



SKI RACING AND ACADEMICS
A WMSC GUIDE FOR ATHLETES AND PARENTS

WMSC
whistler mountain ski club

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Introduction

The commitment to ski racing will, at times, necessitate time away from school. Starting initially with the occasional day in K1, school absences can soon increase. A very competitive FIS racer is often absent for extended periods of time and, at the peak of the season, may rarely be at school. While for some such demands limit an athlete's participation in ski racing, others are able to thrive both on and off the hill and often end up on the honor roll at school – despite their extended absences. Then, as the athlete approaches graduation from high school, many hope that the hard work will pay off in terms of ski scholarships to universities.

This guide has been put together to help athletes and parents navigate their way through the integration of ski racing and academics. There are two sections. In the first, suggestions are offered for when the athlete is at high school. In the second section information regarding University ski racing is presented along with some guidelines for those who are hoping to secure some form of university funding for ski racing.

Part One: The High School Years

Ski racing does not in itself require athletes to miss more than the occasional day of school. It is possible to compete at a recreational level while placing a high priority on attending school. However, as athletes progress in their ski racing career those who wish to compete at an intense level will soon find they will be missing a considerable amount of school, particularly if they choose to go to FIS. Extended training on Thursdays or Fridays, training camps in Colorado, Mt. Hood or Chile combined with race series that, with travel, last several days place a lot of demands on athletes' time.

At WMSC we recognize that the integration of an athlete's academic goals with his or her ski racing ambitions is a challenge. Ultimately parents and athletes, working together with the school and WMSC, must determine a program that best meets academic obligations while at the same time maximizing the athlete's ski racing potential and opportunities. There is no easy answer as to how such integration is best accomplished, as each case is different. However this is not a new challenge and for many years athletes and parents have faced the same issue. This guide is a compilation of some of those strategies that have previously worked for others.

When considering the successful integration of ski racing and academics, four parties play a significant role: the school, WMSC, parents and athletes. While all four must be involved they each have clearly differentiated responsibilities. In the early years is typically up to the parent to manage these different relationships. However, as the athlete matures so he or she will be able to take increasing responsibility for managing school and ski racing commitments.

The School

Schools vary in their acceptance of absences for ski racing. Often this is dictated by history. Those schools that have successfully worked with ski racers in the past are typically more supportive than those who have not worked with ski racers and perhaps see ski racing as a luxury. Likewise, individual teachers will also offer a wide range of support. While some teachers are willing to be flexible and provide alternatives for the athletes others perhaps have many demands already and may resent offering a somewhat individualized program for a ski racer.

Some schools offer customized programs for high-performance athletes. In West Vancouver, Sentinel and Rockridge currently offer such a program called “Super Achievers”. In this program, provisions are made by staff to ensure that students have an opportunity to satisfy course requirements: granting of assignments prior to departure, extending deadlines for projects, and rescheduling of exams when students have given them adequate warning of impending training sessions, competitions or performances. Schools that have active high school ski teams are also likely to be supportive of ski racing.

Parents and athletes need to work with the school to create a program that is realistic given the athletes ski racing commitments, yet does not unduly compromise academic standards. The effort you put into working with the school will need to increase as school absences increase. You may wish to consider the following:

- Make sure the school understands what is involved in ski racing. To help in this regard, WMSC has produced an overview for schools [included at the end of this guide]. Feel free to distribute this to teachers.
- Find out which other ski racers attend the school. Have conversations with their parents to determine successful strategies and identify supportive teachers.
- If possible try and request teachers who are flexible and supportive of elite athletes. They should also be tech-savvy. Teachers who have their lessons online and are able to field e-mail questions from athletes are ideal.
- Supply dates of absences well ahead of time. Many parents give the teachers the dates on which the athlete will be absent during the upcoming term at the start of each term. A reminder shortly before the absence then follows this up.
- If possible ask teachers not to schedule tests immediately upon the athletes return to school. Typically athletes will need a few days to get caught up and few are able to study effectively for a test when away.
- Try and ensure there is a single teacher who is overseeing your athlete. Such a "go to" person can prove to be invaluable in ensuring your athlete has a coordinated and manageable academic program.
- Meet with the school at the end of ski season to prepare for the upcoming season. By meeting in May, plans can be made for the summer and off-season. Meeting when the season starts or just before the first race is simply too late for most teachers.

- As the absences from school increase, so it is likely that some work will need to be done during the summer months. Appropriate summer courses can be identified with the school in May. If the school does not offer anything directly, online or paper based courses can be taken through the Vancouver Learning Network (<http://vlns.ca/index.php>).
- In selecting which courses to take consider the following:
 - Some students elect to take social studies, as these are self-contained courses that do not build on each other year after year.
 - Planning 10 is a popular option for many
 - It is challenging to take English 11 or 12 online, as the reading load can be quite overwhelming.
 - Many courses do not have to be completed entirely in the summer. Students have a full year to complete them. However, many athletes work hard during the summer to do as much as they can give their summer training commitments and finish the course off in the fall.
 - Many schools are willing to give an exemption from Phys Ed for highly competitive athletes. However Phys Ed 10 is a provincial requirement and so exemption may not be possible in this case.
- If the high school has a ski racing team, make sure you support it. Although at times it may seem to be an inconvenience, it is important that you “give back” to the school for their cooperation in supporting your athlete’s ski racing ambitions.

