

Good evening biathlon fans, I hope you're having a great time.
I'd like to share a few words... they might even rhyme.

I wrote this poem for you, and I don't have any excuse.
Because I had a little help from my colleague, Dr. Seuss.

These words are about you, and everyone here in this room.
Each of you is helping Biathlon in BC to grow and to bloom.

We are teammates and competitors, at the same time.
We try hard to beat each other, until we cross the finish line.

Once we catch our breath, we share a fist bump or high five.
Knowing together we created magic, feeling truly alive.

We are connected through sport, and I know this to be true:
My biathlon experience couldn't happen without each of you.

Now, biathlon isn't just good times, as each of us knows.
It's also a sport filled with cold fingers and frozen toes.

It's a sport that brings challenges, both to the body and mind.
Some of those uphill climbs can really be a grind.

Our muscles are often aching and our lungs can be on fire.
Not to mention freezing at the start line in our spandex attire.

Sometimes we get a wind gust at just the wrong time.
A perfectly executed shot that goes wide, oh such a crime.

Trying to stay focused despite all that's happening around.
Sticking to the process, blocking out distractions and sound.

Going back to your mental anchor, that's often the key.
It can be the difference between a penalty loop or victory.

Some important decisions also take place out on the trail.
Getting the most out of your skiing is something you have to nail.

It can be especially hard when you're ahead, or in a tight race.
Should I ski faster right now, or stick to my normal pace?

We all learn through experience, that's how we advance.
Every practice and race provides us with this chance.

We can either choose to dwell on our failures and collapses,
Or we can choose a growth mindset and thus avoid any relapses.

Poor races are moments in time that we can analyze and study.
Debriefing what happened with your coach or with a buddy.

Failing forward and learning is how each of us can grow.
Not just as biathletes, but also as people, don't you know?

This sport will bring you lots of both pain and pleasure.
But how it improves you as a person is this sport's real treasure.

Have a big exam coming up, or an important job interview?
That's nothing compared to what biathlon has put you through!

You've practiced in blizzards, learning how to shoot,
With the goal of hitting 5 targets at the end of a pursuit.

In life if you ever find yourself under pressure to perform,
You will know how to stay calm... you've already dealt with a bigger storm.

Wherever you are on your journey, you didn't get there by yourself.
This is true if it's your first race, or medals cover your mantelshelf.

Biathlon Coaches are a rare breed, a mix of experience and passion.
Even if they don't always demonstrate the latest trends in fashion.

Look around this room at your coaches, be they young, or approaching old.
While you stay warm skiing, they are often standing still in the cold.

While they are waxing, fixing rifles, or driving to BC Cups.
Coaches know biathlon is full of downs and also full of ups.

If the winds of your life are calm, or blowing straight sideways,
Remember your coaches will be there for you, now, and always.

Speaking of coaches, with this poem I do profess.
Biathlon BC is lucky to have the best coach of all, Coach Jess.

She helps each of you become the best biathlete you can,
Maybe even reaching IBU races like Jasper, Gavin, and Dan.

Organizing training camps across the province throughout the year,
Let's toast Coach Jess together, with your water or your beer. "To Jess"

Biathlon Canada is also represented here by our special guest Clay,
He can be a TD, train other coaches, and be an athlete, all on the same day.

He has grown the sport nationally, and supported small groups.
He has even started a new club, welcome team Kamloops!

Last, but not least, I want to recognize BiBC's GM Roddy Ward.
What I love about him is he's always looking forward.

Developing the sport from the grassroots, biathlon is surely to grow.
With Eco-Aims, more athletes, we're in good hands I know.

Who else is by your side through the good and the bad,
Of course this is your parents, be it mom and/or dad.

They **might not** be as cool as Tobin's dad, you know.
But they do spend lots of money buying your ammo.

You may not always get along or have the same music style,
But remember to say a quick thanks to them, once in a while.

We couldn't hold BC Cups without another important group.
They count your hits and misses, or even a rare penalty loop.

Volunteers make it possible for us to have fun and play,
At races remember to thank 10 or more volunteers every day.

Today's Individual is complete, and we'll soon give out the awards.
And the fun of tomorrow's mass starts, we're all looking towards.

So to end this poem, I have just one more thing to share.
It is a message I would love you to spread everywhere.

Biathlon BC is not just about clubs, events, or even camps.
No, it's not just about races, medals, or crowning end-of-year champs.

What **we** are about is much more, because we do this sport together.
As biathletes we are a family, yesterday, today, and forever.

Jonathan Kerr
February 22nd, 2025