



# Competition-Coaching Introduction L2T

## Step 7: Athlete Support



**Reference Material  
for On Snow Workshop**



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This section on Athlete Support complements the information provided in section 8 of your NCCP Introduction to Community Coaching Reference Material, section 8 of your Community Coaching Reference Material and section 6 of your Learning to Train (Dryland) Reference Material.

## 7.1 Team Management

As athletes grow their needs change. For program leaders this means more factors to consider and more responsibilities. A program that includes hikes, camps, travel to competitions in other communities and overnight trips also requires a support group of helpers, risk management guidelines, rules, disciplinary policies and some serious planning.

As a coach, you play a critical role in meeting your athletes' needs, not just in the structure and organization of the program but also in creating a healthy team environment. Whatever the goals of your team, the best outcomes will occur if the team works well together.

Effective team management is therefore an essential component of a successful sport program.

The best results can be obtained if all team members display the following four characteristics: loyalty, commitment, punctuality and respect. Long after the results are forgotten, athletes will remember what it was like to be part of a "real team".

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### Team Support

The task of coaching athletes is big enough without the coach having to undertake all the other tasks that go with providing a comprehensive and meaningful program. In order to provide the best possible support for your athletes, you will require both a program specific support group and an effective coordination strategy with the other program areas in your club (e.g. grooming and tracksetting, marketing, public relations, fundraising and other athlete development programs). For more information on developing a successful team, refer to section 8 of the NCCP Introduction to Community Coaching Reference Material, section 1.2 of the Learning to Train (Dryland) Reference Material and section 1.2 of this document.

### Team Policies and Procedures

A good team environment evolves through common activities, team identification and both formal and informal rules, including rules for behaviour. Your club may already have in place all the policies and procedures you require. If not, it is important for you to develop your own. As a minimum, basic risk management policies should be in place before your program gets underway. The following highlights some key points with respect to this aspect of team management:

- ❑ Establish standards of behaviour, team rules and risk management policies (e.g. roller skiing policy) in writing. With respect to developing team rules and a code of behaviour, you may wish to include input from your athletes.

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- ❑ Establish policies and procedures for implementing the above (e.g. penalties for infractions and procedures for applying disciplinary action).
- ❑ Check the Cross Country Canada website for the Club Directory, and search the club websites for examples of existing cross-country ski club policies.
- ❑ Check the “Centre for Sport and the Law” website or a similar source for advice on how to develop your policies.
- ❑ Ensure that your athletes (and their parents) are aware of the team policies, team rules and the behaviour that is expected of them.
- ❑ Inform the athletes of the consequences of non-compliance.
- ❑ Watch for non-compliance and react quickly and appropriately when it does occur.
- ❑ Apply the rules and impose the appropriate penalty for breaking the rules.
- ❑ Adapt quickly in order to maintain control of the group at all times.

## 7.1.1 Example Club Policy: Code of Conduct

### Bear Claw Cross-Country Ski Club Code of Conduct

This Code of Conduct has been developed to ensure the safety and well-being of all Club members and to provide guidelines for the Club, coaches, athletes and parents involved in the Club's activities.

Members of the Bear Claw Cross-Country Ski Club participate in training, local races and travelling to out-of-town training events and competitions. Club members represent:

- themselves as individuals;
- the Club;
- the sport of cross-country skiing; and,
- the community.

#### Expected Behaviours

- Athletes, coaches, parents and chaperones will demonstrate respect for fellow team members, coaches, parents, officials, chaperones, members of the public and the coaches and athletes of other teams.
- Club members will display courtesy and appreciation for the efforts of other people.
- Coaches, parents and chaperones will respect the dignity of the athletes in their care, recognizing the inherent power imbalance in the relationship so as not to abuse it.
- Athletes will direct unresolved complaints about others to their coaches, chaperones or parents for assistance.

#### Inappropriate Behaviours

The Club considers the following behaviours to be unacceptable:

- Violation of the Criminal Code.
- Failure to comply with stated rules or curfews set by coaches and/or chaperones.
- Underage use of alcohol or tobacco, or the use of drugs other than those prescribed by a physician.
- Bullying of fellow Club members or members of other teams. For the purposes of this Code of Conduct, bullying is defined as physically, mentally or emotionally abusing another person for personal satisfaction and to feel a sense of empowerment over another. It can be in a direct form, such as teasing or taunting, or an indirect form such as spreading rumours.
- Other behaviours considered as inappropriate by the Club or its coaches and/or chaperone.

#### Disciplinary Panel

Athletes, coaches, parents and chaperones who demonstrate a lack of respect for others, or who behave inappropriately, will attend a discussion with a disciplinary panel.

The disciplinary panel will be comprised of a coach, a Club executive member (who is not the parent of the athlete) and another member of the Club who is of the age of majority.

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The athlete, coach, parent or chaperone whose behaviour is under examination may attend the discussion with a personal representative.

One of the Club coaches will notify the parents of athletes involved in one of these situations.

The decisions of the disciplinary panel may include consequences such as, but not limited to, the following:

- Suspension from practice sessions, team competitions or coaching support.
- Discussion with parents/guardians about immediately returning the athlete home at the expense of the parents/guardians or, in the case of coaches, parents or chaperones, at the expense of the coach, parent or chaperone.
- Dismissal from the Club.

### **Specific Guidelines Related to Club Trips and Travelling**

Club members who participate in Club trips will communicate closely with their coaches and/or the trip organizers in order to be well-informed, personally organized and self-reliant. They will also adhere to the following rules when living, training or competing away from home:

- Attend all team meetings or negotiate alternatives with the coach.
- Respect others' needs and requests for privacy, rest and sleep.
- Check with coaches or chaperones when leaving the location of the group. Athletes 12 years of age and younger will not leave the accommodation or competition area unless accompanied by a chaperone, coach or designated older athlete. Athletes 13 to 18 years of age, inclusive must travel in groups of two or more.

If athletes are billeted, they will be able to phone their coaches or chaperones at any time. All concerns or problems regarding accommodation arrangements, including billets, must be discussed as soon as possible with a coach or chaperone.

### **Agreement**

I have read and understand the above and I agree to respect the Bear Claw Cross-Country Ski Club Code of Conduct.

Athlete Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Coach Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## 7.1.2 Example Club Policy: Travel

### Bear Claw Cross-Country Ski Club Travel Policy

#### Competition Calendar and Expression of Interest

- ❑ Each fall, the Club Head Coach will recommend to the Board of Directors (BOD), for their approval, a list of the competitions the Club should attend that season. Only BOD-approved competitions will be eligible for financial support from the Club.
- ❑ A Travel Grant Application Form listing the trips eligible for financial support, estimated costs, athlete eligibility requirements and any other relevant information will be handed out at the parent/athlete fall information session.
- ❑ The Travel Grant Application Form will include a deadline for applications plus the option of indicating an expression of interest or a commitment. This will allow the Club to begin making travel arrangements for the approved competitions. However, an athlete's indication of an expression of interest does not mean that he/she will be obligated to make the trip.

#### Eligibility for Competitions Other Than the National Championships

- ❑ Members of Junior (13 to 18 years of age) and Senior (19 years of age and older) racing teams will be eligible to attend and receive travel support to the Provincial Cup Series and the Provincial Winter Games.
- ❑ Members of the Track Attack and Jackrabbit programs will be eligible for travel support to one Ski Tournament, one Provincial Cup, the Provincial Midget Championships and the Provincial Winter Games.

#### Eligibility for Canadian Cross-Country Ski Championships

- ❑ Athletes meeting one or more of the following criteria will be eligible to receive travel support from the Club to attend the National Championships:
  - ✓ Member of the Provincial Ski Team or Provincial Development Squad.
  - ✓ Member of a National Ski Team program.
  - ✓ Member of a National Training Centre program.
  - ✓ Recommended by the Club Head Coach and approved by the BOD.

#### Travel Booking

- ❑ As soon as the deadline for confirmation has passed and athletes traveling are confirmed (or signed up early), travel bookings will be made. At that time, a deposit of the total cost of transportation (e.g. plane fare, bus) will be required and will be due within two weeks.
- ❑ If an athlete does not travel, his/her deposit will be retained for any fees that were not recoverable. Usually a credit to the airline will be issued. However, for example, Air Canada charges \$145.00 to change tickets.

## **Final Payment**

- ❑ After the trip, the actual costs will be quickly calculated and a final invoice will be issued within one week. This invoice will reflect the TOTAL cost of the trip with no Club support. Payment is due IN FULL within two weeks of the date of the invoice.