High-performance athletes can obtain credits for ski racing. Four credits are available for each of grades 10, 11 and 12. For grade 10 athletes must have been selected by BC Alpine for a high-performance or B2B program or have previously participated in the BC Winter Games. For grade 11 athletes must compete in FIS and be part of the BC Development Team. For grade 12 athletes must be on the BC Ski Team. Credits are secured by submitting to the school a letter of confirmation from BC Alpine. This letter will be coordinated through WMSC. Information is available here:

http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/graduation/ext_credentials/sports_programs.php.

WMSC

While WMSC cannot directly offer academic support, we recognize it is essential that we provide an environment that will facilitate athletes' academic success. To this end WMSC is committed to the following:

- Ensuring study blocks are set-aside during all the training camps and races whenever possible.
- Ensuring that all athletes have access to the Internet while away.
- When possible, ensuring athletes have access to a quiet room in which they can study and complete homework.
- Helping educate the school on the nature of ski racing. If it is useful, coaches are available to attend athletes' schools and to meet with key teachers.
- Providing a schedule well ahead of time so that teachers and athletes may plan accordingly for absences.
- Coordinating letters from BC Alpine for eligible athletes in grades 10, 11 and 12 to gain credits for ski racing

WMSC can provide the environment that will help support athletes academic goals. However, it should be pointed out that coaches are not teachers. While they can ensure that an appropriate environment is provided, they will not provide homework supervision. While away, whether at training camps or races, coaches' days are full and as such they simply do not have the time nor necessarily the expertise to supervise athletes' academics. Ultimately the responsibility for this must rest with each athlete.

Parents

Parents play a key role in helping athletes pursue both academic and ski racing goals. They are the key liaison between the ski club, school and athlete. As the athlete matures, increasingly he or she can assume this role. However, in the early days, the onus very much rests with the parents

Perhaps the most important advice we can give parents is to be proactive. Having your son or daughter miss numerous days of school due to ski racing and then expressing concern when the report card comes home create stress for all. A far better strategy is to get out in front of it through careful planning and organization.

It is parents who must help their athletes find the most appropriate balance between ski racing and academic goals. This varies for each athlete and for each year. Generally though, the more successful the athlete is in ski racing the more time they will be absent from school. When not skiing, these athletes will be focusing on their academics – regardless of the time of year. As a consequence there will be little time for recreational activities and those things that peers of their age may be doing. Some athletes are so committed to ski racing and academic success that they are willing to make these sacrifices. Others are not and yearn for a more balanced life. Parents need to continually engage in conversations with their athlete to help them through this process and decide on their best options.

While it is challenging to integrate ski racing and academics, it can be done. There are numerous examples of WMSC athletes who have achieved high levels of academic success while at the same time being successful competitors. Ironically, such students seem to do better when they do not attend school full-time. The individual commitment that is required both on and off the hill often drives them to great results. When the pressure is off they can sometimes lose this focus.

Parents have adopted many different strategies to help their ski racing athlete achieve academic success. As you make your way on this journey you may wish to consider the following:

- Build relationships with other parents and find out what has worked for them. In particular, as your athlete prepares to transition to a new school, find out where other athletes attend school and if possible arrange for your athlete to attend the one that seems most supportive of ski racing while also, of course, meeting your academic criteria.
- Build relationships with key teachers and advocates within your child's school. While they may not directly teach your athlete, they may help navigate the waters for you. Consider school counselors, teachers that lead the high school ski team, or other senior teachers who would be willing to partner with you to ensure your athlete does not fall between the cracks.
- Recognize that while athletes will be expected to fulfill their academic obligations during any training camp, this is not necessarily possible on all race days. Depending on the circumstances, on race days athletes may rise early, spend an emotionally draining day on the ski hill and then be required to

prepare their skis for the following day of racing. This may carry on for several days in a row. While WMSC will endeavor to provide study blocks for athletes even on race days, many find they are simply incapable of doing quality work during an intense race series. Sometimes athletes and parents do better by accepting that the opportunities for homework are limited at races and plan to catch up when they return home, rather than setting aggressive academic goals and feeling guilty or frustrated when they fail to accomplish these goals when away at races.

- Keep your athlete's head coach informed about what is happening at school. While coaches cannot act as tutors, it is helpful for them to know the academic goals of the athlete and parents and ensure a ski racing program is designed that recognizes these goals as well as ski racing aspirations. Many athletes view the coaches as mentors or role models and as such coaches can play a key role in offering support for academic achievement. For example, they may help parents and athletes decide on whether the athlete should participate in a training camp, which will necessitate numerous days away from school.
- As mentioned earlier, meet with the school at the end of ski season so an appropriate summer program can be developed.
- Ensure your athlete has the tools to do the job. In many cases this requires purchasing a computer for them sooner than you might otherwise have done.
- Do not over schedule your athlete. Work with them to make smart decisions on how they spend the time. As mentioned earlier as absences from school increase, so any spare time they have spare time will be need to be committed to their studies.
- Ensure they are able to talk to you about how things are going. The path a serious ski racer has chosen is a tough one and it is very easy for them to sometimes feel overwhelmed. Make sure they are maintaining a healthy attitude about their commitments be they on the ski hill or at school. Never hesitate to change plans throughout the season if it is in the best interests of your athlete. Sometimes missing a less than critical race series is all that is needed to get back on track for the rest of the season. However, make sure you include the head coach in these discussions.

