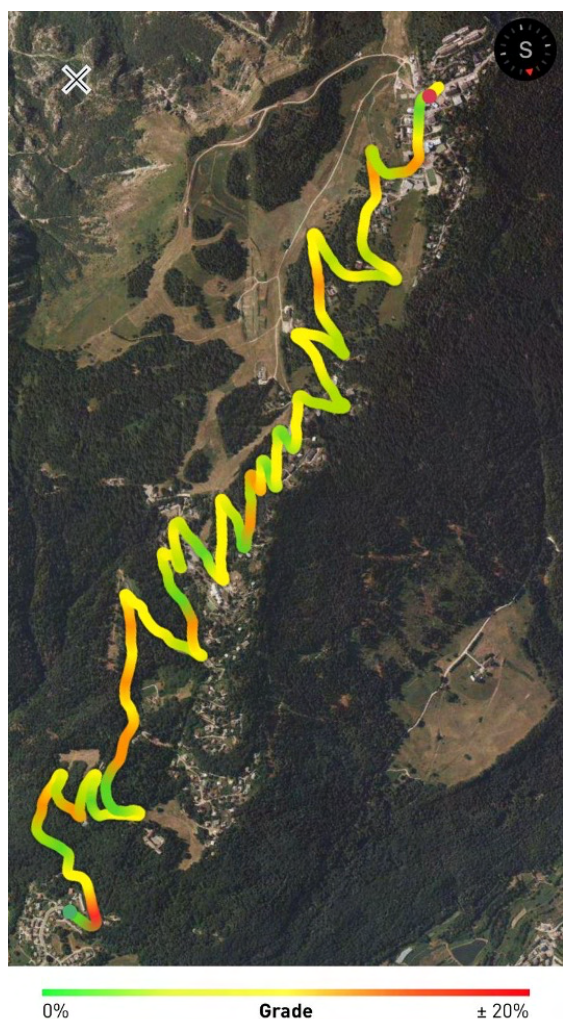
Winning the **Coppa Italia Rollerski 2025** with **1280 points** was more than a result — it was proof of balance, endurance, consistency and resilience.

Doing it again, after 2024, means I've found stability in my performance and joy in the process.

The solid training block in May — covering over 300 km on the Jail Trail in Pittsburgh and including double uphill sessions at Linn Run Rd (near Ligonier) in September — proved instrumental in developing the fitness and preparation needed for this competition.

It's also a victory for the people who travelled, cheered, and worked beside me — my teammates, my coaches, my family, my supervisor at work, and the entire **Winter Sport Club Subiaco**. We grew together, mile after mile, hill after hill.

As I look toward next season, my goal is simple: to keep improving, to help the younger athletes grow, and to show that passion and consistency can take you far — sometimes even all the way to the top of Italy.



Bondone Mountain, near Trento. Feeling exhausted after 8.5km climb with almost 700m elevation gain.

Are Skin Skis for me?

Written by Scott Rugh

If you're looking for a waxless classic ski, consider a skin ski. Skin skis have overtaken the waxless ski market in popularity. Most of the top ski brands are offering skin skis.

When you go into a ski shop looking for a waxless ski, you may be shown a skin ski. Diane and I found this out three years ago when Diane needed to replace her Madshus Ultrasonic fish scale skis. The scales were worn off, leaving her skis with no grip to climb hills. We contacted Caldwell Sports, who specializes in performance skis fitted to the skiers size, and skiing style. We found out that skin skis are the only waxless ski that Madshus makes. Fischer, Rossignol, Atomic, Salomon and Peltonen also sell skin skis. We each ended up buying Madshus skin skis. We've found that skin skis work well in all kinds of snow conditions. Skin skis can be found for both light touring, in track and wider touring ski models. Like any classic ski, the right balance of ski camber for your weight is needed for good kick and glide.

Skin skis have a mohair insert in the ski's kick zone. The mohair will glide, without dragging when the skis are matched to your weight. When striding, the skins will grip when kicking. The plastic base is made with a recessed section for the "skin". Madshus puts one ski wide insert in the kick zone, while Fischer uses two inserts on either side of the center groove. We find that the skis grip and glide well in all snow conditions.



Madshus skin skis

Care of skin skis is relatively simple. Glide zones should be cleaned and waxed like any waxless ski. The newer liquid glide waxes are easy to use. After skiing, the skins should be treated with a cleaner made specifically for skins to remove dirt. The skins are glued on to the bottom of the skis. For that reason, do not use strong wax remover to clean the skins. Before skiing, special skin treatment should be sprayed or wiped on. Treating the skins before use will repel water and prevent icing. The skins can be replaced if damaged or worn out.



**Pennsylvania Cross Country Skiers
Association**

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You can contact us via
www.paccca.org/contact-us

PACCSA Membership Form

You can also renew your membership online at www.paccca.org/join-us

Single (\$6/yr) / Family (\$9/yr) / Donation Only

Number of Adults: _____ Number of Children: _____

Volunteer interests: _____

Would you like to join PACCSA's e-mail chat group? Yes / No

Make checks payable to PACCSA, and mail to Rick Garstka, 309 W. Marion Street, Munhall, PA 15120