## **Club Support for Club Trips to Competitions**

- ❑ Refer to the Bear Claw Cross-Country Ski Club Fundraising Policy for details about fundraising and travel support requirements.
- ❑ Disbursements for travel support to BOD-approved events based on an athlete's "fundraising credits" will be made either in March or when the athlete has accumulated the number of fundraising credits necessary for "full" support.
- ❑ For every trip after an athlete has credit for "full" support, the full amount will NOT be required after the trip, but only the difference between the amount already paid as a deposit and the total owing based on the Club's contribution of up to 50%.
- ❑ For all BOD-approved events, including those events to which there is no formal Club support for travel, with the approval of the Head Coach athletes may use frequent flier or similar programs for their flights to and from an event. When doing so, the athlete (or their parent/guardian) will be completely responsible for ground transportation to the Club team's place of accommodation. Athletes under 18 must be accompanied by an adult or have booked their travel to coincide with the itinerary of an adult Club member. In these situations, the Club will reimburse athletes 50% of their allotted support for the recognized cost of an equivalent airfare (i.e. the lowest cost airfare for a Club member going to the same competition). For example, an athlete who has acquired the maximum level of support of 50% through fundraising would be reimbursed 50% of 50% (i.e. 25%) of the recognized cost of that airfare. Reimbursement for a \$600 equivalent airfare would be \$150.

## **Coaching Support for Club Trips to Competitions**

- ❑ The coach-to-athlete ratio for travel for athletes 18 years of age and younger is 1:5.
- ❑ The coach-to-athlete ratio for travel for senior athletes (19 years of age and older) is 1:7.
- ❑ Designated "Parent Helpers" may also be utilized at the discretion of the Head Coach.
- ❑ The cost of all travel, accommodations and food for the coaches will be shared by the athletes. Coaches will be provided a \$30/day food allowance. In the case of designated Parent Helpers, the Helpers will be responsible for their own travel costs, but not for vehicle rental or accommodation, as they are often needed for driving.
- ❑ The Head Coach has the discretion to add extra coaches or designate Parent Helpers above the coach-to-athlete ratio minimums for trips where more supervision or support is needed.

## **Other**

- ❑ Athletes must sign a current Bear Claw Cross-Country Ski Club Code of Conduct before traveling with the Club.
- ❑ In advance of a Club trip, a Trip Notice (information sheet) will be distributed. The notice will include the location, hotel phone number, races dates/times/distances, what to bring, etc.
- ❑ If there are any changes in the status of an athlete's travel plans, the Travel Committee must be advised immediately.
- ❑ If an athlete cannot pay the trip fee, the Travel Committee must be advised immediately.

## Travel Committee

Members of the Travel Committee for the current year are:

- James White (xxx-xxxx) - Chair.
- Dennis Black (xxx-xxxx).
- Amy Brown (xxx-xxxx).

### 7.1.3 Example Club Policy: Fundraising

#### **Bear Claw Cross-Country Ski Club Fundraising Policy**

##### **General**

Bear Claw Cross-Country Ski Club offers a number of programs for athletes of all ages. Much of the support provided to these programs is only possible through Club fundraising activities. Without these fundraising efforts, Bear Claw Cross-Country Ski Club would not be able to provide quality coaching support, waxing support for various races, training equipment and other benefits for its members. Accordingly, all Club members are encouraged to support Club fundraising. Fundraising activities include such things as “product” sales (e.g. chocolate bars, raffle tickets, perogies) and volunteer activities (such as trail runs).

##### **Fundraising Credits for Travel Support**

No minimum number of fundraising credits is required in order for a Club program member to seek and receive travel support.

Only events that are on the Club Board of Directors’ list of approved events for a given competitive season will be eligible for travel support during the same competitive season. “Full” travel support for a Club program member attending an approved event is defined as up to 50% of the allowable expenses incurred for travel. In order for a Club member to obtain “full” travel support, he/she will be required to earn a total of ten fundraising credits during the corresponding competitive season.

Several options are available to Club program members in order to achieve their required fundraising credits. These fundraising options currently include:

- Bingos - one credit for each bingo worked. There is typically one bingo per month at the Bear Claw Community Bingo site.
- Firewood - one credit for each three-hour wood cutting/splitting/selling session worked.
- Ski Lessons - one credit for every two hours of Club-sanctioned instruction provided.
- Coaching - credits will be given for coaching as per the Club’s Coaching Support Policy.

Based on the number of fundraising credits accumulated by a Club program member during a competitive season, travel costs (i.e. accommodations, transportation and meals) will be reimbursed on a pro-rated basis as determined annually by the Board of Directors, up to the “full” support limit of 50%. For example, a full 50% reimbursement may be received if all ten fundraising credits are earned. Families with three or more participants need to complete up to 10

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fundraising credits per program member in order that each family member, individually, may be eligible to receive travel support.

## Contacts

Contact persons for fundraising activities for the current year are as follows:

- ❑ Bingos – Tom Brown (xxx-xxxx).
- ❑ Firewood – Tim Green (xxx-xxxx).
- ❑ Product Sales – Tracy White (xxx-xxxx).
- ❑ Ski Lessons – Mary Black (xxx-xxxx).

### 7.1.4 Example Club Policy: Screening

#### Bear Claw Cross-Country Ski Club Screening Policy

##### Preamble

The Bear Claw Cross-Country Ski Club (BCCCSC) offers programs for athletes of all ages and promotes skill development, enjoyment, competition and ethical conduct amongst its members. In order to be successful in its efforts, it is vital that the Club can provide a safe and secure environment for its membership. The purpose of this screening policy is to support that secure environment by ensuring, to the extent possible, that BCCCSC volunteers and paid personnel who may work with vulnerable persons are subjected to a process of “screening” to ensure the safety of participants.

It is well-established in common law that organizations providing programs and services to vulnerable persons have an obligation to take reasonable steps to ensure their safety and well-being. While there was previously some debate about whether or not there was a legal duty to “screen”, today there is widespread agreement that such a duty exists. In other words, screening has become an element of risk management, and the organization that doesn’t carry out some form of screening is likely failing to meet the reasonable standard of care that the law, and the community, expects of them.

The intent of this policy and the associated requirements is not to cast doubt on the quality and conduct of volunteers and paid staff engaged by the BCCCSC. The focus of the policy is on the positions that create risk, because of the demands and exposure of the position to vulnerable participants.

##### Definitions

- ❑ **Junior Athletes.** All BCCCSC members or participants in programs or activities run or sponsored by BCCCSC who have not yet passed their 19th birthday.
- ❑ **Police Records Check.** The process of securing information from the police about individuals, as well as to describe the form or report in which information is provided. It may include a check of national or local and regional police records. At the end of the process, a report is issued. The report may simply identify whether or not someone has a criminal record, or it may provide details of actual offences.
- ❑ **Position of Trust.** A position of trust identifies a situation in which someone is placed in a

position of authority over another person in an ongoing relationship. A position of trust implies that someone has some degree of power over another and that the relationship is unequal. Individuals in positions of trust may be family members, friends, caregivers, volunteers, or employees. A position of trust identifies a situation which may be considered risky because of the demands of the position.

- ❑ **Screening.** Screening is a series of initiatives and protective mechanisms which, when utilized, minimize the potential for abuse or injury. These mechanisms include:
  - ✓ the requirement to submit a formal application form to BCCCSC by individuals seeking to serve in a “position of trust” on a volunteer or paid basis;
  - ✓ the use of interviews by a member or members of BCCCSC’s Board of Directors of individuals seeking to serve in a “position of trust” on a volunteer or paid basis;
  - ✓ the use of reference checks for such positions;
  - ✓ the use of Police Record Checks or other background checks by BCCCSC; and,
  - ✓ the use of risk management or risk mitigation measures aimed at reducing the risks inherent in certain relationships.
- ❑ **Vulnerable Person.** Volunteer Canada uses this term to denote individuals who have difficulty protecting themselves and are therefore at greater risk of harm. People may be vulnerable because of age, disability or handicap, or circumstances. Vulnerability may be a temporary or a permanent condition.

This is purposely a broad definition, one that can include children, teens, senior citizens, people with physical, developmental, social, emotional, or other disabilities, as well as people who are victims of crime or harm.

“Vulnerable person” will also include people who have been victims of crime or accident, or are otherwise left with little defense against those who would harm them.

With respect to BCCCSC activities, “vulnerable persons” are generally junior athletes 18 years of age or younger. There may, however, be cases where the BCCCSC’s membership or Club activities include participants who are vulnerable through some physical or developmental disability.

### **General Policy Regarding Screening**

- ❑ Given the normal range of activities in which the BCCCSC engages, particularly its focus on the participation of children and teens and the development of high performance athletes, the situations that pose risk are those which involve the interaction of adults (e.g., paid or volunteer coaches, assistant coaches, designated parent helpers, responsible adults) with these athletes.
- ❑ In order to provide a safe and secure environment for its members and to serve to reduce or eliminate risk, the BCCCSC has adopted the following measures as best practices:
  - ✓ For all levels of junior athlete instructional or training activities, including Bunnyrabbit, Jackrabbit and Track Attack, every training or lesson group is accompanied by at least two coaches; or a coach and at least one other designated, responsible adult.