The Athlete

Ultimately the integration of ski racing goals with academic ambitions is the responsibility of the athlete. The school, the club and parents have a critical role to play in supporting this but when all is said and done it is the choices the athlete makes that will determine success.

As an athlete progresses through their ski racing career they will, as in anything, have to make decisions regarding their commitment to the sport. Ski racing affords athletes a wide range of options ranging from those for whom it is simply an enjoyable weekend activity in which they learn a great skill and make wonderful friends. At the other end of the spectrum we have those talented athletes who harbor ambitions to represent their province and country. As an E2 or K1 most are unclear as to where they're going with the sport. However as a K2 and certainly by the time they are in FIS their ambitions and goals have typically become clearer.

Those athletes who are committed to serious competition are faced with a challenging yet immensely rewarding schedule. In signing up for ski racing they are also signing up for the development of a wide range of life skills. Those that are able to develop these skills typically succeed academically. Those that struggle may ultimately have to choose between ski racing and school.

Just as we encourage parents to talk to each other and share strategies, so should athletes do the same. If you know of an athlete who appears to be succeeding well both at school and on the slopes encourage your athlete to connect with them to determine how they are making it work.

To succeed at school the ski racing athlete needs to demonstrate the following:

- **Discipline.** It takes incredible discipline to remain committed to an academic program while ski racing. To train all day on the hill, do a rigorous dryland session, come home and tune skis for the next day of training, and then to sit down and study for a few hours is tough. After a daily schedule like this most of us would likely prefer to “veg” out in front of the TV or curl up with a good novel. However this is a luxury that is not afforded to our athletes. It requires discipline on their part to follow through with their academic commitments.

- Responsibility. To succeed at school athletes must take on the responsibility for their learning. Parents can help set the stage, but ultimately athletes must coordinate things with each of their teachers. This may mean meeting with the teachers, communicating with peers, taking the initiative to ask questions and clarify assignments and a whole host of other activities.
- Organization. Athletes must be well organized if they are to succeed at school. They always need to be looking ahead and planning appropriately. They need to keep careful track of assignments that are due and resources they need to complete these assignments. When away at a ski race or training camp there will be no teachers there to remind them.
- Focus. To complete the work that they have missed at school, athletes require a high degree of focus. Those who easily get distracted with videogames or Facebook will soon find themselves struggling.

Part Two: University Racing and Ski Scholarships

Ski racing costs a great deal of money and as athletes enter FIS many parents and athletes alike start wondering if it would be possible to reap some rewards and attend a university through a ski scholarship. Presented in this guide is an overview of the Collegiate racing in the US, how scholarships are awarded, and what parents and athlete's can do to continue ski racing while at college and possibly secure a ski scholarship.

An Overview

The organization of collegiate ski racing in the US is quite complex and, as with ski racing around the world, is both dynamic and political. What follows is an overview of how the system is organized at the present time. There are two factors that define the type of ski racing that occurs at the college level – the college affiliation (NCAA or USCSA) and in which races the College chooses to compete (NCAA or USCSA races).

The most competitive ski racing occurs between colleges that are members of the NCAA and who choose to race against other NCAA affiliated schools. The NCAA oversees 88 championships in 23 sports. There are more than 400,000 student-athletes competing in three divisions at over 1,000 colleges and universities within the NCAA. The NCAA is made up of three membership classifications that are known as Divisions I, II and III. Each division creates its own rules governing personnel, amateurism, recruiting, eligibility, benefits, financial aid, and playing and practice seasons – consistent with the overall governing principles of the Association. Each College Athletic Department must affiliate its core program with one of the three divisions. Division I schools may offer athletic scholarships, Division II is intermediate while Division III is a non-scholarship level. Skiing is “divisionally blind” as all NCAA classification compete together towards the same championship. So while the colleges may be at different NCAA levels, this has no impact on ski racing in which Level I NCAA schools compete equally with NCAA Level II and III schools.

NCAA races are organized into two regions. The Eastern region is known as the Eastern Intercollegiate Ski Association (EISA, <http://www.eisaskiing.org/>) and the Western

region is Rocky Mountain Intercollegiate Ski Association (RMISA, www.rmisaskiing.com). Alongside Alpine races are Nordic races, also run under the umbrella of the EISA or RMISA. The EISA annually hosts six Winter Carnival competitions starting in mid-January while the RMISA hosts five. Regional Championships are then held which lead to the National NCAA championships.

