

THE IMPACT OF A COACH DRIVEN CENTRE

NEW BRUNSWICK SPORT PLAN – A HIGH
PERFORMANCE POINT OF VIEW

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THE EXAMPLE OF THE NATIONAL CYCLING CENTRE – ATLANTIC CANADA

The National Cycling Centre – Atlantic Canada was developed and saw the daylight in the spring of 2001. The impact of the Centre was immediate and the goal was somewhat surprising in the Atlantic cycling community: the develop Olympians.

The approach was also something new and different. With the many organizations being led to what members and administrators want, the Centre would propose a new approach to sport:

Athletes focused, Coach driven, administratively supported.

This philosophy enabled the Centre to focus totally on what the athletes needed; these service being offered by a professional coach. The administration of the Centre, the Management Committee, offers the coach its full support to accomplish very specific goals and objectives.

Before this, Atlantic Canadians had very limited successes on the national and international scene. With the exception of 3 riders, the past 10 years were marked by one rider, Peter Wedge. By himself, this riders collected 7 national championship podiums (he would collect three more titles after 2001), and had been on the national team program since 1992.

His status enabled the coaching staff to exemplify the true template of a champion. The young riders now knew what a real champion should be like, the angular item of a successful program.

THE INITIAL NUMBERS

Although we know it takes 10 years to develop an athlete, it might take even more to develop a cycling culture; especially when starting from what we had at the beginning. The young athletes believe in the system, and the coaching staff was able to offer them what they needed. Some results came very quickly.

Our elite training program caters to the best riders in our region and offers them professional coaching services. Gold A tier are nationally carded athletes, Gold B being non carded athletes on the national team program (or top 5 in the country), Silver being top Atlantic riders, and the bronze level being training group riders.

2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Gold B: 3 Silver: 1 Bronze: 3	Gold B: 6 Silver: 4 Bronze: 10	Gold A: 2 Gold B: 3 Silver: 7 Bronze: 13	Gold A: 2 Gold B: 8 Silver: 7 Bronze: 17	Gold A: 1 Gold B: 10 Silver: 6 Bronze: 13	Gold A: 1 Gold B: 13 Silver: 5 Bronze: 6	Gold A: 1 Gold B: 10 Silver: 4 Bronze: 5

With the success of a coach driven program comes the results. The following table shows the great progression in term of numbers at national championships. This table earned the Atlantic Cycling Centre the respect of the nation.

2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Road: 1 MTB: 0 Track: 0 Cross: 1	Road: 1 MTB: 1 Track: 3 Cross: 4	Road: 1 MTB: 1 Track: 1 Cross: 1	Road: 2 MTB: 3 Track: 0 Cross: 4	Road: 2 MTB: 0 Track: 2 Cross: 3	Road: 3 MTB: 0 Track: 5 Cross: 1	Road: 2 MTB: 0 Track: 0 Cross: 0

And with National Championships successes, it quickly forces the hands of the National Team selection committee. The following table illustrates the number of selection of Atlantic riders by the National Team (the numbers in brackets shows Major Games presence).

2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006 *	2007 *
Worlds: 1 NTP: 1 Coach: 1	Worlds: 2 NTP: 2 Coach: 2	Worlds: 5 NTP: 7 Coach: 2 (1)	Worlds: 6 NTP: 7 Coach: 2 (1)	Worlds: 5 NTP: 8 Coach: 2	Worlds: 1 NTP: 3 Coaches: 2	Worlds: 1 NTP: 2 Coaches: 2 (1)

* In 2006 & 2007, the number of National Team projects considerably dropped, affecting the number of selections across the country.

Lately, the dream was pushed even further. With National Team projects taking a very different direction in 2006, riders needed to do a living out of cycling. The following table represents the number of trade team (professional) contracts signed by our riders.

2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
1	1	2	4	5	5	6

THE CHANGE OF THE GARDS

Notable riders whose departure from the Centre that affected above mentioned numbers:

- 2005: Julie Bélanger – injury and retirement
- 2005: Karen DeWolfe – parental leave
- 2005: Lisa Sweeney – let go tandem carding to ride solo
- 2006: Christian Meier – with changes to National Team program, moved to National Team Training Centre – Victoria (back in our statistics in 2007)
- 2006: Peter Wedge – retirement
- 2006 (mid-season): Murray Solem – tandem pilot change and lost carding

- 2006 (mid-season): Karen DeWolfe – retirement
- 2007: Lisa Sweeney – returned to med school

THE FORGOTTEN NUMBERS

Such objective to slowly head towards the Olympic Games has its impact on the athletes. They become more than simple cyclists, but role models in their respective communities. The positive impact on the life of those young adults is often very hard to measure, although with the amount of successful post secondary education degree in our group should speak for itself.

Although, some numbers within the cycling community are a little easier to show. Cycling in Atlantic Canada is slowly growing with the impact of the Centre and its high profile athletes and professional coaches.

EVENTS

Since the opening of the Centre, the increase of high level athletes enabled Atlantic Canada to secure bids to host major events.

