

Tools for Beginners – what every new “Ski Team Parent” needs to know!***Updated August 24, 2014***

1. The coaches and board members of the Great Divide Ski Team are all volunteers. They are volunteering because they love to ski, they love to coach, and they are passionate about sharing the love of the sport with youngsters. There is always a shortage of hands to make the race programs run smoothly – so you may feel that you don't have all the information you need to have a successful and fun race season. Consider being a parent volunteer or board member and helping with fund-raising events.
2. Ski races depend on what level your child skis, and do not occur at the same hills on the same weekends:
 - a. The Youth Ski League (YSL) are unscored races for racers up to U16. These races usually host over 100 kids. Kids can race twice each day, regardless of DQ.
 - b. U16 and above: These races are scored (your racer will start with 999.99 points and will work down from there), and are half the size of the YSL races. If your skier DQ's in the first race, they will not be allowed a 2nd run.
3. Introduction to Devo: After participating in the All-Mountain program, a coach may approach your child and suggest s/he move to the Devo Team. Devo is short for “Development” and this is a bridge year between All Mountain and the Ski Team. There is no particular age at which this happens. Your child may join the ski team as young as 7-8 years old or much older.
 - a. Your child has just joined a ski “team,” but largely downhill skiing is an individual sport. The team does not travel as a team – you will be responsible for transporting your child to all racing events -- but coordinating travel and lodging with other families is encouraged.
 - b. The team tries to stay at the same hotel when traveling, because it's fun and they can get together in the evenings to sharpen edges and wax skis, and view videos from the races. This is not mandatory.
 - c. You will be responsible for booking your own hotel room, but there are blocks of rooms reserved for the ski team at a special rate. These special rates are for a limited time, so it is best to plan to travel early to get the best rates. It is important to communicate early on with coaches to know which races the team will attend.
4. One of the most useful websites is the Northern Division's USSA web page. You can find up-to-date season information, race schedules, race results, links to race flyers, fees, lost & found lists, just to name a few. Bookmark the page and visit it often throughout the race season: <http://www.northernussa.org/>.
5. The Devo racers are encouraged to participate in one or two races during the season. One may be at Great Divide, usually over the Presidents Day weekend; the other is at Discovery,

over the first weekend of March. Here's a brief run-down for participating in your skier's first race(s):

- a. First, your child will need to join USSA (United States Ski and Snowboard Association). Every racer must have a valid USSA card to participate in a race. There often is an option for a one-race USSA license, if your racer only wants to compete in one race.
 - b. Racers are not "competitive" until they are in the U16 group (15 and 16 year olds). This means that their ski times/scores will not be deducted points, and they will not be counting points which allows them into upper-level competitions.
 - c. If your child is in U8, U10, U12, or U14 they will be registering as a Youth Member at USSA (not a competitor) – it's cheaper!
 - i. When you register your child at USSA (<http://my.ussa.org>) the fees will be \$60 on the season's membership, plus \$22 on our division's annual dues.
 - ii. Membership is per ski season, not per calendar year. Regardless of when you register your skier, the membership will expire on June 30th. **Renew by October 15th to avoid paying late fees.**
 - iii. Book your motel room early (see above). Tell the hotel booking agent that you are with Great Divide Ski Team, and remind them of the discount offered (they often forget).
 - iv. You do not need to stay at the "team hotel" – you can find your own accommodations at lower costs, if that is a better option for your family's finances.
 - v. For the Discovery Race, the ski team stays at Fairmont Hot Springs Resort. Usually, on evenings after the races, the kids swim, wax their skis, and socialize. Also, the kids may have a "team meal" – which means they all go into the restaurant and order their own meals, at their own cost. Be sure to teach your kids about tipping.
 - vi. Some families choose to stay at less expensive hotels in Anaconda, and then simply come over to Fairmont in the evening and pay for use of the pool. The kids can still have dinner and wax skis before returning to the alternate hotel.
6. Most of the race weekends are three days – Friday, Saturday and Sunday.
- a. Your skier is not required to participate in any race, and can pick and choose those in which s/he will enter. Many first-time skiers will not go to Discovery for the Friday races, but join in for Saturday, Sunday, or both.
 - b. You might want to talk with your child's coach, and ask his/her advice on which days/events would be best for your child's skill level and goals.
 - c. There is an entry fee for each race, for each child. You must contact the coach by a specific deadline with your child's name, USSA member number, and the events for which you are requesting entry. The coach will enter your child in those races.
 - d. Entry fees differ for each race, and each ski hill. Check the website given above.