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- ✓ All junior athlete instructional and training activities are based on a published schedule or, in the case of sessions arranged via the “snow phone” or e-mail, by a broadcast schedule/itinerary, with known and predictable locations, destinations and return times.
- ✓ For “local” activities or events involving overnight stays, to which junior athletes travel via personal/parental vehicles and/or highway coach, and stay in the company of paid or volunteer coaches, assistant coaches, designated parent helpers or junior athletes’ parents, the designated lead coach for the event will be supported by a sufficient number of adults, including both male and female adults where junior athletes of both genders are involved. In any case, all such overnight stays will be supervised/accompanied by at least two adults. Examples of this type of club activity or event currently include dryland and on-snow Club training camps, out-of-town competitions where the majority of Club members, coaches, designated parent helpers and junior athletes’ parents travel to the races by a Club-hired highway coach.
- ✓ For all overnight trips involving junior athletes, at least one adult of each gender will be included in the team management group (coaches, assistant coaches, apprentice coaches, designated parent helpers) where the athletes are of both genders; where the junior athletes are all of the same gender, then at least one of the team management group will be of that gender (where this is impossible in the case of small teams, arrangements will be made with other teams attending the same event to share such supervisory roles).
- ✓ Coaches (or other team management group members) will avoid to the extent possible being alone in the same room with an individual junior athlete when in lodging facilities and, in all such cases, the door of the room will be kept open.
- ❑ These measures can considerably mitigate risk in what otherwise might be low-to-medium risk situations. There is, however, a considerable difference between a short-duration, limited-intensity activity such as a typical SDP or junior athlete dryland/on-snow training session, and the far longer and more intense relationships that are normal in junior athlete racing environments. The BCCCSC takes the position that the cut-off above which a position should be considered “high-risk” is when that position may be responsible for leading or accompanying a group of junior athletes on an overnight “away” trip to a camp or competition.
- ❑ Characteristics of “high-risk” positions are those where the incumbents:
  - ✓ are frequently alone with an athlete who has not yet passed his/her 19th birthday, or with other vulnerable participants, such as people with certain disabilities;
  - ✓ are in a position of significant power over junior athletes or other participants; and
  - ✓ travel out-of-town, away from the supervision of parents/guardians of junior athletes.
- ❑ It follows that the positions of head coach, coach, assistant coach, apprentice coach and designated parent helper, all of whom are likely to travel with junior athletes on overnight “away” trips, should be considered as high-risk positions. Similarly, persons who may serve in any of these positions, but do not travel with junior athletes on “away” trips, may also be required to fulfill the screening procedures listed below, particularly where such roles are seen as “permanent” (e.g., season-long) appointments, rather than occasional assignments.

### **Specific Application of Screening Policy**

With respect to Club-delivered activities and those attended by the BCCCSC's junior athletes under the direct supervision of the Club's coach(es), the BCCCSC has adopted the following policies:

- ❑ All coaches (i.e. head coach, coach, assistant coach, apprentice coach), designated parent helpers and SDP program leaders (Bunnyrabbit, Jackrabbit, and Track Attack), whether paid or unpaid, will be subject to the following screening requirements:
  - ✓ submission of a written application;
  - ✓ an interview and reference checks by a member (or members) of the Board of Directors (where applicants are not well known to a member (or members) of the Board of Directors); and
  - ✓ provision of a completed Police Records Check.
- ❑ Those Club coaches (i.e. head coach, coach, assistant coach, apprentice coach) and designated parent helpers, whether paid or unpaid, who are most likely to be supervising the Club's junior athletes during "away" camps or competitions involving travel by aircraft (i.e. Provincial/Territorial Cup races, Provincial/Territorial Winter Games, Provincial/Territorial Midget Championships) will be required to have a current (i.e. less than three years old) Police Records Check on file with the Club.

## 7.2 Planning Your Competition Schedule

Competitions are an integral part of a progressive club athlete development system. To assist you in developing a stage-appropriate competition plan for your program, the following table (section 7.2.1) has been provided. This exercise builds on what you learned in Step 6 in the L2T (Dryland) workshop by looking at the competition schedule in more detail.

### 7.2.1 Developing a Competition Plan for Your Team (working copy)

Age Range: \_\_\_\_\_ 11 \_\_\_\_\_ # Boys: \_\_\_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_\_\_ # Girls: \_\_\_\_\_ 5 \_\_\_\_\_

Month	December				January					February				March				
Day = Monday	3	10	17	24	1	8	15	22	29	5	12	19	26	3	10	17	24	31
Low-Key Mid-week Club "Fun" Races (e.g. Chocolate Series)																		
Club Time Trials																		
RR - Ski Tournaments																		
RR - Double Cross																		
RR - Team Sprints																		
Club Races (e.g. Club Champs; Club Costume Relays)																		
Regional Cups																		
Provincial/Territorial Midget Champs																		
Provincial/Arctic Winter Games																		
Provincial/Territorial Cups/Champs																		
Others																		

**Example Competition Plan for the L2T Stage of Development**

Age Range: \_\_\_\_\_ 11 \_\_\_\_\_ # Boys: \_\_\_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_\_\_ # Girls: \_\_\_\_\_ 5 \_\_\_\_\_

Month	December				January					February				March				
Day = Monday	3	10	17	24	1	8	15	22	29	5	12	19	26	3	10	17	24	31
Low-Key Mid-week Club "Fun" Races (e.g. Chocolate Series)	X				X					X				X				
Club Time Trials																		
RR - Ski Tournaments							X											
RR - Double Cross									X									
RR - Team Sprints																		
Club Races (e.g. Club Champs; Club Costume Relays)																	X	
Regional Cups			X															
Provincial/Territorial Midget Champs												X						
Provincial/Arctic Winter Games																	X	
Provincial/Territorial Cups/Champs																		
Others																		

Competitions with a strong "team" component

**Notes:**

- The circles indicate the two major competitions of the season – two or three days of activities each, plus travel.
- The two "Racing Rocks (RR)" activities will each be one day events and held either locally or within the region (not more than two hours from home).
- The Regional Cup race will be a one day event held 2.5 hours from home.
- All other races will be held locally. Only the Club Race (year-end Club Championships) will be a full day event – the others will be low-key evening activities.
- The Ski Tournament and Midget Championships both include sprint races that are not more than 100 metres in length.
- The Club Championships, Provincial Winter Games, Midget Championships and Ski Tournament all include traditional relay events.
- Example "Low-Key Club Fun Race":

**The Chocolate Series.** This is a fun, low cost event that meets the competitive and non-competitive needs of young and old and requires little preparation or volunteer effort. The cost to enter is a Loonie. Formats can vary, and different formats can have their own name – such as Chocolate Chase, Chocolate Moose or Chocolate Sprint. The Sprint race requires one volunteer; the other events require only a large display clock. The clock provides the count-down and start and the skiers record their own times which they can read off the display clock when they cross the line. The reward at the end is a chocolate bar. Another variation is the Chocolate Find – an orienteering event that takes skiers out onto the club trail system.

## 7.2.2 Competition Model

Optimal competition calendar planning at all stages is critical to athlete development. At certain stages, development of physical capacities takes precedence over competition, and at other stages the ability to compete becomes the focus. Competition schedules should therefore be selected by the coach and athlete based on the athletes' developmental needs. See [Website](#) for more details.

