

Hi Everyone,

Just wanted to provide an update from the meeting with the Program Coordinators (and Justin representing JRs) to discuss coaching philosophy for this season.

Nordiq Canada offers the Long-Term Athlete Development (LTAD) model as a guideline for the different physiological, technical, and social development targets of athletes based on age. The LTAD model forms the basis for programs within the club as well as clubs across Canada. Discussion therefore focused on how best to implement this framework in practice within our program structure. Of particular consideration was balancing racing and non-racing focuses and how to assign children to an appropriate group when they enter the LTAD framework midway. The following coaching philosophy was agreed on by the Coordinators.

First and foremost, the emphasis for all Club programs regardless of age is creating a fun environment to participate in the sport of Nordic skiing. This fits with Nordiq Canada's mandate of developing lifelong skiers as skiers enjoying the program will return to the sport year after year. Athletic and technical development, healthy competition and training, and socialization and teamwork opportunities are all parts of a program structure centred on making Nordic skiing as fun as possible for all club members.

Skiers should be placed first based on age into either the JR, TA Junior, or TA Senior programs. We think it is important to prioritize groupings based on age to make sure the social needs of the children are met as well as ensuring the correct physiological training (flexibility, fitness, etc.) is developed. This age-based division can become a problem when athletes enter the program at different points and have different technical skill levels. Therefore, within the groups, subgroups will be formed at practices based on the technical development level of the athletes. During dryland, some of the coaches have been experimenting with identifying natural divisions within the groups based on skill level and speed and this is something that could be continued. This should result in all athletes receiving both age appropriate and technically appropriate instruction. We are hoping that this season's approach will ensure a place for everyone that fits within the LTAD model and does not hold anyone back.

Racing opportunities will be offered as an option to all skiers and their families. Participation at these events will be encouraged and effort will be made to create a fun atmosphere that is family focused. We would like to encourage entire families to become involved with skiing and attending races together. Engaging entire families tend to be the best experiences for the children and develop skiers that continue participating in the long term. While it is anticipated that many athletes will wish to attend at least a few races, we recognize that not all athletes or their families will want to participate in these events. Therefore, we will attempt where possible to allocate instructors to be available for weekends when many coaches/parent volunteers will be away at races. This will hopefully allow continuity for the athletes not racing and maintain a program where racing is an option but not a requirement.

Finally, given the wide range of abilities and situations when working with youth athletes and their families, we recognize the importance of discretion and flexibility. The Coordinators are open to working with coaches and families to ensure the best situation for an individual athlete.

Sincerely,

Oliver Conway-White