NCAA ski races are FIS races operating under the United States Ski Association (USSA) guidelines. The caliber of the field is extremely high with most athletes being competitive at the NorAm level and some being current or former National Team members. With such a high level of racing, it is important for athletes to recognize that College level skiing can offer a very attractive alternative to the athlete remaining competitive while at the same time earning an undergraduate degree. As one coach put it, *“Athletes need to know that college skiing is by no means an end game and in no way precludes the option of racing for a national team following graduation.”*

Colleges are restricted in the number of athletes they can bring to NCAA races. Only six men and six women are allowed to “score” (although a team may race perhaps as many as ten athletes per gender) and these must be the same for both slalom and GS. A Canadian quota and a US Development quota are also allotted for athletes who are not members of one of the NCAA colleges competing in the race series. Athletes must qualify for the NCAA championships in which only 35 athletes of each gender compete.

The United States Collegiate Ski and Snowboard Association (USCSA, www.uscsa.com) is another organization, separate from the NCAA, which organizes ski races in the US. Aside from Alpine, it also includes SkiX programs as well as those from Nordic, Snowboarding, Freestyle and Ski Jumping.

The USCSA has a broad membership of over 420 Alpine programs. However, by far the majority of these programs are club teams, which are not funded through Colleges’ athletic programs. Many club teams are quite social and rely on fundraising to support their activities. While athletes may race, it is not generally at the same elite level as those that race within the NCAA program. The exceptions to this are those USCSA colleges who operate a varsity (as distinct from club) program. Varsity programs are



funded by the Colleges' athletics departments may recruit athletes and may offer some athletic scholarships.

The USCSA is divided into 11 regional conferences and races are organized within these conferences culminating with regional championships and the National USCSA championships. USCSA races have a different feel to them as compared with NCAA as in USCSA races scoring is done as a team, not individually.

Within some of the USCSA conferences there are a few NCAA colleges who choose to compete under the umbrella of the USCSA. One of the prime reasons for this is that they are allowed 10 athletes per gender at USCSA races versus the six at NCAA races. Conversely, some USCSA affiliated colleges' race as guest teams at NCAA races. These USCSA teams will choose to do this because they are looking for a higher level of competition than is available in their USCSA regional conference.

In order to ensure a healthy degree of competition, in the Eastern conference all NCAA schools who choose to compete in the USCSA do so within the same division known as the MacConnell division. Thus although they compete under the USCSA umbrella, schools competing in the MacConnell division are in many ways as competitive as those who are competing in EISA races.

At the time of writing the colleges listed below have active and competitive ski racing teams. Two lists are presented. The first identifies teams that race NCAA, while the second list identifies those teams who race USCSA. The affiliation of each school and the ski association to which they are aligned for racing is also shown. As explained earlier, this may or may not be the same as the organizing body for the races the team competes in. Please be aware that this list, while being current at the time of writing, is subject to change.

The following colleges compete in NCAA races:

College	NCAA Division & Ski association	Website (men's and women's)
Bates College, Lewiston, ME	3 EISA	http://www.bateskiing.com/about.html
Boston College, Chestnut Hill, MA	1 EISA	http://bceagles.cstv.com/sports/m-ski/bc-m-ski-body.html or http://bceagles.cstv.com/sports/w-ski/bc-w-ski-body.html
Colby College, Waterville, ME	3 EISA	http://www.colby.edu/athletics_cs/mens_alpine_skiing/
Colby-Sawyer College, New London, NH	3 EISA	http://www.colby-sawyerathletics.com/index.aspx?path=alpine&
Colorado Mountain College, Glenwood Springs, CO	Not NCAA affiliated (guest team) RMISA	http://www.coloradomtn.edu/cms/one.aspx?pageld=3572319
Dartmouth College, Hanover, NH	1 EISA	http://www.dartmouth.edu/~dartski/alpine/alpine_men/alpinemen.htm or http://www.dartmouth.edu/~dartski/alpine/alpine_women/alpinewomen.htm
Harvard University, Cambridge, MA	1 EISA	http://www.harvardskiing.org/
Middlebury, Vermont	3 EISA	http://middleburyskiing.org/

Montana State University–Bozeman	1 RMISA	http://www.msubobcats.com/index.aspx?path=wski
Plymouth State College, Plymouth, NH	3 EISA	http://athletics.plymouth.edu/sports/skiing/index
St Lawrence University, Canton, NY	3 EISA	http://www.stlawu.edu/athletics/saints/alpine+skiing
St Michael's College, Vermont	2 EISA	http://www.smcathletics.com/sports/skiing/index
University of Alaska, Anchorage	2 RMISA	http://www.goseawolves.com/SportSelect.dbml?&DB_OEM_ID=13400&SPID=6369&SPSID=58421
University of Colorado, Boulder	1 RMISA	http://www.colorado.edu/studentgroups/coloradoskiracing/
University of Denver	1 RMISA	http://www.denverpioneers.com/SportSelect.dbml?&DB_OEM_ID=18600&SPID=10869&SPSID=90235
University of New Hampshire, Durham, NH	1 EISA	http://unhwildcats.com/sports/mskiing/index or http://unhwildcats.com/sports/wskiing/index
University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, NM	1 RMISA	http://www.golobos.com/sports/c-ski/nm-c-ski-body.html
University of Utah, Salt Lake City	1 RMISA	http://utahutes.cstv.com/sports/c-ski/utah-c-ski-body.html
University of Vermont, Burlington, VT	1 EISA	http://uvmathletics.com/index.aspx?path=ski&

