

Ed Drake's 2004/05 Season

A Member of the British Land Alpine Junior Ski Team

Kandahar Premier Award Winner

K Senior & Junior Champion 2005

Great news came last June 04 when I was in the middle of my A Levels. I received a letter from Snowsport GB to say I had been selected to the British Land Alpine Junior Ski Team on the World Class Start Program.

With College days finished my first trip with the British Team was to Saas Fee for 10 days where I met Wolfgang Grabner who was to be our coach. It was straight in at the deep end. We were staying down in Saas Grund which meant an early get up in order to get to the glacier and start skiing. We spent 2 days mastering telemarking, an interesting, yet fun, learning experience. Back down the mountain for fitness in the afternoon which involved running back up the mountain on a couple of occasions!

On my return home to Kingston a fitness program had been e-mailed for me to follow. I incorporate rowing as part of my fitness as it is quite complimentary to skiing, the early morning and late night sessions are also pretty special on the Thames. Towards the end of July our crew, from Walbrook Rowing Club, won the Novice Cox IVs at the Henley Town & Visitors Regatta, where Shirley Stevens came to support us, which was really nice.

Over the next couple of months we went on more training camps to Saas Fee and Piztal. The Vist team clothing started to come through, as did the Scott equipment; I was also sent the new Rossignol skis, all pretty exciting.

The training had been going well during the summer and being home for a bit of normality and mum's food was good too.

I also helped coach on a couple of ski camps on the dry slopes to earn some money in my spare time.

The plan for November and December had been to travel to Norway for some more training and to start racing but due to lack of snow the trip was cancelled. The Austrian Alps were much better and meant that all the races were fully subscribed as a lot of the top racers were there chasing the snow. I found myself way down the bib order but with solid technique and much determination I improved my placings.

Unfortunately on November 25th I missed the presentation of the Premier Award that the Kandahar had given me for which I apologise, but thank Willie Taunton-Burnett for receiving it on my behalf. Without such help I would be unable to carry on skiing full time.

For the first time in five years I was back home for Christmas and New Year, time to relax, watch a bit of TV and catch up with family and friends.

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Straight after New Year it was back to Lofer, the British Olympic Centre. The snow started to fall in earnest, the miles started to add up as we travelled to and from races. My points began to improve which was great so my start positions got better.

I foreran the Downhill at the Inter Services Championships in Saalbach-Hinterglem. It was really good to see Susie Berry there as the TD.

In February I went home for 6 days, a quick recharge then back out to Lofer. First race was in Feldberg, Germany in the Black Forest Region, 2 Junior FIS Slaloms and a GS. Unfortunately I skied out in the first Slalom and the GS was cancelled due to the torrential rainstorm. The second Slalom went so well I won the race by over 3 seconds.

The World Junior Championships this year were being held in Bardonecchia Italy, late February. The selection criteria had been toughened up this year. I was the only male selected and I qualified to race the Slalom. Unfortunately I blew out in the second run. It was a long trip but a valuable experience.

For the next four weeks the races kept coming thick and fast, resulting in more traveling. It was hard work and at times frustrating but that's racing. In Innerkrems and Meribor I did some speed races, which went well setting me in good stead for the British races.

The British Land National Ski Championships started 20th March in Meribel. There was not a lot of snow and it was very hot - typical end of season conditions. My family was out helping

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the England Team, mum was house-mum and brother James was assistant coach to Tim Fawke. It was great to see them and have their support. In the Downhill I was really pleased to come second 0.86 seconds behind Finlay Mickel. This also meant I was Junior Downhill Champion and my downhill points went tumbling down. The Super G was unfortunately cancelled and I was disappointed with my Slalom and Giant Slalom results. I hurt my back after some acrobatics during a race and I had to have some days off with some physiotherapy treatment in Meribel. I then did some races in Courchevel, Les Arcs (where I scored my best ever result in Slalom!) and Val Thorens. This was all in the run up to the British Junior Championships, again in Meribel, where it was very good to meet up with old friends and team mates still on the part-time program.

The British Junior Super G was the first race. It felt good and I ended up winning the race and The Kandahar Commonwealth Trophy. The second race, the Giant Slalom, was started five minutes early and consequently I nearly missed my start and was in a bit of a panic. I was lying third after the first run and on the second run my binding pre-released - needless to say I wasn't in the best mood after that! The Slalom was on day three; I was pretty wound up after the previous day. The weather was terrible, raining buckets. I had bib number three and attacked the course taking advantage of my early start number and was over a second ahead of the next racer. The rules are that the top 30 go in reverse order so I had to ski 30th in the second run, by which time the course had started to wash away. After many hairy moments and lots of oohs and aahs from the remaining drenched spectators I completed the run and stayed in front winning the Ski Club of Great Britain Slalom Trophy. The two wins meant I was Overall Junior Champion. It was a good British Championships for me and it was strange to think that that there were no more races to be done but a great high point to finish on! Back to the apartment to pack, then a night out with friends to celebrate the end of a long hard season. The next morning it was loading the van and the long trip back home to England.

I would like to thank the Kandahar and my other sponsors and supporters for keeping my dream alive.