

# Nevison climbing high to prepare for NorAm season

by JASON PETERS  
Citizen staff

Ross Nevison is heading for the mountains of France.

He has a good reason.

"I don't want to sit in an office my whole life," said Nevison, an 18-year-old from Prince George. "I want to be a professional ski racer."

Nevison is scheduled to leave town today. By Friday night, he'll be jetting out of Vancouver, bound for Heathrow Airport in London. From there, he'll fly to Geneva, Switzerland. The last leg of his journey will be a ride from Geneva to Tignes, France.

In Tignes, Nevison will spend 40 days at 10,000 feet of altitude so he can absorb the benefits of an international training camp for alpine skiers.

For Nevison, attending the camp is all about reaching the next level of speed.

"When I was younger, I was winning all my races," he said. "I was one of the top guys in B.C. and I was one of the top in Canada for my age. In the last couple years, all my buddies, they all grew bigger than me and had more strength because they were bigger. They may not have had the agility that I had, but strength is such a big thing when you get up to the FIS (international) level, especially when it's your fourth year at FIS. The guys get bigger and want to train harder in the summer and get stronger. They want to be ski racers too, basically. You have to do a lot to make yourself faster.

"Over the last couple years, I maybe didn't work hard enough in dryland (training). I maybe didn't realize that I needed to really step my game up."

So, now's the time.

Last ski season was Nevison's third away from home. He was training with the Red Mountain Racers in Rossland under the guidance of coach Mike Osatiuk. Another coach and Nevison acquaintance, Mike Lewis, has been instructing at the Tignes camp for the past eight years.

In Nevison's view, the real hook of the Tignes ski school is the high-altitude factor.

"While I'm there, I will be doing a dryland program that has been offered to me from a sport scientist (Delia Roberts of Castlegar's Selkirk College) who has a doctorate degree in high-altitude training," Nevison said. "It will teach me to work extremely hard at high altitude, which means

when I'm at normal elevation, by the time I finish a run, I won't be feeling the burn in my legs and stuff like that. My body will be trained for higher altitude."

When he's on his skis in Tignes, Nevison will be sharing the slopes with elite downhillers from throughout Europe — just one more benefit as he strives to reach the pinnacle of his sport.

"I'm really lucky — I'm going to be training with guys who are way better than me," he said.

"The whole time I'm there, I'll be chasing, to try to catch these guys of course. My coach and I are really hoping it will allow me to sort of break away from the group that I've been skiing with and really raise my level of competition."

Nevison and his family are funding the trip to France themselves.

