

There has been ongoing debate in Canada around what the best model is to develop our athletes as skiers and as people, and keep them ski racing as long as possible. The Provincial Ski Associations and Alpine Canada agreed to tackle this issue together and have been engaged in discussion for the past year. We have a very engaged and collaborative group of GMs and Athletic Directors and this was an opportunity to review what has been done to date, assess what has worked and what hasn't, and seek the best-possible model.

**Background:**

- Alpine Canada and Canada's four largest PTSOs have been working since the spring of 2018 to define and structure a new pathway to develop athletes to the level where they can be selected to C team or higher.
- The on and off model for many years has been a stand-alone Development Team which tended to be U19 and younger at time of selection.
- The selection of younger athletes created unintended consequences like increased attrition of their peers, who saw no future since they were not selected.
- ACA has also had trouble consistently fielding a development team annually due almost entirely to financial challenges. Continually going from having to not having a stand-alone Development Team was very disruptive for athletes, families and the provincial associations.
- This past season, ACA and Provincial technical directors nominated a Development Team of six men and four women. Of these, two men and three women turned down the nomination primarily due to their desire to complete their high school degrees. Another athlete chose to attend university and participated in the team part-time. Having half of the nominees choose another pathway certainly raised many red flags and pushed ACA and the GMs to consider other models.
- In addition to the six invitees, 2 top speed athletes were not offered development team spots because CAST could only provide training opportunities in Technical events for the 2018/19 season. A few years ago, the opposite occurred where only speed athletes could have a development team opportunity, highlighting the struggles of sustaining this model.
- Ski racing has evolved and it is now clear there is more than one pathway to achieve a ski racer's full potential, which means the new model must be more fluid to accommodate athletes' individual choices.
- We have an opportunity to create a new Canadian model that is more sustainable and allows for longer term planning and development for a larger pool of athletes.
- Cooperation between ACA and the PTSOs is essential for the success of a new model and we are all committed to working together in a professional, respectful and dynamic fashion. We believe that by adhering to our shared values and guiding principles, described below, we will create a development pathway that functions in the best interest of all our Canadian ski racers.

### **Shared Values:**

- 1) We believe a supportive, safe, holistic and respectful environment is foundational to successful athlete development and competition.
- 2) Fundamentally, what we do and the decisions we make, need to be for the greater good of our collective group of athletes. This does not mean every athlete will be happy with every decision but we will be confident they were dealt with fairly.
- 3) Skiing skill development is fundamental to sustainable athletic success.
- 4) We see hard work as both the right approach and an achievement of its own.
- 5) We believe in fairness and inclusiveness.
- 6) We promote good health, excellent physical fitness and positive mental preparation.
- 7) Our processes are built on accountability and transparency.
- 8) Our culture of excellence creates sustainable success.
- 9) Cooperation and collaboration make us stronger.
- 10) While striving for top performing athletes and programs, we also seek cost effectiveness.
- 11) We embrace adaptability and continuous improvement.
- 12) We acknowledge that there can be multiple paths to success as defined in our LTAD.
- 13) We want to see all of our athletes, volunteers and stakeholders having fun and enjoying a quality sport experience.

### **Guiding Principles:**

- 1) Keep as many athletes in our sport as possible, reaching their full potential for as long as possible.
- 2) Do not build the system around the outliers.
- 3) Have patience and confidence in our system.
- 4) Focus culture on long-term development rather than short-term success.
- 5) Utilize smart calendaring for strong athlete development and competition success.
- 6) Create skills first – follow the LTAD.
- 7) Be resilient and patient.
- 8) Support athletes in the pursuit of their athletic and academic goals.
- 9) For continuity, it is important that ACA, CAST coaches, PTSOs, PTSO Coaches and our respective Boards maintain their commitment to these values and principles and effective communication lines.

## **New Development Structure:**

- Alpine Canada will have an A, B and C team managed by CAST coaches with the objective of pursuing World Cup, Europa Cup and NorAm success. The A and B team will focus most heavily on WC and EC while the C team athletes will focus on winning NorAm titles and gaining some experience at the WC and EC levels.
- PTSOs, especially our historically strong four large PTSOs, will operate provincial teams that function as the feeder system to CAST. PTSO teams and coaches will focus on elevating athletes' performance to be competitive at the NorAm level and prepare them for the next step to Europa Cup and World Cup.
- Smaller PTSOs could decide if they want to develop athletes to the CAST level on their own or look to neighboring, larger PTSOs to assist with developing their top athletes.
- All provincial team athletes will be referred to as the Development Level in Canada.
- These athletes' home base will be their provincial team.
- The top developing athletes will have opportunities to train and compete together often informally but sometimes as Team Canada (e.g. World Juniors).
- ACA will operate and offer national training and competition projects to create these opportunities for developing athletes.
- Each PTSO will nominate athletes to projects if they have development needs that the PTSO cannot meet. An invitation to one project does not guarantee attendance at the next project.
- ACA will accept athletes to national projects depending on athlete's physical and mental preparedness, space at camp and resources available. When a PTSO proposes a name, all other PTSOs should be made aware.
- National projects will have fees based on the direct costs associated with the additional athlete and PTSOs will need to provide a coach and/or serviceman to accompany their athletes. Fees will be clearly outlined to invitees prior to the projects.
- For each project, each PTSO will decide how the costs will be covered and whether any portion will be at the expense of the athlete/family.
- PTSOs and ACA will aim to be sensitive to the costs of ski racing and cap the amount spent on sending athletes to national projects and camps.
- PTSOs will also seek opportunities to cooperate at the PTSO level on training and competition projects to contain costs and allow the best athletes to push each other as a group.
- ACA and the PTSOs will work hard to stay aware of each athlete's needs and support athletes along their individual pathways.
- ACA and PTSOs will work together to maximize the availability of gyms, facilities and racing equipment at reasonable costs for Development Level athletes.
- Carding is set by Sport Canada and is offered based on world ranking and therefore independent of any team naming.
- Communication between the PTSOs and ACA will be paramount to the success of this model. Brien Perry will be the coordinator between ACA and the PTSOs and will lead regular calls to ensure transparency and coordination.

- A likely side benefit of the PTSOs and ACA cooperating on joint projects is that this same cooperation and logic will take hold between Clubs and with Clubs and the PTSOs. Our success as a ski nation will certainly be better supported if we can increase the frequency and quality of interaction between athletes at varying levels.
- While upping the readiness of racers graduating from PTSOs will not be easy, nor occur overnight, there is a lot of positive energy and enthusiasm building amongst all the stakeholders to meet this challenge. We are excited to pursue a new model that aspires to keep more athletes in our sport and see them reach their full potential.

**Example of Possible Projects (training and racing):**

- Potential PTSO cooperation on later summer and fall glacier training e.g. Hintertux
- Fall camp projects East/West
- NorAm Series projects
- World Juniors
- Exposure to racing in Europe
- NorAm Finals project
- Spring 2020 Camp/Projects East/West