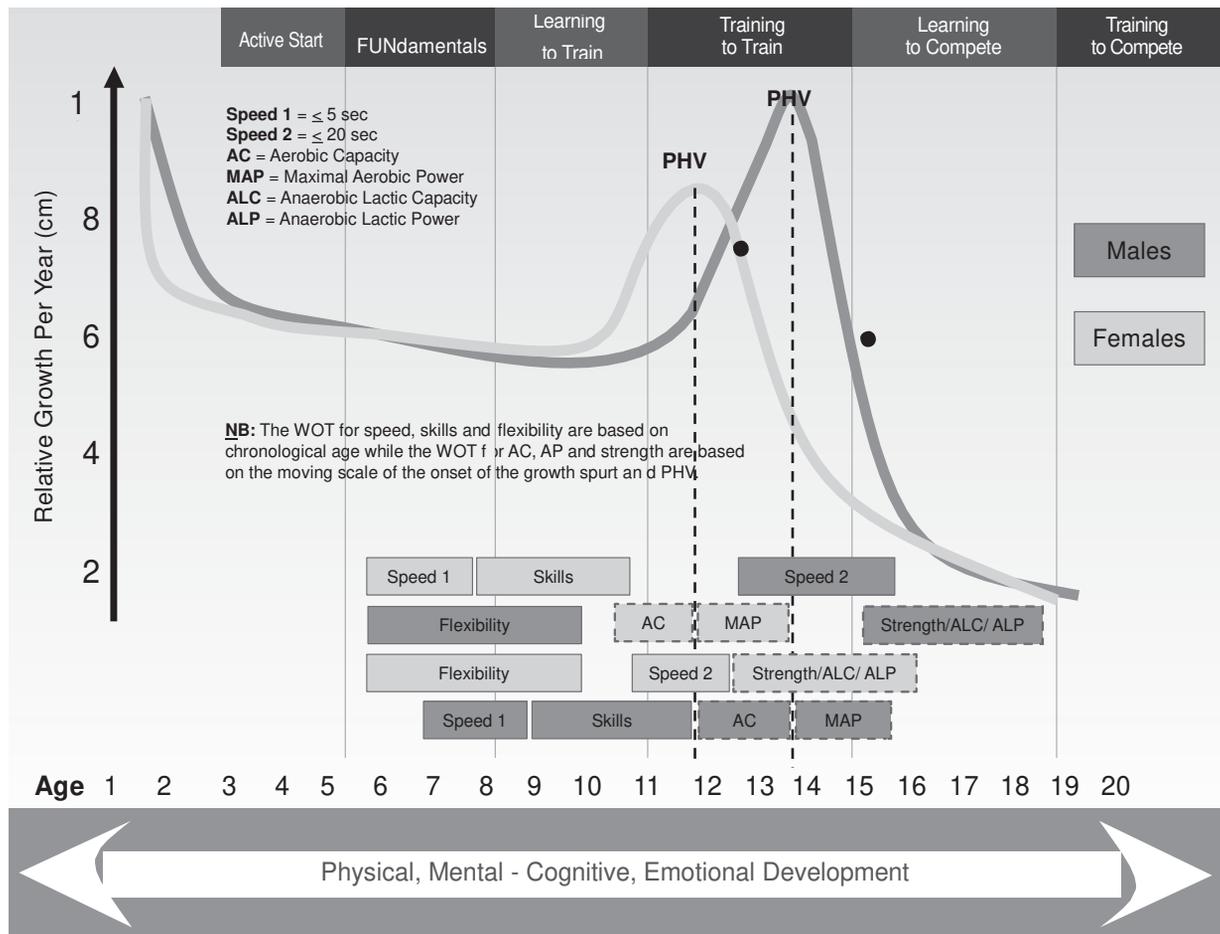
A long-term athlete development plan means a system of training and competition that is optimized for the abilities of athletes during the various developmental stages. The following factors should be considered when planning:

- ❑ Optimal training-to-competition ratios should be the objective for all stages of athlete development.
- ❑ At the L2T stage, an insufficient number of competitions (inappropriate training-to-competition ratio) will result in a lack of sport skills to build on in later stages.
- ❑ At all stages, the appropriate level of competition is critical to the technical, tactical and mental development of the athlete.
- ❑ The length and level of the competitive season should be aligned with the changing needs of the developing athlete in the LTAD progression.
- ❑ Early season races should be at the shorter end of the range. The maximum distance should only be used one or two times towards the end of the season.
- ❑ When deciding which races your athletes should enter, take into account the following:
  - ✓ The format (i.e. mass start, relay, team sprint, interval start, pursuit, individual sprint).
  - ✓ The ability and fitness of the skier.
  - ✓ The difficulty of terrain (course profile).
  - ✓ The elevation (altitude) of the race site.
  - ✓ Where the athlete is in his/her age grouping – first year, second year etc.
- ❑ At the end of the L2T stage, girls can begin to develop their maximal oxygen consumption rate (VO<sub>2</sub>max) through racing, as they are entering a Window of Optimal Trainability (WOT) for this performance factor. Race distances that are optimal for this stage - in order to develop VO<sub>2</sub>max - are in the range of 1.5 to 3 kms (5 - 10 minutes).
- ❑ Due to the longer period of pre-adolescent growth for boys (as compared to girls), it is not optimal for boys to be introduced to VO<sub>2</sub>max development until the later stages of T2T. Therefore most race distances for this stage should exceed three kms, so that the athletes are optimizing the WOT for aerobic capacity that corresponds to the growth phase they are in.
- ❑ Types of competitions that are suitable for the L2T stage of development:

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- ✓ Racing Rocks! (Ski Tournaments; XC ski Cross; Team Sprints).
  - ✓ Club Races (Club Championships; Club Costume Relays; Club “Chocolate” Relays, etc.).
  - ✓ Regional Cup Races, Provincial/Territorial Midget Championships, Arctic/Provincial Winter Games, Provincial/Territorial Championships. Refer to section 3.2.1 of the NCCP L2T (Dryland) Reference Material for an overview of what a three year program of L2T stage-appropriate competitions might look like.
- ❑ Competitions that provide recognition and rewards for athletes for each year of birth (in the L2T stage).
  - ❑ Windows of Optimal Trainability (WOT).

Figure 7.1: Pacific Sport Windows of Optimal Trainability (adapted from Balyi and Way, 2005)



Competition Model Chart						
Stage/ Gender	Age	Major Goals for Stage of Development	Recommended Race Times and Distances	Other Considerations	Major Factors to Avoid	
FUNDamentals Boys	(5)-6-7-8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• FUN</li> <li>• Skill development</li> <li>• Speed 1 (≤ 5 sec.)</li> </ul>	5 to 10 min (0.5 to 1.5 km) <b>Total = 4 - 6 races/season</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adapt race distances to race "time" guidelines for the age grouping</li> <li>• Include some "legs only" events</li> <li>• Use varied terrain; include some unconventional settings (i.e. obstacle courses; terrain parks)</li> <li>• Include a variety of race formats (i.e. relays; mass starts); creative elements (i.e. costumes; changes of equipment) (mostly club and regional races)</li> <li>• Ideally the race experience should be half a day (mostly club and regional races)</li> <li>• As much as possible, limit travel to races</li> <li>• Introduce competition in a team environment whenever possible</li> <li>• Begin racing after Christmas</li> <li>• Athletes 5-(6) years old (Active Start) should receive participation awards such as a ribbon</li> <li>• Athletes (6)-8 (FUNDamentals): acknowledge achievements/results for each YOB (medals, ribbons, etc.); recognition awards for all participants is encouraged</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anaerobic (capacity and power) efforts</li> <li>• Terrain extremes (i.e. long or steep hills; all flat)</li> </ul>	
FUNDamentals Girls	(5)-6-7-8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• FUN</li> <li>• Skill development</li> <li>• Speed (1 ≤ 5 sec.)</li> </ul>	5 to 10 min (0.5 to 1.5 km) <b>Total = 4 - 6 races/season</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adapt race distances to race "time" guidelines for the age grouping</li> <li>• Include some "legs only" events</li> <li>• Use varied terrain; include some unconventional settings (i.e. obstacle courses; terrain parks)</li> <li>• Include a variety of race formats (i.e. relays; mass starts); creative elements (i.e. costumes; changes of equipment) (mostly club and regional races)</li> <li>• Ideally the race experience should be half a day (mostly club and regional races)</li> <li>• As much as possible, limit travel to races</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anaerobic (capacity and power) efforts</li> <li>• Terrain extremes (i.e. long or steep hills; all flat)</li> </ul>	

<p>L2T Boys</p>	<p>9-10-11- (12)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fun</li> <li>• Skill development</li> <li>• Introduce strength using body weight</li> <li>• Athlete can race at high speed with good technique</li> </ul>	<p><b>Distance:</b> 5 to 20 min (1 - 3 km)</p> <p><b>Sprints:</b> 100m or ≤ 20 sec. (at the end of this stage)</p> <p><b>Total = 6 – 8 races/season</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduce competition in a team environment whenever possible</li> <li>• Begin racing after Christmas</li> <li>• Athletes 5-(6) years old (Active Start) should receive participation awards such as a ribbon</li> <li>• Athletes (6)-8 (Fundamentals): acknowledge achievements/results for each YOB (medals, ribbons, etc.); recognition awards for all participants is encouraged</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anaerobic (capacity and power) efforts</li> <li>• Terrain extremes (i.e. long or steep hills; all flat)</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus on "fun" events that emphasize team effort and skills (i.e. Ski Tournaments)</li> <li>• Adapt race distances to the "time" guidelines for the age grouping</li> <li>• Include a variety of race formats (i.e. relays; mass starts); creative elements (i.e. costumes; changes of equipment)</li> <li>• Use varied terrain; include some unconventional settings (i.e. obstacle courses; terrain parks)</li> <li>• Include some Double Poling and "legs only" events (at shorter distances)</li> <li>• Emphasize the importance of skill development through recognition and rewards</li> <li>• Use slightly declining slope for sprint races to develop speed and balance</li> <li>• Ideally the race experience should be half a day, with only 1-2 key events being one day. Club, Regional Cup and Provincial/Territorial Cup races (when held within region)</li> <li>• As much as possible, limit long distance travel to races</li> <li>• Competitive focus should be on personal improvement, and in a team environment</li> <li>• Basic rules are learned</li> <li>• Generally begin racing after Christmas</li> <li>• Acknowledge achievements/results for each YOB (medals, ribbons, etc.)</li> </ul>			

