
FXC PREP

2017-2018 Parent Information

The NSCF-FXC Prep Team is aimed at middle school skiers in the U14 age group looking to take their skiing to a higher level. As the 'Prep' name suggests, this program is designed to prepare skiers for an easy and effective transition to high school competition, as well as regional and national level junior racing if the skier chooses.

COACHES

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TEAM INFORMATION

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PRACTICE SCHEDULE

WINTER: Tues, Wed, Friday, Sat

SUMMER/FALL: Tues, Thurs, Sat

Practice lasts 1.5 hrs daily

PROGRAM OPTIONS

Prep Year round: Includes all Prep seasonal programs.

Prep Summer: (Memorial Day to Start of School Year) The dryland program is not a ski-specific training program, but instead focuses on broader athletic development through the lens of a ski racing program. This includes developing good habits and enjoyment of physical activity as well as establishing a strong foundation of physical fitness and athleticism which an athlete can build on later in their athletic career. During the dryland season, training is held at the same time and location as the Jr. Devo Team, although the groups often split up for their training activities. Summer training is held on Tuesday and Thursdays from 4-5:30 PM and Saturday afternoons. Typically a little over half the practices start at the West Ridge Trails on the UAF Campus with the rest held at Birch Hill Recreation Area. There is a week break for the 4th of July holiday and a week break later in the month of July.

Prep Fall: (Aug-Oct) The substance of our Fall training is very similar to our summer program. Athletes can select from a variety of programs that best fit their needs. In August and September we encourage athletes to participate in their school running programs, so Prep athletes can select from participating two or three days per week. After a two-week training break in late September, the October program meets three days per week and often includes a transition to snow if conditions allow. Practices in the Fall happen from 5:30-7 PM on Tuesdays and Thursdays and Saturday afternoon.

Prep Winter: (Nov- mid Apr) The Prep Team meets three times a week for training from early November to mid-April. Practices are held Tuesday from 6:00-7:30, Wednesday, and Friday evenings from 5:30-7:00 PM and on Saturday for a longer tour. Training typically takes place at Birch Hill, although practice is occasionally moved to other locations (and possibly times) for tours or just a

change of scenery. Such changes will be announced in regular email updates. In the case of consistent cold weather, practices are sometimes

shifted to an indoor facility such as the UAF Student Recreation Center (SRC).

ORIENTATION

We organize two informational meetings for parents each year. One in May focused on summer and fall dryland activities, and one in November oriented towards winter activities. Contact pete@peterleonard.net if you would like more information on when these meetings will happen.



WEATHER GUIDELINES

We train rain or shine throughout the dryland season, so proper clothing is imperative! In case of smoke from forest fires, we use the Borough's air quality and particulate guidelines to help us decide on whether the local air quality is suitable for healthy activity. We do our best to make these announcements early, but the localized nature of smoke sometimes requires last minute decisions. We typically try to make announcements via email an hour or two before practice begins.

ATTENDANCE

It is no secret that consistency in any endeavor leads to improvement. However, we also understand that balance is important in life and other commitments like music, school, family, etc. will need to take priority over training at times. As such, the NSCF-FXC race teams do not have a required attendance policy.

COACHES

Training for the Prep Team is run by a NSCF-FXC's certified professional coaches with the support of intern coaches. Many of our interns are college athletes who enjoy the opportunity to pass-on their passion for the ski training to a younger generation.



The coaches are focused on the athletes during practice time so if you have a question for a coach, we respectfully request that you send an email and set up a time to talk outside of practices.

TEAM EXPECTATIONS

- Be on Time
- Have a positive attitude – remember your positive attitude is contagious!
- Be ready to put in the effort toward getting better.
- Be willing to take feedback from coaches and your fellow skiers.
- Skiers should be prepared for practice: this means having the proper equipment for the day's activities, proper clothing for the weather, and taking care of nutrition by showing up at practice hydrated and fueled with a healthy snack ahead of time, plus a water bottle for during practice and a light, healthy snack for afterwards.

EQUIPMENT

Dryland Equipment

Summer and Fall programs

Proper gear is essential for making practice fun and productive instead of frustrating. It doesn't have to be new, but it must fit, and be in good working order.