7. On the day of the race, you will be expected to have your child at the appointed meeting place (a specific location in the main lodge, usually) by 8:00 am.
 - a. Racers gather together with their coaches.
 - b. Coaches go to a meeting with all the other coaches.
 - c. Coaches return to skiers with race bibs, race rosters, etc.
 - d. At this point, you, the parent, are free to buy your own lift tickets and ski – your racer is in good hands with his/her coach, for the day! But you will need to feed your child lunch and snacks.
 - e. You can sign up as a volunteer for Gate-Keeping – Gate-keepers watch the gates on the race course and mark whether the skier faults or not. It is very critical work, and often the races are short gate-keepers. Only parents who can ski can gate-keep. Most ski hills will give the volunteer a lift ticket for another day. You are given a lift ticket for the race day as well, but you may not have much time to use it if there are a lot of racers. You will be provided a sack lunch.
 - f. Remember to ask the coaches what time your skier's event begins, or pick up/view a race start list – there are separate ones for boys and girls, for morning and afternoon. Different ski hills have different rules about viewing the race event. This information will be on the race flyer that can be obtained on the Northern Division's website (<http://www.northernussa.org/>).
 - g. At Discovery, parents who do not ski can usually walk up to the viewing area from the base lodge. This is an easy walk, but you will want boots with good traction and warm clothes. Its cold standing out there while all the racers have their runs – you cannot walk down after your child has raced, but must stay until the event is over.
 - h. Most often, the racers and families are free to ski anywhere on the mountain until they are expected at the starting gates (before their event begins). They simply keep checking back in with their coaches every few runs.
8. If your skier is on the Ski Team for the first time, and you are unsure about whether or not s/he is expected to participate in every race of the season, you should consult the coaches. Attending each race is exhausting for parents and racers, and financially draining; choose your races carefully, and be sure your child can recover between race weekends.
9. Information on specific ski hills/races:
 - a. The March YSL race at Discovery draws youth from far and wide, and is a great race for the younger/new racers (all information above). Parents who do not ski can usually walk up to the viewing area from the base lodge. This is an easy walk at Discovery, but you will want boots with good traction and warm clothes. Its cold standing out there while all the racers have their runs – you cannot walk down after your child has raced, but must stay until the event is over.
 - b. At Bridger, you can buy a walking lift ticket (about \$5) so you can ride the lift up to the lodge at mid-mountain and watch the races.

- c. The course at Red Lodge is quite technical and often the youngest racers do not participate in this event. If you do go to Red Lodge, the team usually stays at the Chalet Rogue. It is nice because someone will try to get one of the suites with a kitchen and then one night the parents pitch in and we cook spaghetti at the hotel. At least that is what the two-day racer group does.
 - d. We do host a Youth Ski League race at Great Divide. This can be a great start to a young skier's racing career. It's the home crowd, a familiar mountain, and there are little-to-no travel costs. Consider being a gate-keeper or volunteering in other ways – it is so important to be involved.
 - e. At Big Sky, which is usually a 4-day event, the two-day racers get a condo or house and all stay together. It is nice to stay with the team. Then the kids can wax together.
 - f. And finally, the YSL Championships is the capstone race for the season. The division puts a lot of effort into making this a big deal, even though the YSL racers are not “competitive” and it's a great deal of fun for the kids. It's worth getting there if you can. The location for the YSL championships changes year to year.
 - g. Whitefish – the team usually stays at the Grouse Mountain Lodge, who has very strict refund policies, so be sure you are certain you will attend the race before making reservations (but keep in mind the window of opportunity to make reservations at the team rate). It may be possible to cancel your reservations without penalty if there is a legitimate reason (like an injured skier), and the head coach may have to assist you in getting the refund.
10. Summary of expenses you may expect (they will include, but are not limited to.....)
- a. Ski Team (One-Day Racers \$600 per year, Two-Day Racers \$750 per year)
 - b. Team jacket fee
 - c. Gear: skis, boots, poles, speed suit. All ski racers are required to have a hard-eared helmet, which are not currently available in town (Capital Sports may start selling them). Most racers will want specific skis for specific races. The team has gear to borrow, check with coaches.
 - d. Lift ticket for each time your child skis. If you choose to purchase a season pass, this will only be valid at your home hill, and you will still need lift tickets for away races. Lift tickets for racers are included with race fees, so do not purchase lift tickets for racers on your own.
 - e. Your own lift tickets and/or rentals if you and your family choose to ski when your child is racing at other mountains.
 - f. Travel expenses, hotels, meals, etc.
 - g. USSA Northern Division Yearbook – Sometime in late January your skier will be invited to submit his/her photo and brief essay to USSA, for publication in this yearbook. It does not cost anything to submit your skier's information, but be prepared to buy a copy at the YSL Championships at the end of the year. It is a fundraiser for USSA Northern Division, and your child will love to see himself in print!

- h. Professional photos. At most races, Paul Bussi of Ideal Photography will be on the hill photographing racers. These are fabulous action shots and available for viewing and purchasing at www.idealphotography.com.

- 11. Other fun events:
 - a. End-of-Season Banquet (awards, etc.) This is usually a pot-luck, low-key family event, and really fun. This is great way to honor our young skiers, recognize their specific achievements, and enjoy getting to know each other.
 - b. Ski-A-Thon Fund-Raising Event to raise money for the team. This takes place at Great Divide at the end of the All-Mountain season. Kids take pledges for how many runs they can make in two hours. Local sponsors donate items to be given away as prizes for the skier who raises the most money, who skis the most runs. Skiers can use 30% of what they earn toward their own ski team fees.

- 12. As a ski team family, please help out with fund-raising events.
 - a. The Annual Not-A-Golf Tournament occurs in the summer and involves selling advertising sign spot to local businesses for placement on the golf course during a busy summer weekend.
 - b. Dinner at On Broadway occurs in the spring and a percentage of proceeds go to the ski team. Look for announcements through email and on the team's Facebook page.
 - c. Ale nights at Blackfoot River Brewery and Lewis & Clark benefit the team – look for news through email and on the team's Facebook page.