



INTRODUCTION TO DRY LAND BIATHLON

LEARNING INTENTIONS FOR THIS SESSION

- To develop an understanding of Biathlon as a unique sporting option for schools
- To illustrate the differences between the 2 distinct skill sets in Roller Skiing
- To understand the physical and mental challenges involved in accurately completing a Laser shooting bout.
- To appreciate the versatility of Biathlon as a curriculum offering across a variety of syllabus learning areas.



Biathlon – a dual discipline Olympic sport that blends the extremes of physical exertion on Cross country skis with the control and precision of shooting. Now, unless there is an extreme weather event in Stanthorpe, the chance of experiencing snow in Queensland is virtually nil! However, all is not lost because you can substitute skis for Roller skis which imitate the action of a cross country ski on a bitumen or similarly hard surface. NO, you don't see 2 metre skis with wheels sliding along bike paths. Roller skis are between 60-75cms long but do have all the qualities of a regular ski with normal bindings, cross country ski boots and supported by the use of ski poles.

Likewise, you can't shoot with real bullets in school grounds for obvious reasons, so take away the regular Biathlon air rifle and replace it with a perfectly safe laser rifle designed to "shoot" a single pulse shot at the 5 circular targets some 10-20 metres away and your Dry Land Biathlon experience comes to life.

LINKS TO CURRENT CURRICULUM AND SYLLABUS OFFERINGS

This is an activity that can be adapted for any group in the school and has realistic links to both the senior and junior Physical education programs as well as specialist school- based programs such as leadership training, team development and school camps.

Whether it be Recreation studies or junior HPE, this is an activity that has a number of applicable contexts. Examples include:

- **Challenge and adventure activity** – Biathlon is a challenge that almost all of your students have not experienced before.
- **Leadership and Interpersonal skill development** – individually or in teams. Working in teams during relays requires considerable co-operation and collaboration.
- **Fitness and training program design** – it is one of the most physically demanding activities on the planet!
- **Team dynamics** – particularly problem solving skilled movement sequences
- **Self- development through mindfulness** – to be calm during the shooting phase of biathlon is the single most important quality and one that determines success or failure at any level of the sport. See separate point, Century 21 Skills on page 2.
- **Biomechanics** – looking at the force generation aspects of the 2 Roller ski styles provides considerable content for classes studying Biomechanics.

- **Anatomy and Physiology** – what makes a biathlete tick?
- **Motor learning** – as a new experience, students have to experience all the phases of learning. This is an excellent activity for Skill Acquisition units.
- **Sport psychology** – particularly when it comes to going from physical exertion on the roller ski course to the calmness of the shooting range.
- **Cultural and historic significance of Physical activity** – Biathlon is huge in the northern parts of the Northern hemisphere but is relatively unknown in Australia.
- **Movement challenge** – combining movement on the ski with co-ordinated actions of the arms is a real challenge.
- **Performing specialised movement sequences with control and accuracy** – on the shooting mat, the students need to understand that being organised prior to shooting involves a series of movement patterns and sequences.

ALIGNMENT WITH EDUCATION POLICIES AND PRIORITIES

I could articulate in any number of ways to make it fit an “Education speak” framework but I have simply focused on what all HPE teachers are interested in – seeing students develop physically and psychologically during their involvement in any physical activity. DRY LAND BIATHLON ticks so many boxes because it encompasses all of the elements of a fitness regime as well as the psychological challenge of the control and accuracy of the shooting range. Key physical components developed by this activity include:

- Cardio vascular endurance
- Increased VO2 max as a consequence of CV endurance benefits.
- Increased Anaerobic capacity
- Balance, Core Strength and Co-ordination
- Increased tidal volume of the lungs.
- Increased upper body strength and endurance
- Increased tolerance to lactic acid.
- Fine motor control
- Neurological functioning

CENTURY 21 SKILLS : MINDFULNESS

The ability to focus on the here and now and to distance yourself from the past or the future is a skill that enhances calm, considered thought and de-stresses individuals who are overwhelmed by life events. The world is now incredibly complex and evolving at a pace faster than most of us can comprehend. For young developing minds, this is, and will continue to be, an incredibly difficult challenge to overcome. The Laser rifle stage of this program focuses participants on body control and clarity of thought to be able to succeed in hitting the targets. Examples of how laser rifles form a vital part of this program include:

- Enhanced Breathing control – overcoming the paradox of intense physical effort followed closely by the need to have complete stillness to hit the 5 targets with the Laser rifle from a distance of between 10 - 25 metres.
- Tactical understanding – learning to balance the physical effort with the recovery needed to shoot accurately.
- Motor skill development – in particular the efficient drills required to move from the action of roller skiing to both prone and standing shooting.
- Overcoming fear, accepting challenge, being persistent and developing the skill of a narrow visual focus are all part of one of the most demanding sports on the planet!