

Consider Coaching

By Rich McCleary – Undisputed Champion of Crazy Hat Day

Introduction

I received my first pair of cross-country skis as a Christmas present at the age of ten. That year my parents decided that our family of seven would try the sport. My father took lessons through the City of Calgary Recreation Department and then tried to impart the basic skills on the rest of us. I still remember his head plant while demonstrating how to brake down a steep hill by sitting down on the ski poles he was dragging between his legs. At the age of 10, I recognized a bad idea when I saw one and have since used the snow plow to check my speed. My first formal lesson was at the age of 17. I was told that my approach was certainly vigorous but far from efficient. Efficiency is the key, I learned, especially if I wanted to ski for any distance. I've been a skier ever since, and have been chasing that ultimate goal of efficiency for more than 30 years.



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I started coaching in 2005, when my oldest daughter was three and we were members of the Hinton Nordic Ski Club. The message from the other coaches was simple – “We are moving up to the next level with our own kids. If you want your kids to ski, you are going to be the coach.” I was terrified to learn that the most important part of the lesson was the warm up song that I was required to sing at the top



Caroline (5) and Elizabeth (3) at their first ever ski race, Hinton (2008)

of my lungs while acting out the motions. The other coach demonstrated a couple times, then set me loose. I noticed all the sets of eyes were upon me and started off. I intentionally avoided looking at the other adults present. Within seconds, the entire group of kids were singing along and smiling.

A few years later we moved to Invermere and skied with the Toby Creek Nordic Ski Club. In 2008, with support and encouragement from the club, I

completed my first formal coaching course. I also took my competitive spirit to “Crazy Hat Day” where I was the undisputed champion.



Katherine, age 3, Invermere

December 2017 signals our families' fourth winter with the Overlander Ski Club. Our three daughters are now 10, 13 and 15 years old. I've completed a total of six Cross Country Canada coaching courses progressing from "Community Coaching" to "Learning to Train" to "Train to Train". I am currently working with a promising team of 10-year-old athletes. Currently, my own coach development plan is focused on improving my ability to evaluate classic and skate technique, to communicate points to the athletes in a manner that they can understand and of course to

come up with more ways to have fun in the process. I am also supporting my 15 year old daughter Carolyn, who has her sights set high on the Nationals in Thunder Bay in February.



Caroline McCleary (14) and Hanneli Ladyman at Nationals (2017)

When I look back at the family photos from the last 12 years (which have really flown by), the fun times we've had with the various ski clubs are among my most treasured. Coaching has certainly led to most of these experiences.

Why we need coaches?

Volunteer coaches are the back-bone of our club. The number of volunteer coaches will determine the number of age-specific teams, the number of athletes on each team, and the minimum age for participation. Special events for our youngest skiers will also reflect the level of coaching engagement.



Katherine (age 9), in 2017

What are our athlete and coach development models

The Overlander Ski Club holds a membership with Cross Country BC (<http://www.crosscountrybc.ca/>). All members of our club are also members of Cross Country BC. Our coach development program follows the National Coaching Certification Program (<http://www.cccski.com/Programs/Coaching-Development.aspx>). Our athlete development programs follows the Long Term Athlete Development and Skill Development Programs (<http://www.cccski.com/Programs/Athlete-Development.aspx>). The coach development programs are delivered through Cross Country BC (<http://www.crosscountrybc.ca/coach-development>).

Who can coach?

- Volunteers willing to provide a criminal records check for a volunteer working with youth.
- Volunteers willing to create a fun environment for young athletes to enjoy the outdoor winter activity of skiing.
- People interesting in enjoying the benefits of volunteering which include:
 - ✓ becoming a member of our coaching team;
 - ✓ actively contributing to an enjoyable winter;
 - ✓ learning about the sport; and
 - ✓ improving your own technique.
- Note that **you are not expected to be able to demonstrate perfect classic or skate skiing technique** prior to taking a coach assignment. You will be given a skill appropriate assignment. Your coaching team will also provide support to improve your technique over time.
- Coaches must be a **minimum of 14 years of age** on the first day of an Introduction to Community Coaching (ICC) or Community Coaching (CC) Workshop. After completing the course, a coach who is under the age of 16, can serve as an assistant coach under the supervision of a certified coach (ICC certified – children six years of age and younger; CC certified – children nine years of age and younger). See <http://www.cccski.com/Programs/Coaching-Development/Coaching-Policies-and-Procedures.aspx>

What type of commitment does coaching require?

- A time commitment the time for coach training, preparation, running practices and leading athletes at special events.
- In an ideal situation, each team will have two coaches. These coaches can switch off as required to meet individual commitments or conflicts.

How much does it cost?

- The club will cover the course costs for you to attend the CCC/CCBC training session (about \$100 per course) and your basic travel expenses while you are on the road to these training sessions.
- Because you are a volunteer, there is no charge for the Criminal Records Check.
- Your main commitment is your time.

If I don't know how to ski properly, how can I teach?

There are three important means for you to learn and improve the skills that we teach:

1. Attend coach training sessions that are offered in our region that include exposure to coaching resources available through Cross Country Canada.
2. Mentor under the other coaches in our club.
3. Exchange ideas and techniques with coaches from other clubs. One of the most important and lasting benefits from my participation at coaching training events has been the establishment of relationships with coaches from other clubs. The technical materials and leadership from the trainers are excellent, but I place a special value on the exchange of ideas between my coaching peers which continues whenever I attend an event. Coaches are united towards developing athletes who will “ski for life” and also feed into a strong BC team.

Timelines

If you would like to become a coach, you should get registered in the Introduction to Community Coaching course. As previously described, the club will provide financial support for you to attend. This course is offered this fall as follows:

Oct. 14-15 in Vernon and Revelstoke

Oct. 21-22 in Salmon Arm

Oct. 28-29 in Sun Peaks

For a full course schedule see:

<http://www.crosscountrybc.ca/coach-workshop-schedule>

Closing

Please consider coaching. There are personal benefits, family benefits and community benefits. You could start out as an assistant coach under the supervision of a certified coach. Please contact the Ski League Coordinator, Rich McCleary (richmccleary@shaw.ca) with your questions or to get start the process.