Westminster College, Salt Lake City	Not NCAA affiliated (guest team) RMISA	http://www.westminstergriffins.com/index.aspx?path=wskiing&
Williams College, Williamstown, MA	3 EISA	athletics.williams.edu

The following schools compete in USCSA races and, if not NCAA affiliated, have USCSA varsity racing teams:

College	NCAA affiliation & USCSA Division	Website (men's and women's)
Babson College, Babson Park, MA	NCAA 3 MacConnell division	http://www.babsonathletics.com/sports/c-ski/index
Brown University, Providence, Rhode Island	NCAA 1 MacConnell division	http://www.brownbears.com/sports/c-ski/index . (Women only)
Castleton State College, Vermont	NCAA 3 MacConnell division	http://www.csc.vsc.edu/athletics/skiing/index.htm
Clarkson University, Potsdam, NY	NCAA III MacConnell division	http://www.clarksonathletics.com/index.aspx?tab=alpineski2&path=alpine
College of Idaho, Caldwell, ID	Not NCAA affiliated Northwest division	http://www.collegeofidaho.edu/athlete/skiing



Rocky Mountain College, Billings, Montana	Not NCAA affiliated Grand Teton division	http://www.rocky.edu/athletics/mensski/MensSki.shtml or http://www.rocky.edu/athletics/womensski/WomensSki.shtml
Sierra Nevada College, Lake Tahoe, NV	Not NCAA affiliated Nor Cal Division	http://www.sierranevada.edu/index.php?id=778
St Anselm College, Manchester, New Hampshire	NCAA 2 MacConnell division	http://athletics.anselm.edu/sports/mskiing/index or http://athletics.anselm.edu/sports/wskiing/index
St. Olaf College, Northfield, Minnesota	NCAA 3 Grand Teton division	http://www.stolaf.edu/athletics/alpski/men/ or http://www.stolaf.edu/athletics/alpski/women/
UBC	Not NCAA affiliated Northwest division	http://www.gothunderbirds.ca/

Racing in Canada

At the time of writing, no Canadian universities have NCAA ski racing teams and only the University of British Columbia has a varsity USCSA team.

Within Quebec, a number of Universities participate in the Québec University Alpine Ski circuit (<http://www.sportetudiant-stats.com/universitaire/ski/index.php>). These Universities are Montreal, Concordia, Laval, UQAM and McGill. The Quebec University Ski Circuit consists of university-F.I.S. races and standard university races spanning the Quebec region at hills such as Mont Saint-Sauveur, Mont Sutton, Le Relais, Le Massif and more. The McGill Ski Team has an athletic based scholarship available to one male and one female athlete per year. The scholarship can be maintained from year to year based on previous year's performance.

Making the Team

Some parents assume that because their athlete is an accomplished ski racer and has had some success in FIS, a ski scholarship is assured. This is not the case by any means. Even if the head coach of the University ski team invites the racer to join the team, funding is by no means assured. In many cases making the team and securing funding are two distinct and discrete steps in the process.

While each university has their own criteria, in general both academic and ski racing achievements are taken into account by the head coach when assessing an athlete's suitability as a member of the University ski team.

Academic Achievements

All universities will pay close attention to an athlete's academic achievements. Given that all the universities are in the US, athletes will be required to take their SAT or ACT. These standardized tests can be taken more than once and the best results from reading, writing and math combined to create a "super score". It is certainly advantageous for athletes to take this test multiple times.

The results of this exam combined with school achievements will be a key factor in a university determining whether or not to offer a place at the College to the prospective student. While some universities acknowledge that ski racing will have taken time away from academics, athletes must demonstrate that they have met at least the minimum criteria for academic entrance into the University. In many cases a minimum SAT score determines this. Each university sets this minimum. For instance:

- At Harvard the coach tells us that he has had pretty good luck with athlete's who have scored 2100 on SAT's and have an A to A- average in high school.
- At Middlebury there is a minimum SAT or ACT test score. It varies yearly but is generally 1860-1900 SAT and 26/27 ACT.
- At the University of New Hampshire, test scores by the last year's admitted first-year students indicate that the average SAT combined score was 1650 and the average ACT composite score was 25.

Athletes should also be aware that while some colleges look at the full SAT score; others may look only at English or Math.

Ski Racing Accomplishments

Each university varies regarding the ski racing accomplishments the head coach looks for in the racer. While representation on a provincial ski team is certainly an asset, this in itself is not sufficient. Rather head coaches' look at FIS points and results in competitions such as NorAms or intercollegiate races. One of the best ways to find out the competitive level of the current team is to log on to the ski team web site, look up the current roster and determine the FIS points of current team members. These will give you an idea of the competitive level of the current team.

While each university is different as a rule of thumb the athlete's FIS points should be 40 or lower in both GS and Slalom. Most of the competitions are in these two disciplines and so universities are less interested in Downhill or Super G results.

