



by Tyler Fish

Last night at 7pm I went out into the drizzle to run and walk with ski poles for two hours in the dark fall of northern Minnesota. Physical training isn't always easy to fit into a person's full life, so sometimes you find yourself in less than ideal conditions. As I plodded and bounced and breathed up some of the hills at the nordic ski area, retired ski jump slopes to my right and the forest to my left, I thought of one of my skiers on the ski team I coach. What message I would tell him about training?

Some good skiers have talent and don't have to work at it very hard at it.

The rest of the good skiers don't have a lot of natural ability, but really dedicate time and effort to be good.

Great skiers have talent and work hard. They work hard not only in practice, not only when it feels good to train and not only when it's convenient. They train when they don't want to, when it hurts and when it doesn't really fit into the schedule.

People say that you shouldn't fear your own greatness. I think it's perfectly natural fear your own potential, because to accept your own potential for greatness is to simultaneously take on a lot of blood, sweat and tears. Ultimately, that's how you really achieve.

Many athletes, coaches and armchair fans have strategies for training. Admittedly, it's not always easy and sometimes downright depressing to have to go and trudge along for two hours or more. As I ran last night I came up with a few tips that work for me.

1. Have someone force you to get out there. Whether it's a coach, a friend who meets you for regular training sessions, or your wife, you are accountable to someone. They can give you the extra nudge to put your heart into action.
2. Force yourself to complete a route or goal. You usually don't quit within the first half an hour, so if you begin on a loop, destined to end where you began, at some point you find yourself out there with slightly more to go forward than backwards, but forwards is more interesting. That can be the difference between an hour and a half or a two hour workout. That extra half an hour, when added consistently, really boost the training times.
3. Make it interesting. Bjorn Dahlie, legendary Norwegian cross country skier, Olympic and World Cup champion, believed that training must be fun. You have to do what is interesting; have enough options to add variety to the routine. For example, I can run, bike, rollerski, pull a tire...just to name a few, somewhat interchangeably.
4. Be consistent. Training leads to more training. It's easier to motivate when you are successful, because you see the differences that it makes, but also because you become addicted. Your body wants to be physically active. For me, I can go two days without training,

but after that two things happen: Either I begin to be overwhelmed by guilt or by either physical and mental restlessness or lethargy. The first drives me crazy and the second one disheartens me.

5. Prioritize training in your schedule. Everyone has a time that works best for them. Know what that time is and schedule your life around it so that you are more likely to train. Personally, if I don't train in the morning it gets exponentially harder to see it happening as the day wears on.

Much like a connect-the-dots page in a children's book, it's a lot easier to see the big picture if you have a lot of dots to work with (many training days) and connect them regularly. Unlike a connect-the-dots, when training you can't just sit down one day and draw a picture the day before the race and win. You have no choice but to connect one dot at a time. The trick is in making it as easy as possible to do so, the say can be said for connecting the dots to the North Pole, but more on that later.