Stage/ Gender	Age	Major Goals for Stage of Development	Recommended Race Times and Distances	Other Considerations	Major Factors to Avoid
L2T Girls	(8)-9-10- (11)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• FUN</li> <li>• Skill development</li> <li>• Introduce strength using body weight</li> <li>• Athlete can race at high speed with good technique</li> </ul>	<p><b>Distance:</b> 5 - 20 min (1 - 3 km)</p> <p><b>Sprints:</b> 100m or ≤ 20 sec. (at the end of this stage)</p> <p><b>Total = 6 - 8 races</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus on "fun" events that emphasize team effort and skills (i.e. Ski Tournaments)</li> <li>• Adapt race distances to the "time" guidelines for the age grouping</li> <li>• Include a variety of race formats (i.e. relays; mass starts); creative elements (i.e. costumes; changes of equipment)</li> <li>• Use varied terrain; include some unconventional settings (i.e. obstacle courses; terrain parks)</li> <li>• Include some Double Poling and "legs only" events (at shorter distances)</li> <li>• Emphasize the importance of skill development through recognition and rewards</li> <li>• Use slightly declining slope for sprint races to develop speed and balance</li> <li>• Ideally the race experience should be half a day, with only 1-2 key events being one day. Club, Regional Cup and Provincial/Territorial Cup races (when held within region)</li> <li>• As much as possible, limit long distance travel to races</li> <li>• Competitive focus should be on personal improvement, and in a team environment</li> <li>• Basic rules are learned</li> <li>• Generally begin racing after Christmas</li> <li>• Acknowledge achievements/results for each YOB (medals, ribbons, etc.)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anaerobic (capacity and power) efforts</li> <li>• Terrain extremes (i.e. long or steep hills; all flat)</li> </ul>

Stage/ Gender	Age	Major Goals for Stage of Development	Recommended Race Times and Distances	Other Considerations	Major Factors to Avoid
T2T – 1 Boys	(12)-13- (14)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• FUN</li> <li>• Skill development</li> <li>• Aerobic capacity</li> <li>• Speed 2 (<math>\leq 20</math> sec.)</li> <li>• Strength using body weight</li> <li>• Develop tactics: tracking, sprints, etc.</li> <li>• Athletes compete to win and do their best, but the major training focus is on refining technique skills</li> <li>• Athletes train in competitive situations several times a week (practice matches, competitive drills and games)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Sprints:</b> 100m or <math>\leq 20</math> sec.</p> <p><b>Distance:</b> (3 - 7.5 km)</p> <p>2 races @ 3 km 5 races @ 5 km 1-2 races @ 7.5 km mass start at end of season</p> <p><b>Total:</b> 2 Sprint + 8 Distance = 10 races</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adapt race distances to the “time” guidelines for the age grouping</li> <li>• Use all the official race formats</li> <li>• Continue to include a few “fun” events that emphasize team effort and skills</li> <li>• Use slightly declining slope for sprint races to develop speed and balance</li> <li>• Emphasize personal improvement and personal best</li> <li>• Begin racing mid-December</li> <li>• Compete in Regional Cup and Provincial/Territorial Cup Series, Provincial/Territorial Games, Easter/Western Canadian Championships</li> <li>• Begin to narrow the competitive focus to two sports</li> <li>• Acknowledge achievements/results for each YOB (medals, ribbons, etc.)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anaerobic (capacity and power) efforts</li> <li>• Terrain extremes (i.e. long or steep hills; all flat)</li> </ul>

Stage/ Gender	Age	Major Goals for Stage of Development	Recommended Race Times and Distances	Other Considerations	Major Factors to Avoid
T2T – 1 Girls	(11)-12- (13)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• FUN</li> <li>• Skill development</li> <li>• Aerobic capacity</li> <li>• Maximal aerobic power</li> <li>• Speed 2 (≤ 20 sec.)</li> <li>• Strength using body weight</li> <li>• Develop tactics: tracking, sprints, etc.</li> <li>• Athletes compete to win and do their best, but the major training focus is on refining technique skills</li> <li>• Athletes train in competitive situations several times a week (practice matches, competitive drills and games)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Sprints:</b> 100m or ≤ 20 sec.</p> <p><b>Distance:</b> (1.5 - 7.5 km)</p> <p>5 races @ 1.5-3 km 2 races @ 5 km 1-2 races @ 7.5 km mass start at end of season</p> <p><b>Total:</b> 2 Sprint + 8 Distance = 10 races</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adapt race distances to the “time” guidelines for the age grouping</li> <li>• Use all the official race formats</li> <li>• Continue to include a few “fun” events that emphasize team effort and skills</li> <li>• Use slightly declining slope for sprint races to develop speed and balance</li> <li>• Emphasize personal improvement and personal best</li> <li>• Begin racing mid-December</li> <li>• Compete in Regional Cup and Provincial/Territorial Cup Series, Provincial/Territorial Games, Easter/Western Canadian Championships</li> <li>• Begin to narrow the competitive focus to two sports</li> <li>• Acknowledge achievements/results for each YOB (medals, ribbons, etc.)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Terrain extremes (i.e. long or steep hills; all flat)</li> </ul>

Notes:

- Age is defined as “the age of a child as of the December 31<sup>st</sup> that is part of the current ski season” .
- “T2T – 1” refers to the first part of the Training to Train stage of athlete development.
- The guidelines above refer to competitions that are held on snow.

## 7.3 Preparing for a Competition

Ideally your club will determine its competition schedule long before the season begins – i.e. which races the club will be hosting (big or small), which out-of-town events the (whole) club team will attend and which events the club plans to send a specific group of athletes to, such as a Provincial/Territorial Midget Championships. This kind of early planning allows program leaders the opportunity to inform athletes, parents, coaches and other helpers of the dates and approximate costs well in advance, and is essential for optimal participation and support.

### 7.3.1 Planning Ahead

Planning considerations for a successful trip would include the following:

- Informing all involved, at the start of the season, of the dates, type of event and approximate cost.
- Recruiting your support team and providing them with some information as to what their duties will be – preferably in writing. Refer to section 7.4 for more information.
- Developing a budget.
- Preparing your athletes for the types of events in which they will be competing. For example, if the competition includes a traditional relay, then you may wish to practise relay exchanges, teach how to “read” relay bibs and discuss the rules that pertain specifically to relays.
- Acquiring and becoming familiar with the Race Notice.
- Arranging for accommodations, a place to wax and store ski equipment at the hotel, meals that the team will be coordinating, transportation to and from your home community and the community hosting the event, etc.
- Preparing a trip notice with the information that parents need - accommodations, key phone numbers, a what-to-bring list for their child/athlete, transportation arrangements, departure/return times, plans for meals, etc.
- Ensuring waivers, trip payments and/or race entry fees are collected in a timely manner.
- Registering the athletes (correct names, correct categories and any other required information) prior to the deadline. Confirm at that time whether or not the race organizers received your registrations, regardless of the method you used to register. If you have the option of checking the final race registration list before you leave home, do so. Check it carefully and report any errors right away.
- Risk management: waivers, team rules, disciplinary policies and procedures, etc. Also, keep in mind that athletes in this age group require more support and supervision than older athletes do, and organizers need to plan for coach/parent support accordingly.
- A carefully planned rooming list.
- Trip evaluation forms.
- Developing a “to-bring” list for your team - e.g. waxing equipment (tools, wax table, etc.), waxes, waxing tent, team communication system (i.e. team radios), etc. Refer to section 2 for more detailed information.
- Keeping records of the above to help you plan better next time.
- Ensuring coach, athlete and parent “Code of Conduct” documents are read and understood before leaving for camps or out-of-town competitions.
- Ensuring the athletes’ ski equipment is race-ready prior to attending a competition.

### **Coach's Competition Planning Sheet #1 (working copy)**

Identify the principal tasks you, as a coach, are responsible for prior to, during and after a competition.

**Event:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

#### **The Day Before:**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

#### **Pre-Race (the morning of):**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

#### **During the Race:**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

#### **Post-Race:**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

### 7.3.2 Coach's Competition Planning Sheet #1

Identify the principal tasks you, as a coach, are responsible for prior to, during and after a competition.

Event: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

#### The Day Before:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

#### Pre-Race (the morning of):

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

#### During the Race:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

#### Post-Race:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

### **7.3.3 Athlete's Personal Race Plan**

The objective of a personal race plan is to give an athlete purpose and direction, reduce tensions and prepare him/her for a competition.