To be competitive in the collegiate races athletes generally need to be skiing at about 30 point level or lower. Many collegiate races have a penalty of 15 points. By way of example:

- At the University of New Hampshire, on average incoming freshmen have FIS points in the 40's or better.
- Conversely, in terms of the depth of the current Harvard team, anything under 75 FIS points would make our men's team, while in order to make or women's team, you would probably need at least one event in the low 40's to high 30's for FIS points.
- At Bates, both men and women should have FIS points 60 or lower prior to their senior year in high school with the expectation that they will be 50's or lower when they enter Bates.

Some coaches look specifically at the results history of each athlete to see what their "normal performance" is and what their DNF-rate is. Coaches may initially look at FIS points and then look at where those results were scored. They also look at consistency of results and signs of continued improvement. Experience at NorAms and in Europe is also preferred. Coaches also really like to see prospective athletes in action. Thus

athletes should consider racing head to head against college athletes in collegiate races. A good way to attract a coach's attention is to beat some of their current team members!

Luck/Timing

Each university ski team consists of a defined number of athletes. As mentioned, only six athletes of each gender are allowed at NCAA races while 10 of each gender are allowed at USCSA races. It is only when these individual athletes leave the university that there are openings for additional athletes. Thus there is a certain amount of luck involved in this process. If a university team consists primarily of first or second years then it is unlikely they will be looking to recruit new athletes to their ski team. However if a large number of athletes will be graduating, more places will be available.

Entry Date

The NCAA allows only four years of competition. The clock starts ticking either when the athlete starts college full time during a regular term or they turn 21. Thus athletes should pay careful attention to the timing of when they apply to colleges. While they may choose to focus on ski racing on completion of the high school years, they would be well advised to ensure they are racing at the collegiate level by the time they are 21. Colleges are likely to be less interested in those who have turned 21 and thus cannot race for the college for the full four years. Athletes at NCAA Division 1 institutions do have 4 years of competition that can be spread over a 5 year period.

It is also important to recognize that if athletes who have completed high school, have not yet started college but are taking the occasional college class may begin their NCAA clock. This comes in to play often, as skiers will often take a year or two between High School and College to compete and improve their academic resume as they apply to colleges. The NCAA clock starts when a student has been enrolled on a full-time basis. The college, not the NCAA, determines what is full-time and what is part-time. For some colleges, full-time may be three classes per semester, for others it may be two and for others it may be just one. It is critical that athletes determine

ahead of time what defines full-time versus part-time at the college through which they take their courses.

Amateurism

All college athletes must meet the criteria for amateurism and will need to complete the NCAA eligibility criteria (see later on in this document). It is important not to accept award money that “exceeds actual and necessary expenses”. Compensated FIS race entry fees appear to be fine, but excessive prize money may violate an athlete’s amateurism.

Funding Sources

Thus although you may be invited to join the ski team, this in itself does not in any way mean that your education will be paid for. However, depending upon the college it may be possible to piece together a funding package comprised of a partial athletic scholarship, academic scholarship and scholarship based on financial need.

Athletic scholarships

Ski scholarships are few and far between and, in cases where they do exist, vary tremendously. At one end of the spectrum is the full ride, which could include funding for tuition, books, fees as well as room and board. At the University of Denver the value of this is upward of \$50,000 annually. More common are partial or "cocktail" scholarships which provide assistance of anywhere between \$2,000 and \$10,000. While some schools such as the University of New Hampshire, University of Vermont, University of Alaska or University of Denver to offer athletic scholarships to skiers, most do not. Scholarships can only be awarded on a yearly basis. There is no such thing as a 4 year scholarship. Every scholarship is reassessed at the end of the season and can be increased, decreased, or taken away.

Given the scarcity of ski scholarships it is typically only the very competitive athletes that are likely to qualify for funding in this regard. For most universities athletes have to be national team members or winning NorAms to be considered. For example:

- At the University of New Hampshire, as a general guideline an athlete would need FIS points in the 20's in SL or GS to approach a full scholarship while points in the low 40's may earn an athlete a partial scholarship.
- At the University of Denver, athletes with points under 25 would be considered.
- Conversely, Sierra Nevada offers the following guidelines:
 - *For Full-Tuition Scholarships*
 - Male athletes with fewer than 30 FIS points in either SL or GS, and fewer than 40 in the other event will be considered
 - Female athletes with fewer than 35 FIS points in either SL or GS, and fewer than 45 in the other event will be considered
 - *For Partial-Tuition Scholarships*
 - Male athletes with fewer than the 50 FIS points in either SL or GS, and fewer than 60 in the other event will be considered
 - Female athletes with fewer than 55 FIS points in either SL or GS, and fewer than 65 points in the other event will be considered

Only NCAA Division I or USCSA colleges can offer athletic scholarships. However, Division I colleges that are Ivy League (Brown, Dartmouth, Harvard) are not allowed to offer athletic scholarships. Division II or III are also not allowed to offer financial assistance. The exception to this is University of Alaska, which, although it is a Division II school, can offer full athletic scholarships. It is Division II simply because it has insufficient sports to meet the Division I criteria.

Within the NCAA, colleges are allowed to fund a maximum of 6.3 men and 7.0 women on the ski team. As this is expected to cover both Alpine and Nordic, partial funding is generally the rule of thumb. To the best of our knowledge no athletic funding is available for members of any Canadian varsity ski teams.

