

8.1 The Support Structure

8.1.3 A Progression of Athlete Development Opportunities

An established club should have a progression of athlete development opportunities. This progression would normally begin with a Bunnyrabbit Program, and continue with a Jackrabbit Program, Track Attack Program, Junior Racing Team program and so on. These programs within a program must not only offer a progression but be vertically integrated in order to work to potential. It is very important that each step is thoughtfully integrated with the next to reduce the chances of skier drop-out.

Definition: a vertically integrated **athlete development program** is a series of individual club programs that provides a clear and continuous progression of skier development opportunities, usually up through the senior age category.

Does your club have:

- ✓ ONE athlete development program?
- ✓ ONE overall athlete development strategy?
- ✓ ONE club head coach?

Vertical integration is a critical consideration when tackling the problems of skier dropout.

8.1.4 Club Coaches

□ **Club Head Coach**

The club head coach is an essential component of a successful club athlete development program.

The key areas of responsibilities for this position would be:

- ✓ overseeing the development of all the club coaches, including beginners;
- ✓ overseeing and coordinating all the club athlete development programs from Active Start through to the Training to Compete stages of athlete development;
- ✓ coaching the junior and/or senior racing team (optional).

In carrying out these responsibilities the head coach might perform the following duties and tasks (or ensures that others perform them):

- ✓ Organizing a day-long meeting of all the club coaches (beginner through to veterans) in late August or early September) to discuss and plan the program for the year. This would include reviewing the objectives of the program, the club philosophy, the budget and what should be covered in practice/training

sessions. If all the coaches are included, including beginners, then everyone will learn why things are done the way they are. This is the time when the club coaches should be updated on news from the ski world, such as changes in emphasis on technique or changes in race formats. It is the start-up of the club program for the season. Some groups within the club membership will have trained over the summer, but this will be the *formal* beginning to the season.

- ✓ Coordinating the different athlete development groups, from the youngest skiers to the top senior skiers in the club, so that they meet together to start their practice from one location once a week – even if all they do is start their practice with a common warm-up. This ensures that everyone sees each other at least once weekly, and encourages club identity and cohesion within the overall program. This will usually take place on Saturday and will continue through both the dryland and on-snow seasons (as appropriate for the different age groups)..
- ✓ Coordinating a meeting between the coaches and parents to explain the philosophy of the club's athlete development program and the plans for the season.
- ✓ Regularly attending SDP (Bunnyrabbit, Jackrabbit and Track Attack) activity/practice sessions. The purpose of this is to assist inexperienced coaches, to get to know the younger skiers and to ensure the integration of the various programs.
- ✓ Providing technical leadership, which includes technique instruction and waxing clinics for developing coaches.
- ✓ Coordinating elite club skiers to assist with SDP activity/practice sessions on a regular basis.

SDP Coaches

SDP coaches lead group sessions. If the group of children are in the Active Start stage of development this role may be filled by community coaches "in training", but if the group is six years of age or older, they should be certified community coaches - technically competent, good role models and able to present the program well. General responsibilities might include the following:

- planning and conducting activity/practice sessions for their own group of children (dryland, on-snow and classroom sessions);
- teaching and evaluating ski technique;
- teaching ski preparation skills and respect for ski equipment; and
- providing inspiration and enthusiasm.

If your club SDP is large, it may be necessary for one of the coaches to take the role of team leader in order to oversee the planning and coordination of all the group sessions. This person requires a good understanding of the program. Responsibilities might include the following:

- ❑ coordinating the training and development of all the coaches working with SDP program, including new coaches recruited to replace retiring coaches;
- ❑ ensuring suitable substitutes for coaches who cannot make an activity/practice session;
- ❑ liaising with the club head coach and the next level of athlete development program above the SDP;
- ❑ ensuring the provision of current information on equipment selection, ski preparation etc.;
- ❑ ensuring the coordination of games when the various SDP groups assemble together, as well as the coordination of appropriate equipment; hoops, soccer balls etc.;
- ❑ coordinating the regular involvement of appropriate "role models"; and
- ❑ coordinating use of the ski area to suit the needs of the different ages/skill levels within the groups.

8.1.5 SDP Programmer

The SDP Programmer is the program administrator. This person may or may not be the team leader or the coach of a group, depending on the size of the program. This position doesn't necessarily require ski skills, but it does require good organizational skills and the ability to recruit volunteers. Responsibilities include:

- ❑ local promotion of the program;
- ❑ phoning;
- ❑ transportation;
- ❑ coordinating facility use, grooming;
- ❑ all aspects of registration;
- ❑ social events;
- ❑ coordinating special activities, ski swap, excursions, etc., possibly in cooperation with other club members (e.g. trips to a ski tournament, a back-country outing, a provincial cup competition, an inter-school ski day, etc.);
- ❑ ordering and distribution of materials and supplies;
- ❑ administration of enrolment kits, program booklets, awards stickers, and badges;

- ❑ coordinating the provision of refreshments;
- ❑ information distribution: email network; phone chains; bulletin board; etc.;
- ❑ coordinating local leadership training courses – Introduction to Community Coaching, Community Coaching courses, waxing clinics, etc.;
- ❑ liaising with the club head coach;
- ❑ overseeing the risk management program (safety equipment at practices, paperwork, circulating accident report forms to coaches, etc.);
- ❑ preparing year end reports; and
- ❑ performing the responsibilities of a “team leader” if the team leader position is not filled.