The following outline has been provided as a possible handout for athletes who are interested in learning more about how to prepare for a competition. Some of your athletes may be ready for this information – others may not be interested until they are older.

#### **Why Warm-Up?**

An appropriate warm-up routine prepares you physically and mentally to execute a race to the best of your ability. It will gradually prepare you for skiing full out by getting your body's energy systems and muscles up to prime operating temperature. Points to note:

- ❑ your warm-up should include some hard work, but not hard enough for fatigue to set in;
- ❑ the timing of your warm-up is critical because you should be well warmed up for your race, but you don't want to lose the effect of the warm-up prior to the start; and
- ❑ your warm-up routine is part of your pre-race plan and should be monitored and improved from race to race.

#### **Why Warm-Down?**

An appropriate warm-down routine should relax tight muscles, help remove waste products from your muscles, help you recover quickly if you have another race later that day or the following day, and reduce your chances of getting sick. Point to note:

- ❑ if the weather is particularly cold, or if there are other indications that hypothermia could be a possibility, then it is important for you do your warm-down with another skier.

#### **Preparing for a Race**

For you, the athlete, the planning and implementation of a personal race strategy is an important component of your preparation for a competition. Each competition should be considered a learning experience - something to look forward to and an exciting challenge on the way to self-improvement! Here are some points to consider.

#### **Pre-Race - The Day Before**

The day before the competition, your main objective is to have your planning and preparations in good order so that your race day can run as smoothly as possible.

- ❑ When you arrive at the venue you will want to inspect your competition course, either by yourself or with team-mates that will be racing the same course. Depending on your familiarity with the site and conditions, your coach may wish to ski it with you. While checking the course, you should ski over the difficult downhill sections once or twice at race pace until you establish a comfort level; unless the course conditions change significantly overnight, this may be the only time you will ski the course prior to the competition.
- ❑ At some point during the course inspection, or shortly after it is completed, you should discuss your race strategy (tactics) with your coach. Tactical decisions depend on the race format, your

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strengths and abilities as an athlete, the course conditions, your start position and the course distance/profile.

- ❑ Discuss a suitable warm-up routine with your coach. This will depend on your age, your physical fitness and the race format. For T2T and older athletes, a short “interval” should be included. At some point in time you will need to discuss and develop this procedure with your coach. Together you will learn through trial and error what works best for you.
- ❑ Discuss a suitable warm-down routine with your coach.
- ❑ The detailed club/team plan for race day (prepared by the coaches and understood by everyone on the team) is an essential part of your preparations, as is your personal race plan, and they need to be in harmony with each other in order for everything to fall into place the following day. Develop the habit of putting your plan in writing. The purpose of all this pre-race planning is to ensure that the morning of the race will be calm and well organized so that you can focus entirely on your preparations for your competition. Following the competition, you and your coach should review your personal plan and look for ways to improve it for next time.
- ❑ Ensure that you understand what the procedure will be for picking up your bib.

### **Pre-Race - The Morning of the Race**

The morning of the competition your main objectives should be: (1) to be physically ready; (2) to be mentally ready; (3) to have all your equipment in good working order; and (4) to have your skis prepared properly.

- ❑ Follow the pre-race plan you developed the day before.
- ❑ Try a slow wake up run (10-15 minutes) soon after you get up in the morning. This may or may not work for you, but at some point you will need to test it out and see if it is the right thing or not.
- ❑ Eat appropriately. What you choose is a matter of individual preference, but keep in mind that the food you eat in the last few hours before a competition should be high in carbohydrate and low in fibre. You will need to experiment to learn what works best for you. Don't eat anything you are not used to on the morning of the race.
- ❑ Experiment to find out the best time for you to eat before a competition. This could be one to four hours before your start. Three important considerations to keep in mind are:
  - ✓ don't eat a full breakfast later than three hours before start time;
  - ✓ if you are eating just one or two hours before your start, use food in a liquid form to ensure rapid absorption; and
  - ✓ don't eat so long before the race that you feel hungry before you start.
- ❑ Your coaches will give you specific instructions on when you are to arrive at the venue. Generally this will be 1.5 hours before your start time in a classic race and 1 hour before your start time in a free technique race.
- ❑ When you arrive, go to your team headquarters and check in with the coaches. Find out how the skis are being processed on that particular day, and when you should pick up your warm-up skis. If you are waxing your own warm-up skis, find out the recommended wax and prepare them.
- ❑ The timing of your warm-up is critical because you want to be well warmed-up for your event

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but you don't want to lose the effect prior to the start.

- ❑ This final pre-race period should be planned to the minute. Your warm-up routine should take your full attention and your entire focus should now be on preparing for your competition. From this point, there should be no time for anything but carrying out the plan.
- ❑ Follow the warm-up routine you planned with your coach the day before.
- ❑ You should do your warm-up routine alone so that you can be focussed on the upcoming race. Generally you would ski for about 20 minutes. You would extend this somewhat in very cold temperatures.
- ❑ Ensure that your warm-up is done correctly. This will become increasingly important as you get older. Senior athletes following a proper warm-up routine should be physically prepared for their event so that they are able to ski at the appropriate pace right from the start. Typically a good warm up increases the core temperature, uses muscles and techniques at the intensity level required during the event and sets the appropriate arousal level without your being fatigued at the start. If you are sweating when you finish a warm-up, you should change your toque and gloves before the start.
- ❑ In very cold weather, the "feeling" from the warm-up should be the same. What changes as the temperature drops is how the warm-up is done to get and maintain this "feeling". Often on a cold day you will be tempted to cut your warm-up short because you will be afraid of becoming cold. Instead, the warm-up should be long enough and intense enough for you to break into a sweat. To maintain this warmed up state, you need to minimize the amount of time you are in damp or wet clothing. In these conditions a well prepared athlete will put on dry gloves/mitts, underwear, hat (and perhaps socks) after the warm-up and before the start.
- ❑ Your warm-up routine should end about ten minutes prior to your start. Return to your team headquarters for your race skis. Test the wax out briefly before going to ski marking. Check that everything is in perfect order. This includes a final equipment check.
- ❑ Proceed through ski marking. This should take place approximately five minutes before the start.
- ❑ Once you are in the holding area you should do some dynamic exercises. You may also wish to jog or ski. It is important for you to keep warm and loose.
- ❑ It is important to concentrate on the start of the race. By keeping your focus on the start and the race process, you should be able to control anxiety effectively.
- ❑ You should enter the start gate relaxed and sweating lightly; your heart rate should be above its resting values.
- ❑ Your warm-up routine is an essential part of your pre-race plan. Evaluate it and improve on it from race to race.

## **Post-Race**

The main objective of the period immediately following the competition is to ensure a good recovery.

- ❑ One of your team coaches should be at the finish line to meet you. If you would like him/her to have your recovery drink, snack or something else you need immediately following your race, plan for this ahead of time.
- ❑ Change your toque, gloves and other wet clothing as soon as you have completed your event

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and before you do your warm-down.

- ❑ You should begin your warm-down routine as soon as possible.
- ❑ Go for an easy ski (approximately 10 to 20 minutes). If the weather is particularly cold or if there is any other indication that hypothermia could be a possibility, then it is important for you do your warm-down with another skier.
- ❑ For the best recovery, warm down at low zone one (approximate heart rate of 120).
- ❑ Note: you should not stretch for at least three hours following the end of your event.
- ❑ Within 15 minutes of the race, consume some high carbohydrate sport drink with protein and begin snacking on foods that will quickly replace the depleted fuel and nutrients from your system. The recovery drink should be at room temperature.
- ❑ The replacement of fluid is a high priority during the first hour after a competition; snacking should continue over a three to four hour period.
- ❑ Snacks should be selected from foods that are high on the glycemic index (the measure of how quickly foods are converted into fuel the body can use is called the “glycemic index”). This would include bagels, oatmeal, etc.

To better prepare for future competitions, you and your coach should analyze your race and determine whether you achieved the goals you had set. It is from this evaluation that you can develop a better strategy for next time.

**7.3.4 Athlete's Pre-Race Planning Sheet (example #1)**

**Athlete Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Check List:**

- Skis                                       Poles                                       Gloves
- Recovery Drink       Boots                                       Clothing Change
- Toque                                       Extra Food

Time Before Race Start	Activity	Notes
180 min		
150 min		
120 min		
100 min		
80 min	Pick up warm-up skis	Warm-up skis are waxed
60 min	Test warm-up skis	Give feedback on wax to coaches
40 min	Pick up race skis	Race skis should be prepared (target)
35 min		
30 min		
25 min		
20 min		

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15 min		
14 min		
13 min		
12 min		
11 min		
10 min	Check in at ski marking	
9 min		
8 min		
7 min		
6 min		
5 min		
4 min		
3 min		
2 min		
1 min		
Start		

### Athlete's Pre-Race Planning Sheet (example #2)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Goals (organization, warm-up, technique, etc.)

