

Warming Up For Sprint Races

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What should I be doing for a sprint warm up? This is the most common question I am asked by other skiers. This can also be the most difficult question to answer because everyone's body is different and what works for me may not work for everyone, but I will try to present some ideas that I think will help people prepare best for a sprint race.

The most important aspect of warming up is being familiar with your body and knowing that when you step up to the start line you are physically and mentally ready to go. This comes from years of refining your pre race routine so that it is structured, effective, and most of all like second nature to you. Here is an example of a warm up protocol that I would use before a sprint race.

My warm up

Total time around 45 to 50 min.

15 min easy level one -

Make sure its really level 1. Because of nerves ect., your heart rate may be elevated at first, but make sure the skiing is kept easy. This can be an even harder task if there are a lot of skiers and spectators around but try to swallow your pride and ski your own pace. You'll show everyone once the race starts. For me this is a heart rate of below 137.

2 level 2 intervals (1:30 to 2:00 min long) -

The main purpose of this routine is to warm up the body very gradually so your system is not shocked in any way. It will be pretty easy to get your heart rate into level 2 just by skiing relaxed, snappy, and smooth and thinking about skiing with good technique. These intervals are just designed to get your blood moving and prepare you for the next step so take a few minutes recovery in-between them.

2 level 3 intervals (first one around 1:30 and the second around 2:00 min)

It is even more important to keep these ones under the appropriate heart rate, because you still want to be working aerobically. This is the main reason why I like to use a heart rate monitor during my warm up. Take a full recovery in-between these intervals to make sure your not accumulating any lactic acid. This is also a great time to get to know the course a little better if it hasn't been closed yet. During these intervals think about the different kinds of technique you want to use on the up hills and down hills, and try to identify the important transitions and corners. Split the course up so that you are able to ski every section at a level 3 pace during these two intervals.

2 level 4 intervals (first one 2:00 and the second one around 2:30 or 3:00 min)

This is level 4, NOT A SPRINT PACE!! Sorry but we're not up to full speed yet. These intervals should be slightly faster than your 5 or 10k race pace just, touching your anaerobic system. If you are still fortunate enough to be on the course this is the time to test yourself a little bit. Try taking the corners at full speed and see how far you can push your double pole or V2 into the hills without bogging. Take a full recovery in-between these intervals as well to make sure that your not building up so much lactic acid that you can't clear it out. I like to time it so that I do my second level 4 interval about 20 to 15 minutes before my prelim start time.

Accelerations

After I've recovered from the level 4 intervals I spend the next 5 to 10 minutes doing some accelerations at sprint pace. These sprints can vary in length but should be kept under 30 seconds long. This is the first and only time before the prelim that I will go as fast or faster than my "sprint" pace.

Get to the start

I think that in order to sprint your fastest you need to be warm and fired up at the start, but at the same time calm and relaxed. This is why it's a good idea to get to the start area in plenty of time before you go out. After I'm done with my warm up I like to have enough time to change my top, gloves, hat, and goggles (this is very

important when its cold out and you've just finished a hard warm up) and still get to the start area 10 minutes before I am out the gate. Getting to the start with plenty of time becomes even more important in big races like world cups where there are a lot more hassles that you need to go though like credentials, transponders, ect.

Just because you stop your warm up 15 minutes before your start doesn't mean that you should stop moving around however. Once in the start area it's good to jog around and do some quick running sprints with poles. This is also a good time to do some "ballistic stretching" like leg swings to get your muscles ready for a max effort.

Make it your own

Like I said earlier, everyone's body is different. Some of you may need to add some more intervals or pick-ups to your routine while some may need to take some away. Typically skiers that have "slower twitch" muscles may need to do one all-out effort about 20 minutes before their start. The most important thing to remember is that things change. You might have to run or spin to warm up depending on weather, waxing, or course closures, but being able to identify what it feels like to be "ready to go" can be the most import tool you have.