

Birkie Q&A With Doug Wiens – 23 Birkies and Counting



Doug Wiens has been skiing the Canadian Birkebeiner since the 1980's. He plans to ski again in 2016, making it his 24th Birkie – what an accomplishment! Here, he shares his passion for skiing and how he prepares for the race.

When did you ski your first Canadian Birkebeiner?

We moved to Edmonton from Halifax in 1987 and a colleague of mine – Doug Kelker, for many years the Chief of Course for the Birkie -- introduced me to my first Canadian Birkebeiner. I had cross-country skied as a youngster and as a teenager, mainly shuffling along. However, it wasn't until after my first Birkebeiner that the "ski-bug" bit me and motivated me to do it again each year.

How do you stay in shape off-season?

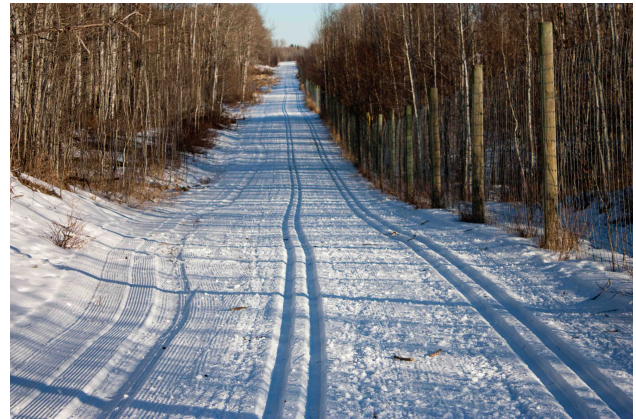
I participate in long distance road cycling during the off winter season. This helps keep my cardiovascular level up and keeps my legs in shape when not skiing.

How do you train for the Birkie?

When I started doing the Birkie I foolishly 'trained' by going out the previous weekend and skiing 55 k., to reassure myself that I could do it. I've gotten more sensible since. With friends I typically ski 30 – 40 k. on Sunday mornings. My wife Marilyn and I do a shorter ski from Waskehegan on Saturdays; as well we usually go to Goldbar one evening a week.

What do you normally carry with you on the Birkie Trail?

I participate in the 55 km distance without the pack. I carry with me some ski wax to get through those rougher areas.



Do you have any advice on what to watch out for while doing the trails?

My first Birkie was a tough slog. In fact all of them are. Don's Way, the long and straight stretch near the end of the trail, is the toughest each time. This is mostly psychological – by the time I hit it I'm starting to feel pretty miserable anyway, and then the long line of other laggards stretched out in front of me can be quite discouraging. The volunteers are also great at keeping one's spirits up throughout the course.

"Living in Edmonton means that winter is part of your lifestyle."

What is your motivation to continue with the Birkie tradition?

Living in Edmonton means that winter is part of your lifestyle. The Birkie tradition is a great way to celebrate the winter and promote healthy living with other Canadians.

Doug currently contributes trail reports for nordic ski areas around Northern Alberta on the Edmonton Nordic Website: <http://bit.ly/1RYFAEj>

If you are interested in joining the community of skiers of Cooking Lake – Blackfoot, you can follow their facebook page: <http://on.fb.me/1Qaifd7>