The amount of funding available also depends upon who is already being funded on the team. If an athlete on a full scholarship graduates then it is more likely that that money be allocated to a second or third-year team member who has already proved his or herself. It is rare that a first-year be fully funded. It is more likely that an athlete

will be accepted on the team, perhaps if they are lucky with a partial athletic scholarship and be funded to a greater extent in their later years. However, at some universities if the head coach is anxious to recruit the athlete he or she may have some sway with the admissions department in terms of creating a financially manageable packet through partial funding from athletic and academic scholarships as well as those offered based on financial need.

Academic

All colleges offer academic scholarships for eligible students. The application for athletic scholarships in no way precludes academic scholarships. In many cases athletic and academic scholarships are combined for a talented student.

Financial Need

Colleges also consider the financial ability of the family to pay for the student. Head coaches are typically kept at arm's length from this assessment, which is completed through admissions departments.

Funding for ski racing

Regardless of whether or not the athlete has received any form of financial assistance for his or her education, athletes who are members of the ski team typically have their ski racing paid for. Although again this varies by college and is dependent upon the size of the athletic department, the college may pay for such things as travel, entry fees, team uniforms, and even in some cases the cost of equipment. Thus although the cost of education may not be paid for, by racing for a collegiate ski team it may be possible to cover the large part of the cost of ski racing. This is not the case for USCSA teams racing at the club level who instead turn to fundraising to support their racing activities

The Recruiting Process

NCAA Certification

All athletes applying to Division I NCAA schools must be certified by the NCAA through the NCAA Eligibility Centre

(http://web1.ncaa.org/ECWR2/NCAA_EMS/NCAA_EMS.html) This is essentially a clearing house that tracks students. The NCAA Eligibility Center certifies the academic and amateur credentials of all college-bound student-athletes who wish to compete in NCAA Division I or II athletics. More information can be found at <http://www.ncaapublications.com/productdownloads/CBSA.pdf>.

This is a necessary but relatively straightforward process. Athletes must take responsibility for registering with the NCAA and submitting transcripts and SAT or ACT scores.

Deciding on the Right College

The first step in the recruiting process is for the athlete to determine which college they would like to attend. This process should start 18 months to two years prior to the athlete wishing to attend college. For example if an athlete intends to go directly to college from high school, in grade 11 they should start the process of considering which college they wish to attend.

All coaches' stress that athletes should select the school that is the best fit for them – regardless of the ski team. The ski team and the possibility of athletic scholarships should in no way be the number one driver for college selection. As one coach put it:

“When choosing a college, don't simply make the choice by which school has the best reputation or the best ski team. You are going to spend four years at a school, make sure you are happy and comfortable with the program of studies they offer and with the environment/setting of the campus and the personality of the students at the school.”

Preparing a Portfolio

Athletes will be required to introduce themselves to the coaches. To this end it is prudent to prepare a portfolio of their ski racing history to date as well as academic and other achievements. While this may be done on paper, increasingly athletes are building their own websites, which can be constantly updated with current results and videos.

When and how to contact the college

Once an athlete has determined which colleges they might be interested in attending they should make contact via e-mail with the head coach. E-mail addresses can be found through going to the websites listed earlier. The onus is on the athlete to reach out to the head coach. The NCAA has some strict rules regarding the recruiting of athletes. These rules define who may be involved in the recruiting process, when recruiting may occur and the conditions under which recruiting may be conducted. Recruiting rules seek, as much as possible, to control intrusions into the lives of prospective student-athletes. The NCAA defines recruiting as “any solicitation of prospective student-athletes or their parents by an institutional staff member or by a representative of the institution’s athletics interests for the purpose of securing a prospective student-athlete’s enrollment and ultimate participation in the institution’s intercollegiate athletics program.” Given this, NCAA coaches cannot overtly attend ski races and “recruit” prospective students. However, they can make inquiries about a particular racer to the ski club. Thus, the onus is on the prospective student to first make contact with the school.

Once the athlete has made a connection with the coach, they should consider racing in a local ski race and then visiting the campus shortly afterwards. Given this, it is important that that the first contact be during the ski sea season.

Each college has a different schedule. However, generally applicants for ski team should apply early on and well ahead of the regular application process. Many colleges like to have serious candidates that they can support as official recruits in to visit campus and interview with the admissions office in mid-to-late September. Then all application materials need to be in by the end of October if that applicant is pursuing

Early Action, where the deadline might be November 1st. Decisions could be returned from the admissions office by December.

Even if athletes are unsure whether or not they will be applying to college, they should take their SAT or ACT and complete the NCAA eligibility process as early as possible. In some cases, coaches have awarded scholarships to those athletes who may not be their first choice, but have completed all the mandatory requirements.