- 2001: National Road Championships
- 2004: National Cyclo-cross Championships
- 2006: National Track Championships
- 2007: International Cycling Union Women's Tour du PEI (secured until at least 2009)
- 2007: National Track Championships
- 2009: Canada Summer Games

In addition to these major championships, we are also seeing better oriented calendars in Atlantic Canada. It results in event such as the Maritime Super Week, and, for 2008, the Atlantic Cycling Centre's series. These events purely suited to the athlete's needs.

Prior to 2001, major events in our region were limited to hosting three National Championships (road in 1985, cyclo-cross in 1989, and mountain bike in 1998) and a few Canada Cups (road in 1992, and mountain bike at a few occasions in the late 90's).

COACHING AND STAFF

With the hiring of a professional coach in 2001, it marked a major change for Atlantic Canada. One coach can't do it on its own and be successful. Here are some coaching development items that happened as a result of the program.

- National Cycling Centre's Head Coach is a course conductor for NCCP level I and II, since 2001, regular clinics have happened in all provinces.

- A level III clinic was also offered by the CCA in our region in 2004, a first in our knowledge. A recent survey confirms we now have enough candidates to repeat the exercise at the 2008 Atlantic Coaches Seminar.
- Atlantic Canada now counts 2 NCI students, and more coaches are showing interest in such program.
- The National Introduction to Cycling Program – Sprockids was also developed with an Atlantic flavor. The Centre's Head Coach was on the writing committee of the program and the program was also piloted in Dieppe. This program, since it saw the day in 2003, has been a great way into coaching for many successful developmental programs in our region.
- In 2003, we also introduced the Atlantic Coaching Experience Program. This program gives the opportunity to provincial level coaches to participate in Selection (Team AtlanticCyclingCentre.com) projects. This enabled many coaches to be exposed to events such as the Tour de l'Abitibi, the Tour de la Guadeloupe, the National Championships, Tour du PEI, etc.
- Staff was also not forgotten. They are a very important piece of a successful program. So far, are biggest staff development are mechanics and soigneurs. We managed to expose these individuals to national and international level competitions.
- This summer, with a partnership with Nova Scotia's Support 4 Sport and the Canadian Sport Centre – Atlantic, we received the funding to hire a part time Assistant Coach. Our long term plan indicates we want to have this position full time by 2010.
- This newly appointed Assistant Coach will now act as a direct mentor for all four Provincial Coaches leading to Canada Summer Games. These actions will take place via the newly created Provincial Tier, and entry level tier to our Elite training programs.

OFFICIALS AND DECISION MAKERS

With the increasing number of events and activities in our region, it is totally normal to see some of our people getting involved at a national level.

For the first time in years, we can count on local expertise in terms of officials. One of our commissaire is now very active on the national and international scene. This number should keep on growing with regular events such as the UCI Tour of PEI. This level of expertise enables us to offer better services, such as photo finish, to our participants.

Atlantic Canada also has an important place on the various Canadian Cycling Association (CCA) committees. At the moment, we have a position on the Board of Directors, the High Performance Committee. We also had a position on the events committee for a term.

We also had a very important say in the development of the CCA LTAD. In fact, many of our programs and documentation are now intricate part of the plan.

The quality of our events also enabled one of our organizers to be an important part of the 2003 World Road Championships in Hamilton. He was in charge of the start-finish area. This also brings us an incredible level of expertise in our region.

THE INITIAL DEVELOPMENTAL STAGES

The fact our Centre is high level oriented might induce many to the mistake we only have an impact on a handful of riders. These athletes are definitely the focus of our Centre, but each of them has a certain radius of positive impact on our sport.

Last winter, the Atlantic Cycling Centre revamped its programs according to the LTAD. The programs are now categorized in three major delivery levels:

- 1) Local delivery for the initial stages. This means the Centre directly offers Active start to L2T program in Dieppe, but we also offer leadership and mentorship to help other regions and clubs to be able to deliver suitable programs at this developmental level.
- 2) At the T2T stage, we will now partner with the PSO's in the Provincial Tier program.
- 3) For the later stages, the actual Centre's Elite training programs mainly cater to these athletes. The Centre being a National one, it creates a direct link to the National Team programs as well as with Trade Teams.

The Centre's leadership in the development of BMX, a newly appointed Olympic discipline, will have an incredible impact on numbers in our four provinces. The Centre also keeps on adding the numbers on the Caisse populaire Dieppe with the physical education classes. Every spring, between 400 and 650 kids try out a new sport on the track.

The Active for life stage is also not forgotten by the Centre. Many events are invested at that stage to generate revenue to be re-invested in our programs.

Although still operating on a limited budget, the Atlantic Cycling Centre's arrival more than tripled the dollar amount invested in cycling in our region. Facilities have been built as well. For the first time ever, cycling can have something concrete to fall back on.

CONCLUSION

So the reality and fear of investing money at the high level and not having any positive effect on the initial developmental stages is a false one if you look at the National Cycling Centre – Atlantic Canada's example. It is also false when you consider the Australian approach many years ago. By investing more at the higher levels, you create not only more, but better role models. You define what a top athlete should look like. Most importantly, you give the kids hope and something to aim for.

The success of such program is due to its precision. A goal oriented program is always a successful one; and it is a known fact that success flourishes. New Brunswick must go back and think what the athletes need, who can deliver it, and last, how can we do it. This is how we'll make New Brunswickers proud of who they are.