1) \_\_\_\_\_

2) \_\_\_\_\_

#### Plan - Evening Before Race

- Good supper
- Team meeting
- Wax skis
- Talk to my coach and finalize my personal plan for race day
- Pack equipment and clothing
- Go to bed early at \_\_\_\_\_

#### Plan - Race Day:

- Get up at \_\_\_\_\_
- Eat a healthy breakfast
- Leave for the race site at \_\_\_\_\_
- Go to team headquarters and check in with the coaches when I arrive at the venue
- Test my skis as per instructions from the coaches
- Check if I need to change my clothing, go to the bathroom or have a snack
- Ski my warm-up routine as discussed with my coach
- Arrive at the start area ten minutes before my start time
- Start at \_\_\_\_\_
- Ski hard, but with the focus on good technique
- Behave fairly towards other competitors
- Feel proud of myself
- Replace fluid and begin snacking within 15 minutes of the finish of my race
- Change clothes as necessary before doing my warm-down
- Ski ten minutes in a slow, easy warm-down with my ski-friends
- Cheer for my team mates and other competitors
- Talk about my race to my coach
- Pack up my personal belongings
- Thank one of the race volunteers for hosting the event

### 7.3.5 Athlete's Warm-Up Plan (example)

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My start time is: \_\_11:22\_\_\_. I will start my warm-up routine at: \_10:45\_\_\_\_\_

Time	Activity	Comments
10:45	Skiing	15 minutes of "Endurance" skiing
11:00	Skiing	2-3 minutes of "Intensity" skiing
11:03	Skiing	4-5 short sprints at 5 seconds each
11:04	Skiing	4 minutes "Easy" skiing
11:08	Changing clothes	Change to dry clothing if needed (i.e. top, toque, gloves, socks); add additional clothing (i.e. overcoat) - depending on temperature - to wear up until my start
11:12	Ski marking	Get my skis marked at the ski marking station; ten minutes prior to start
11:13	Holding area	Skiing back and forth and or doing a few dynamic exercises according to the plan I worked out with my coach
11: 18	Removing unnecessary clothing	Remove warm-ups four minutes before my start; if the weather is cold, keep my jacket around my shoulders until just prior to my start
11:22	Starting my race	Follow my race strategy as discussed with my coach

**Notes:**

- I can only retain the benefit of my warm-up routine for a maximum of ten minutes.
- Prior to the start I can keep warm by moving and wearing clothing suitable for the weather/ temperature.

**7.3.6 Athlete's Warm-Down Plan (example)**

Time	Activity	Comments
	Meet up with team coach in finish area	Pick up my recovery drink and snack as soon as I finish my race; begin drinking and eating within 15 minutes
	Pick up my clothes	Pick up my clothing from the coach and/or the station where the race officials have put them
	Change my clothes	Change out of my wet clothing
	Start warm-down	As soon as possible
	Ski	10 to 20 minutes easy "Easy" skiing
	Leave for home/hotel	Pack up and take all of my personal belongings with me when I leave

**Notes:**

- The reason I warm-down in Zone 1 is to get the best recovery.
- I should consume some high carbohydrate sport drink with protein within 15 minutes of the finish of my race. The drink should be at room temperature.
- I should begin snacking on foods that will quickly replace the depleted fuel and nutrients from my system within 15 minutes of the finish of my race. My snacks should be selected from foods that are high on the glycemic index (bagels, muffins, oatmeal, etc.).
- The replacement of fluid is a high priority during the first hour after my race; snacking should continue over a three to four hour period.
- I should not stretch for at least three hours following my event.

**7.3.7 Athlete's Race Evaluation Form**

1. Discuss my race goals with my coach and write them below:

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2. Compete in my race.
3. At the finish line, briefly discuss my race with my coach (i.e. "Two Stars and a Wish").
4. Follow my race warm down plan.
5. Later in the day meet with my coach (and possibly my team mates as well) to review the race. Discuss:
  - a.) my "Two Stars and a Wish" for the race I just completed;
  - b.) whether or not I achieved my race goals (why? why not?);
  - c.) what I might want to change next time;
  - d.) my overall thoughts and feelings about my race; and
  - e.) feedback from my coach.
6. Record one key point I would like to remember for next time:

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## 7.4 Providing Support at a Competition

There are a number of things a coach and his/her support team must attend to before, during and after a competition to ensure that the athletes have a positive and motivating experience. Some of the tasks are administrative in nature, such as accommodations, transportation between the hotel and race site, picking up race bibs, etc. Others are technical, physical and psychological.

The objective of this section is to give you an overview of what is required for an overnight trip to a competition in another community. Note that the list that follows is just a starting point. You need to develop your own detailed list of tasks in order to provide your athletes with a good environment in which to compete.

### 7.4.1 Race Support Checklist

- Upon arrival at your accommodations, confirm the details that were arranged ahead of time.
- Post the rooming list on a bulletin board or the door to your room so that members of the team know where they are staying and how to find each other. This is a good place to post other team messages as well.
- Once the team is settled in, drive to the race site and check it out.
- Arrange for the athletes to ski the courses they will be competing on the following day; arrange for coaching support as needed.
- Find out where you would like to set up your waxing station, where the washrooms are, where the race headquarters are, what will be available for an indoor common area, what food will be available on site, suitable locations for giving splits (if needed) and where to do your ski testing.
- If you don't already have copies of the start list from off of the internet, find out where they are and pick some up.
- Return to your accommodations and prepare for dinner.
- Hold a "support team" meeting to discuss plans for the remainder of the evening and the following day. Possible items to cover include:
  - ✓ curfew and follow up;
  - ✓ wax testing: where, who, when;
  - ✓ preparing the skis: where, who, when (both that evening and the next day); refer to section 2.3 for more detailed information;
  - ✓ logistics and the transportation schedule to the site: where, who, when;
  - ✓ splits: where, who, when;
  - ✓ bibs: where, who, when;
  - ✓ start area: when, who;
  - ✓ finish area: when, who;
  - ✓ recovery drink: where, who, when;
  - ✓ back up plans for common problems, such as an athlete leaving his/her ski boots back at the hotel; and
  - ✓ other business as required.
- Prepare for and hold a team meeting. This is an information meeting for all the coaches and athletes on your team. Attendance must be compulsory in order to reduce those problems

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that inevitably occur when some of the team are relying on second-hand information. Everyone should be asked to bring a writing pad and pen in order to record key information. If possible, use a room that is well lit and comfortable. The points covered should include:

- ✓ relevant points about the stadium area, including the start and finish areas;
  - ✓ possible areas for warm-up and warm-down;
  - ✓ a review of the race courses and race distances for each applicable category;
  - ✓ start times for each applicable category;
  - ✓ distribution of race bibs;
  - ✓ the weather forecast and the implications as to what the athletes should wear and bring with them to the race site;
  - ✓ the waxing plan for that evening, for warm-up skis and/or race skis;
  - ✓ the waxing plan for the next day for race skis;
  - ✓ key points from your “support team” meeting; and
  - ✓ the race day schedule – when and how do the race skis get to the competition site, when and from where does the team leave for the competition site, when does it return to the hotel, when is the next team meeting, etc.
  - ✓ Team meetings should be short and to the point. Specific and individual questions should be addressed one-on-one after the meeting is over.
- Discuss personal (individual) race plans with your athletes, including warm-up and warm- down routines.
  - Ensure your athletes have completed a pre-race plan for the next day.
  - Complete the team’ s detailed plan for the next day.
  - Prepare skis.
  - On race day, carry out the Team’ s race day plan.
  - If time permits, stand along the competition course at critical points and provide verbal encouragement and technique tips as your athletes pass by.
  - One of your support team should be checking the results board periodically throughout the event to make sure there are no errors with the timing; if there are, the race officials should be notified so that they can make the necessary corrections.
  - Talk to each of your athletes after the race.
  - Thank the race officials for putting on the race.
  - Pack up and return to your accommodations.
  - Debrief with your support team.

Coaching Tip: On race day your main objective is to ensure that your athletes: are physically and mentally ready, have their skis waxed properly, and have their equipment in good working order.

## 7.5 Parents and Competition

Parents play a pivotal role in determining whether or not their child has a positive learning experience when he/she takes part in a competition. It is therefore worthwhile for you and the other coaches in your club to develop a strategy for introducing new parents to some guidelines for successful sport parenting. The following tools have been provided to assist you.

### Ten Commandments for Sport Parents

1. Do not impose your ambitions on your child.
2. Be supportive, no matter what.
3. Encourage fair play.
4. Only have positive things to say at a competition.
5. Acknowledge your child's fears.
6. Do not criticize officials.
7. Respect your child's coach.
8. Be loyal and supportive of the team.
9. Encourage your child to have goals other than winning.
10. Do not expect your child to become an Olympian.

