



Project Excel is a national initiative focused on accelerating the performance of Canada's high performance ski racers.

ACCELERATING PERFORMANCE

The primary focus of Project Excel is on racers, who are within the high performance pathway and graduated through U21, but outside of the Canadian Alpine Ski Team.

While Project Excel is lead by ACA, its strength comes from the strong collaboration and expert guidance provided by the Provincial Ski Associations. As such, the Project Excel Working Group is comprised of technical experts from across the country including both the National Ski Team and National Ski Cross Team. This Working Group has been formalized and will continue to generate new ideas, develop action plans, and consult with coaches and technical leaders from across the country moving forward.

The 2023/24 Project Excel Action Plan has four focus areas:

FOCUS AREA

Use national benchmark standards to guide athlete development.

1

FOCUS AREA

Identify competitions where athletes can develop and be tested.

2

FOCUS AREA

Implement gap-analysis with PTSOs/clubs to drive continuous improvement.

3

FOCUS AREA

Identify creative solutions, programs, and partnerships for athletes on podium pathway.

4

The Project Excel Interval Report will be published periodically to report on activities, outcomes and milestone achievements of the Project Excel Working Group.

ACTION PLAN ITEMS UPDATE

1

Increase the opportunity of our top athletes to enhance their FIS ranking by running a FIS race series in spring of 2024 that includes CAST members.

STATUS

POST-PONED

Benefits

1. Provide a domestic, low penalty event, spring and/or fall, that includes members of the CAST and all HP athletes identified on our performance pathway.
2. Provide a head-to-head competitive race for our top Canadians
3. Will lower our athletes' points in the system which will improve their start position at upcoming events

Current Activities

- a. Confirming the 2024 NorAm schedule to determine possibility of holding a domestic FIS event that would allow CAST D team and full provincial team participation.
- b. Looking to integrating a coach professional development opportunity into event.



The 2023/24 Project Excel Action Plan consists of eight key recommendations.

ACTION PLAN ITEMS UPDATE *cont.*

2 Establish a full-time CAST "D" (development) program to service our best athletes who are on the podium pathway but outside of CAST. STATUS | ON TRACK

Benefits

1. Centralize our top athletes into one program/team.
2. Respond precisely to the needs of athletes at this level.
3. Prepare this group for the demands of skiing at World Cup level.
4. Re-focus PTSO's time and resources on athletes further down the development pathway.

Current Activities

- a. Business plan approved by ACA and PTSOs.
- b. Athlete nomination completed the week of May 3rd.
- c. Staffing roles identified and hiring process initiated.
- d. CAST D Team launched the week of May 27th.

3 Accelerate the development of our best-performing athletes who are just outside of the CAST, by providing access to WC races. STATUS | ON TRACK

Benefits

1. Provide high quality training opportunities during the preparation phase.
2. Assist HP athletes measure themselves against World Cup groups.
3. Provides increased motivation and confidence to those athletes who have a chance of winning a title at NorAms.

Current Activities

- a. Debriefing athletes/coaches who attended various WC event for lessons learned.
- b. Debriefing CAST and top provincial coaches re. project as well as identify other potential athletes (ongoing).

4 Improve the competitive readiness of U14/U16 racers by piloting and analyzing the benefits / limitations of using randomized start order. STATUS | ON TRACK

Benefits

1. Develop stronger and more well-rounded FIS-ready athletes by developing key skills and competencies needed when they graduate to FIS.
2. Educating our top HP athletes to what the next step will be like – start positions, snow conditions, which affects technique and their mental approach to high-performance racing.

Current Activities

- a. Project Excel "White Paper" outlining concept completed and circulated to key stakeholders for review.
- b. BC, Alberta Ontario and Quebec piloted different structures of RSO during the 2023/24 season.
- c. ACA's U16 Regional Championship utilized random seeding approach.
- d. Summary report being drafted based on race results and feedback received from key stakeholders (June 2024).

5 Implement a national recognition program that targets our top junior athletes, and which provides access to equipment suppliers plus other benefits. STATUS | POST-PONED

Benefits

1. Provides national recognition and motivation to those athletes that are achieving performance standards.
2. Provides performance support such as equipment and resources (ex: levels the playing field with our competitors by providing "World Cup Stock" race equipment to our racers).
3. Assists our non-national team athletes in accessing Government funding (carding) when they qualify.

Current Activities

- a. Create draft recognition standards using updated performance curves – by end of May 2024
- b. Initiative being reviewed now that CAST D Team has been launched.



**THE PROJECT EXCEL
WORKING GROUP**

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ACTION PLAN ITEMS UPDATE *cont.*

6 Leverage NorAm competition opportunities through increased communication and planning with NorAm, CAST and PTSO Coaches. STATUS | **ON TRACK**

Benefits

1. Enhances the opportunity to get collaborative speed training in advance of fall NorAms.
2. Optimizes the chance of winning NorAm titles.
3. Helps to lower the points in the system.

Current Activities

- a. Proactive outreach to all World Junior Long-list athletes, regardless of program location - ongoing
- b. Enhanced communication to coaches of the opportunities within Canada - ongoing

7 Align our developmental system through improved communication of performance / fitness and skills progression data by age group to broader racing community. STATUS | **TO BE STARTED**

Benefits

1. The adoption of national targets/goals in key performance and skill areas will help to standardize how our coaches coach, as well as establish the right expectations for athletes and their parents.
2. Provide an alternative method to identify our top athletes - U14 and up – rather than relying solely on our national point system.

Current Activities -

To be initiated following 2023/24 ski season

- a. Collecting, organizing, and data mining existing data.
- b. Contracting a graphic designer to create a simple, clear and concise method for sharing information to ski community – by June/24
- c. Launch initiative by end of August/24

8 Become the world's fittest ski nation by relaunching the ACA fitness combine ensuring CAST, IST, and PTSO teams are aligned around how it is applied to different athletes. STATUS | **ON TRACK**

Benefits

1. Improved performance by raising the physical fitness of our top athletes.
2. Alignment amongst CAST and PTSOs regarding the implementation of a fitness combine for national and provincial athletes on the podium pathway.
3. Provides the foundation to ACA re-branding efforts as "the world's fittest racers".

Current Activities

- a. Updating ACA Fitness Combine - by May/24
- b. Communicating the use of ACA Fitness Combine scores for athlete inclusion in 2024 Excel Projects – beginning in July/24
- c. Inserting ACA Fitness Combine into all Canadian HP programs (CAST / PTSOs / Clubs) – by Aug/24

WHAT'S COMING UP

- Finalize and communicate CAST D team program policies and procedures.
- Conduct a year-end review of 2023/24 Project Excel Action Plan.
- Initiate the 2024/25 planning cycle which includes soliciting feedback from provincial coaches.
- Presentation and discussion at the 2024 Ski Summit (Whistler) - June 11