Conclusion

Ultimately it is up to each athlete and parent to navigate his or her way through the US collegiate ski racing system. The admissions and recruiting process is a little different at every school. Don't assume the timelines and terminology are interchangeable from school to school. It is the hope of WMSC that the life skills learned through ski racing will have equipped athletes with the confidence and common sense required to take the initiative to find a way to best leverage their ski racing experience. As one coach put it:

“Don't be afraid to ask questions, the more questions you ask of the coach and current athletes, the better feel you will have for the team and if it is the right place for you. All of the teams in the east currently provide excellent training environments to continue to excel at skiing, but they may do it in different ways and the coaches all have different coaching styles and expectations.”

Alpine Ski Racing – A Guide for Teachers

Alpine ski racing is a rewarding activity that, aside from developing young athletes into superb skiers, teaches them a wider range of life skills including organization, resilience, determination and handling competition. However it can be a demanding sport both in terms of the time and effort required. At some point the athletes will likely require time away from school. The more successful they are the more time they will miss. This guide has been put together by the Whistler Mountain Ski Club to help teachers who are unfamiliar with alpine ski racing understand the demands of the sport and how best to work with students who miss school due to ski racing. The Whistler Mountain Ski Club is committed to ensuring athletes meet both their ski racing and academic goals. As such we see ourselves as full partners with our athlete's schools.

Athletes start competitive ski racing at the age of 11. Those in Grades 6 and 7 race together with most races held locally with the exception of the Provincial and Western championships that take place somewhere in BC. Those in Grades 8 and 9 compete together and while most of the races will also be held locally, at this point the more successful athletes may travel to a few races in Alberta, Ontario or Québec or Western US. As athletes enter Grade 10, so they are no longer restricted by age. At this point most races are held in the Rockies and the more successful the athletes are, the more they will travel to distant races.

Athletes may miss school because they are either training or racing. This schedule and the intensity, and as such the amount of schoolwork they are able to complete while away, will vary depending on whether they are training or racing. The races start in December and conclude by about the first week of April. However, the more competitive athletes tend to train year round and will attend training camps in the spring, summer and fall.

Some training may take place through multi-day camps, which are typically held in the fall. Athletes may travel to Colorado or, if they are an extremely competitive racer, to South America for two or three weeks of training. During a training camp athletes will

typically ski most of the day, spend time doing some form of light physical exercise off the ski hill, have meetings with coaches, do video analysis and prepare their skis for the next day of training. While they have a hectic schedule, the coaches make sure that at least some time [ideally two hours] every day is set aside for schoolwork. All athletes will have access to the Internet while away on a Whistler Mountain Ski Club trip.

Once the season gets underway, some athletes [typically the most competitive ones] train at Whistler on Thursdays and Fridays as well as the weekend. During these days they will typically be on the ski hill from 8:00am until 3:30pm, after which they may do dryland training until 5:00pm. Every evening is free for schoolwork and ski tuning.

Races are intense and often exhausting experiences for athletes. Away races often involve a day of travel, particularly for those athletes who race in the Rockies. On race day they may rise at 6:00am and spend an entire day on the hill, perhaps returning to the hotel room by 3:00pm. At this point they will be tuning their skis for the next day's race – something that can easily take them a few hours. Then it is coach's meetings, debriefing the day, video review and preparing for the next day of racing. Race days are physically and emotionally tiring given the stress of competition and the need to be outside in sub-zero temperatures for most of the day. As a result, athletes are not often able to expend much effort on their schoolwork, although where possible, time is allotted by the coaches and all athletes will have access to the Internet.

Given this, we ask that you please consider the following when working with students who are alpine ski racers:

- If possible, please consider assigning work ahead of time. Ask students to give you lots of warning of when they might be absent. The race schedule is set in October, and so there should be no surprises. The only exceptions to this are races, which are held towards the end of the season and for which they must qualify.
- We will make sure that students have access to the Internet while they are away, so if you have your lessons and assignments on-line, please let the students know how to access this information.
- Please be aware that on their return to school, students are likely to be very tired. When at away races, they typically depart at about 4:00pm after the last races and travel well into the late evening to get home as soon as possible. This combined

with the fact that races themselves can be exhausting means that they are unlikely to be back up to “full-speed” for a couple of days.

- If at all possible, please do not ask students to complete a missed test on their first day back at school. It is unlikely that they will be fully prepared as they will not have had sufficient time to study and will be very tired. Ideally ask them to complete the test either before they head off on their ski trip or a few days after their return.
- If they will be missing lots of group projects, if possible see if they can meet the course requirements through some more independent work.
- While the coaches can ensure that students have time to study, they do not provide academic supervision. Thus, please be clear with students on what they are expected to do while they are away.

At the Whistler Mountain Ski Club, we understand that teaching a ski racer requires considerable flexibility on the part of the athlete’s school. We appreciate it is not easy for athletes to balance both their ski racing ambitions and their academic goals. However, we believe strongly that with sufficient commitment on the part of the athlete and understanding on the part of the ski club and the school, an athlete’s full potential can be achieved – whether this is in the classroom or on the ski hill.

Please feel free to contact us if you have any questions, concerns or suggestions. The best point of contact is Rob Boyd, our Sports Development Manager, who can be reached at 604-932-4644 ext 108, or rob@wmsc.info. If necessary, Rob can connect you with your student’s Head Coach and/or arrange for a visit to the school by either himself or another coach.

Thank you for your on-going support of your student and our athlete.

