



PARENTAL PARTICIPATION

Parents have a very important part to play in the sport. Parents clothe and equip athletes. Parents drive them to and from the mountain and to their races. Parents stand on the hill and encourage, sometimes as race volunteers. Parents make big commitments and sacrifices to support their athletes and respective clubs.

Training Sessions

Training sessions are valuable times for the coach and the skiers. Parental participation in training sessions can cause a distraction for coaches and skiers. Therefore clubs should normally discourage parents from joining in training sessions. Young skiers will become more independent and better skiers when given "elbow room" on the slope. Adult training sessions should take place separately to the children's race sessions.

Parent-Coach Communications

It is important that parents communicate with the coaches but this should be at an appropriate time and place after training sessions. The decisions coaches make regarding coaching philosophies, training plans, athlete development and athlete management are the products of experience, careful thought and collaboration. Parents should trust and respect coaches' decisions regarding programmes and individual athletes. If parents have questions or comments in this area then they should communicate directly with the head coach. Parents should not interfere with programme activities or "take matters into their own hands".

Competitive skiing requires athletes to develop patience, focus and confidence. The "mental" part of the sport presents challenges for coaches, athletes and parents. It can sometimes be difficult to keep things in perspective on race days. For parents, the urge to coach, provoke and criticize athletes can be almost irresistible. Young athletes will not perform at their best when receiving advice and direction from the "sidelines".

It is hard for children to remain relaxed, confident and to maintain a love for the sport in the face of unrealistic expectations or criticism for their efforts.

RACE DAY DO'S FOR PARENTS

- Nutrition and clothing are just as important (more!) than wax. A nutritionally balanced breakfast, healthy snacks and water or still drinks should be available. Ensure that in all the turmoil of race day children have a light lunch or small snacks throughout. Weather is unpredictable, an extra neck warmer, gloves, goggles and socks are recommended.
- Arrive at the race in good time. A hurried athlete is a stressed athlete and that is the worst ingredient for race day. Check with the coach on the previous day with regards to time and meeting place.
- Skis should be tuned and waxed the night before.

- Try to avoid the "Finish" or result board. This sends the message that race time and results are the single most important thing.
- Think before speaking to athletes – what may seem helpful to an adult can be seen as a criticism to a child. Leave technical advice and comments to the coaches; parents should create a positive environment, welcoming smiles and perhaps a good joke! Children should be aware that parental disappointment is for them and not in them.
- Try to support all athletes. A compliment from someone else's parent/carer could be the key to a child's best day.
- Relax and enjoy the day!

RACE DAY DON'T'S FOR PARENTS

- Leave course inspection to the coaches. Coaches will have worked on specific things with each athlete and are able to pinpoint what that athlete needs to be thinking about. Too much information or a change of focus on race day can have a negative effect.
- Parents should normally stay away from the "Start" area. An athlete needs to be able to focus on the race and this can often be hard when parents are present. Again, each coach is very aware of what each child should be doing in preparation for his/her run.
- Whether watching the race or back in the "lodge", keep negative comments about other children, coaches or the running of the race to yourself. Racers will quickly pick up on these comments, use them as excuses and will carry them around for the rest of the day.
- Video plays a key role in the development of ski racers, but it has a specific time and place. Athletes tend to focus on what they have done wrong after watching video and so watching their first run is not a positive thing. Athletes can also be given different information or a new focus from what a coach has been working on with them.
- Keep video analysis at home relaxed, short, positive and fun. Give athletes the chance to watch it alone and give their own feedback.
- Last but certainly not least coaching is done during training. Race day is where all the information on technique, inspection, line tactics, psychology and sportsmanship from training sessions should come together. It is often said, "if you didn't bring it with you, you won't find it here".

Give positive guidance, support and understanding and then stand back and watch the athletes develop.