#### 7.5.1 How To Be a Successful Sport Parent

If parents want their children to come out of their sport experience as winners (feeling good about themselves and having a healthy attitude towards sport), they need to help! Parents are a vital and important part of the coach-athlete-parent team. If they do their job correctly and play their position well, then their children will learn the sport faster, perform better, really have fun and have their self-esteem enhanced as a result. Their sport experience will serve as a positive model for them to follow as they approach other challenges and obstacles throughout life. If parents “drop the ball” or run the wrong way with it, their children will stop learning, will experience performance difficulties and blocks, and will begin to really hate the sport. And that's the good news! Further, parents' relationships with their children will probably suffer significantly. As a result, children will come out of this experience burdened with feelings of failure, inadequacy and low self-esteem - feelings that will generalize to other areas in their lives. Children and their coaches need parents ON the team. They can't win – in every meaning of the word - otherwise!

The following is a list of useful facts, guidelines and strategies for parents to use to become more skilled in the “children and sport” game. Remember, no one wins unless everyone wins. Parents are needed on the team!

- ❑ **Stress process (skill acquisition, mastery and having fun), not outcome.** When athletes

choke under pressure and perform far below their potential, a very common cause of this is a focus on the outcome of the performance, i.e. win/lose, instead of the process. In any peak performance, the athlete is totally oblivious to the outcome and instead is completely absorbed in the here and now of the actual performance. An outcome focus will almost always distract and tighten up the athlete, thereby insuring a bad performance. Furthermore, focusing on the outcome, which is completely out of the athlete's control, will raise his/her anxiety to a performance inhibiting level. So, if parents truly want their children to win, they should help get their focus away from how important the contest is and onto the task at hand. Supportive parents de-emphasize winning and instead stress learning the skills and playing the game.

- **Avoid comparisons and respect developmental differences.** Supportive parents do not use other athletes that their child competes against to compare and thus evaluate their own child's progress. Comparisons are useless, inaccurate and potentially destructive. Each child matures differently, and the process of comparison ignores the significant distorting effects of developmental differences. For example, two 12-year-old boys may only have their age in common! One may physically have the build and perform like a 16 year old, while the other, a late developer, may have the physical size and attributes of a nine year old. Performance comparisons can prematurely turn off otherwise talented athletes on their sport. The only value of comparisons is in teaching. If a child demonstrates proper technique, that child can be used comparatively – but as a model only!
- **When defined the right way, competition in sport is both good and healthy and teaches children a variety of important life skills.** The word “compete” comes from the Latin words “com” and “petere”, which mean together and seeking respectively. The true definition of competition is a seeking TOGETHER, where the opponent is a partner, not the enemy! The better the opponent performs, the more chance an athlete has of having a peak performance. Sport is about learning to deal with challenges and obstacles. Without a worthy opponent and without any challenges, sport is not as much fun. The greater the challenge, the better the opportunity athletes have to go beyond their limits. World records are consistently broken and set at the Olympics because the best athletes in the world are “seeking together” and challenging each other to enhanced performance. Children should never be taught to view their opponents as the “bad guys”, the enemy or someone to be hated and “destroyed”. Parents must never model this attitude!! Instead, they should talk to and make friends with the parents of their children's opponents. Root for great performances and good plays – not just for the winner!
- **Children should be encouraged to compete against themselves.** The ultimate goal of the sport experience is to challenge oneself and continually improve. At this age, judging improvement by winning and losing is both an unfair and inaccurate measure. Winning in sports is about doing the best YOU can do, an issue that is separate from the outcome or the performance of one's opponents. Children should be encouraged to compete against their own potential, i.e. “the Peter and Patty Potential”. That is, the boys should focus on beating “Peter” (competing against themselves) while the girls challenge “Patty.” When children have this focus and compete to better themselves instead of beating someone else, they will be more relaxed, have more fun and therefore perform better.
- **Success and failure should not be defined in terms of winning and losing.** As a corollary to the point above, one of the main purposes of a child's sport experience is skill acquisition and mastery. When a child or team performs to his/her potential and loses, it is

unacceptable for a parent to focus on the outcome and be critical. On the contrary, if a child or team tries their very best and loses, the parent should encourage them to feel successful! Similarly, when a child or team performs far below their potential but wins, they should not be encouraged to think they were successful. Parents should help their children make the important distinction between success and failure and winning and losing. Remember, if parents define success and failure in terms of winning and losing, they are playing a losing game with their children!

- **Help make sport fun for your child.** It is a time proven principle of peak performance that the more fun athletes are having, the more they will learn and the better they will perform. Fun must be present for peak performance to happen at every level of sport participant, from children to world-class competitors! When children stop having fun and begin to dread practice or competition, it's time for parents to become concerned! When the sport or game becomes too serious, athletes have a tendency to burn out and become susceptible to repetitive performance problems. An easy rule of thumb for a parent is: *if your child is not enjoying what he/she is doing or loving the heck out of it – investigate!* What is going on that is preventing him/her from having fun? Is it the coaching? The pressure? Is it YOU??! Parents should keep in mind that being in a highly competitive program does not mean that there isn't room for fun. Children who continue to play after the fun is gone will soon become a drop-out statistic.
- **Be supportive, do not mix the roles of coach and parent!** A parent's role on the parent-coach-athlete team is as a Support player with a capital S!! Parents need to be their children's best fan. Unconditionally!!! They should leave the coaching and instruction to the coaches. Rather, they should provide encouragement, support, empathy, transportation, money, help with fund-raisers, etc., but.....they shouldn't coach if that is not their designated (agreed by the coach) role! Most parents who get into trouble with their children do so because they forget the important role that parents play. Coaching can interfere with the parents' important roles as supporters and fans. The last thing children need or want to hear from their parents after a disappointing performance or loss is what they did technically or strategically wrong. Parents should keep their role as a parent separate from that of coach, and if they are in the position where they are coaching their own children, they should be diligent about maintaining this separation of roles. In the start area, on the course, or during the post-race debriefing, they should say "now I'm talking to you as a coach". At home, they should say, "now I'm talking to you as a parent". The rule is: parents shouldn't parent when they coach, and shouldn't coach at home when they're supposed to be parenting.
- **Remember the importance of self-esteem in all of your interactions with your child-athlete.** Athletes of all ages and levels perform in direct relationship to how they feel about themselves. When children are in an athletic environment that boosts their self-esteem, they will learn faster, enjoy themselves more and perform better under competitive pressure. One thing all children want, and never stop wanting, is to be loved and accepted and to have their parents feel good about what they do. This is how self-esteem is established. If parents' interactions with their children make them feel good about themselves, they will, in turn, learn to treat themselves the same way. This does not mean that parents should incongruently compliment their children for a great effort after they just performed miserably. In this situation, being empathetic and sensitive to their feelings is what is called for. Self-esteem makes the world go round. If parents help their children feel good about themselves they will give them a gift that will last a lifetime. They should never interact with them in a

way that assaults their self-esteem by degrading, embarrassing or humiliating them. If parents continually put children down or minimize their accomplishments, not only will the children learn to do this to themselves throughout their life, but they will also repeat this mistake with their own children!

- **Give your child the gift of failure.** If parents really want their children to be as happy and successful as possible in everything that they do, they should teach them how to fail! The most successful people in and out of sports do two things differently than everyone else. First, they are more willing to take risks - and therefore fail more frequently. Second, they use their failures in a positive way as a source of motivation and feedback to improve. Our society is generally negative and teaches us that failure is bad, a cause for humiliation and embarrassment, and something to be avoided at all costs. Fear of failure or humiliation causes one to be tentative and non-active. In fact, most performance blocks and poor performances are a direct result of athletes being preoccupied with failing or messing up. No one learns to walk without falling enough times that they learn how. Each time that you fall your body gets valuable information on how to do it better. You can't be successful or have peak performances if you are concerned with losing or failing. If parents teach their children how to view setbacks, mistakes and risk-taking positively, they will give them the key to a lifetime of success. Failure is the perfect steppingstone to success.
- **Challenge – don't threaten.** Many parents directly or indirectly use guilt and threats as a way to "motivate" their children to perform better. Performance studies clearly indicate that while threats may provide short-term results, the long-term costs in terms of psychological health and performance are devastating. Using fear as a motivator is probably one of the worst dynamics that parents can set up with their children. Threats take the fun out of performance and directly lead to children performing terribly. Implicit in a threat, (do this or else!) is a parents' own anxiety that they do not believe their children are capable. Communicating this lack of belief, even indirectly, is further devastating to the children's performance. A challenge does not entail loss or negative consequences should the athlete fail. Further, implicit in a challenge is the empowering belief, "I think that you can do it".

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