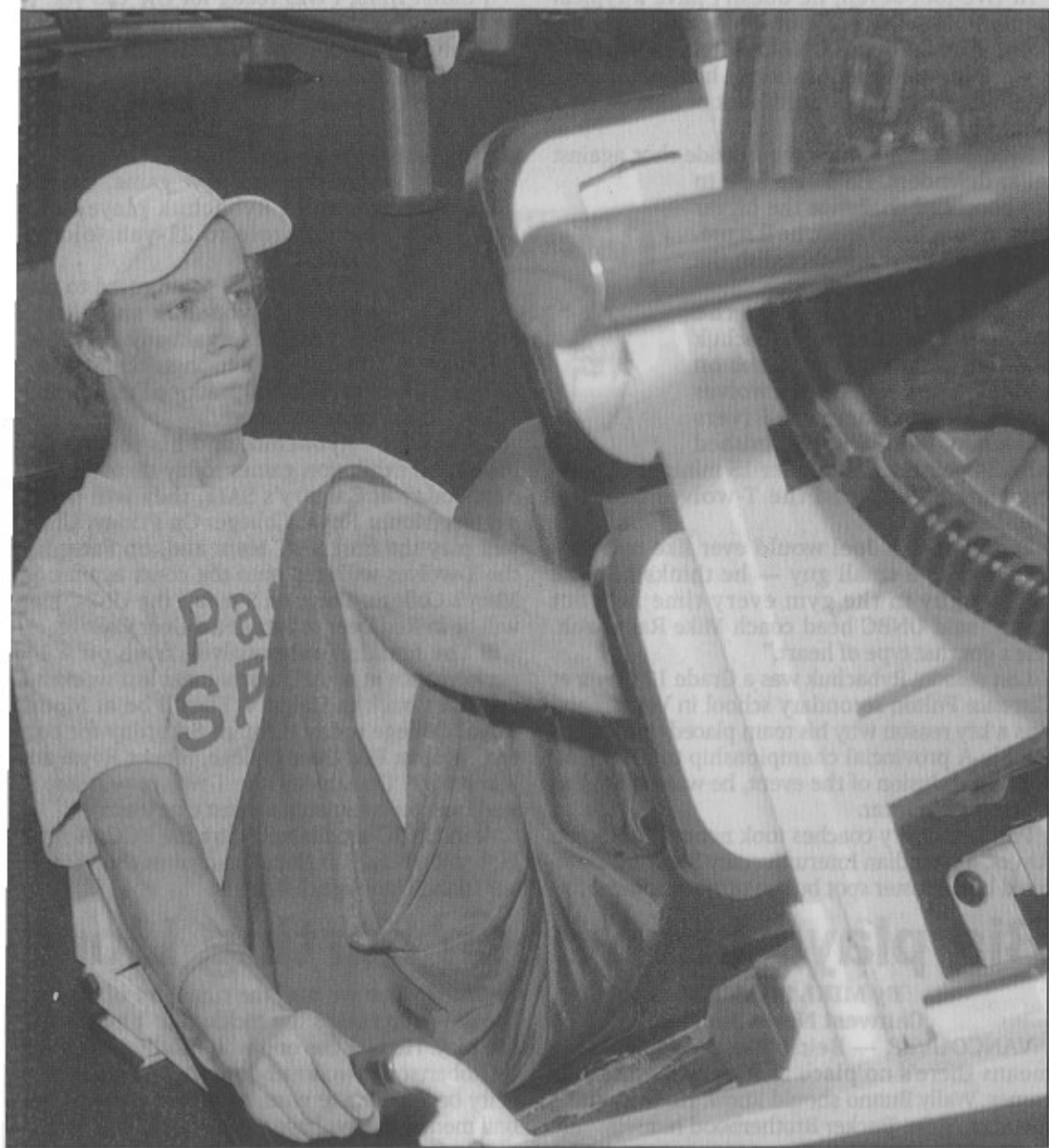
Nevison, a former College Heights secondary school student, competes in all the disciplines — slalom, giant slalom, Super G, downhill and super combi. His favourite is slalom.

"I like it because it's one of those events where you hop out of the gate and you have to be ready to go from the first gate to the last gate because they're coming at you so quick, and you want to be quicker," he said. "You've got to make the line tighter and I really like the intensity of it, I guess."

When Nevison arrives back in Prince George on Nov. 24, he'll only be here for nine days because he's scheduled to be on his planks at a Nor-Am downhill race in Lake Louise. He'll follow the Nor-Am circuit around Canada and, if he does well enough, into the United States. Nor-Am is slightly below the World Cup level, which features the rock stars of the sport.

"A lot of the guys at the Nor-Am level are right on the edge of the World Cup teams," said Nevison, who started his competitive career at the age of six in the local Nancy Greene program and then graduated to the Prince George Alpine Ski Racers. "When I go to the Nor-Ams, there are often World Cup guys there, the Canadian guys. So I'm racing against guys who are in the World Cup.

"One of my buddies last year, at Canadian nationals in Quebec, he won the second run at nationals as an 18-year-old in slalom, against the national-team guys. I've beaten this kid plenty of times in training and it just shows that if it comes together for you one day, you can make it happen."



Citizen photo by David Mah

Prince George alpine skier Ross Nevison, 18, has been hitting the gym to be ready for a winter of racing, his first stop coming in Tignes, France, the site of an international training camp that will force him to deal with high altitude and prepare him for the upcoming NorAm season.