Running Shoes: Everything we do during the summer requires good footwear. A good quality pair of simple lightweight running shoes (or trail running shoes) often does the trick. Make sure the shoes have adequate tread for activities on trails. To avoid blisters or other foot problems, be sure to wear-in the shoes during regular daily activities prior to wearing them for training.

Clothing: Skiers should come to practice with appropriate clothing for training for that day's conditions. Loose fitting athletic clothing that allows for movement in a full range of motion is essential. Materials that wick perspiration and keep one warm while wet are essential in colder or wetter weather. Gloves are recommended when the ground gets cold as we do a number of ground based activities in almost every session. Dress in multiple thin layers to be warm and shed layers as you get warmer during the session.

Dryland Poles: As part of the dryland program we introduce skiers to various forms of dryland ski imitation which use poles including ski bounding and ski walking. Dryland poles are the only necessary piece of equipment for this and are any pair of poles that comes up to roughly mid-chest height, although size can vary from the bottom of the sternum to armpit height and still work. Poles must have a good strap so the skier can release their grip on the pole, and an intact metal tip to dig into hard ground. Last season's classic ski poles or a smaller sibling's poles often do the job just fine.

Mountain Bike: We use mountain bikes as part of our summer program about once every week or two to add in athletic variety, and develop leg strength, endurance, balance and coordination. Each skier should have a mountain bike that is in good working order. We recommend purchasing your bike from a reputable bike shop in town such as Goldstream Sports, Beaver Sports and Raven Cross Country (or a used one originating from one of those shops) as those bikes are typically assembled with greater knowledge and care and are built with components that are able to last through the rigors of trail riding. Be sure your bike is in good working order with shifting gears, functional brakes and tires that hold air well in advance of the first session so you can get a tune up if needed.

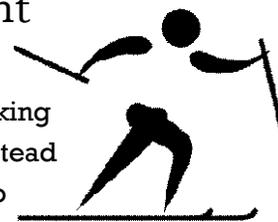
Helmet: Helmets are mandatory for all wheeled activities. No helmet, no participation (although we do have a couple of extras we can lend out in case an athlete forgets). Be sure your helmet fits properly – covering your forehead and fitting securely so it can't be jarred loose in case of an accident. Check with a reputable bike shop if you need help here.

Water Bottle: It is hot in Fairbanks in the summer! Jr. Devo and Prep skiers should be sure to have a water bottle with them at each practice to maintain hydration through the session. Please note that this bottle does not replace but merely adds to good hydration and nutrition habits through the day particularly for those that spend the day outside.

On-snow Equipment

Late Fall and Winter Programs

Proper gear is essential for making practice fun and productive instead of frustrating. It doesn't have to be new, but it must fit. Both skate AND classic gear is essential to take advantage of all workouts.



Be sure to mark all of your equipment with your name – most ski gear looks alike! This includes both skis, both boots, both poles and clothing!

Skis: Skiers should have both classic and skate skis that fit. Skate skis should be about as tall as the skier and classic skis approximately 4 or 5 inches longer and of a flex that allows the skier to easily compress the wax pocket. Skis should be in good condition and of a durable construction (kids race skis are usually of adequate durability, as are mid-range adult racing skis). We advise holding off on purchasing top-of-the-line skis until the skier is fully capable of taking proper care of their equipment (and he or she has other skis available for thin snow conditions or playing games).

Wax: Each skier should own a tin of blue and a tin of green kick wax and a synthetic waxing cork. Skis should be properly waxed by the athlete and parent or coach for each day's practice. Waxing advice will be posted on the team whiteboard prior to practice each day.

Boots: Skiers should use warm boots that allow for natural ankle movement. Bring both sets of boots (skate and classic) to each session.

Poles: Skiers might begin their time on the Prep Team with only one pair of poles that comes up to the shoulder, but by the end of their tenure they should be using separate classic and skate poles. Skate poles should come up to between the chin and lips, while classic poles should come up to the middle of the shoulder. Poles outside of this range make it extremely difficult and frustrating to learn good technique.

Clothing: Skiers should come to practice with appropriate clothing for training in cold weather. This includes mittens, warm gloves or split mitts (aka lobster gloves), hats, ear muffs, neck warmers, buffs, balaclavas or other means of covering the skiers face and head. Skiers should dress in layers which should include a synthetic or wool base layer, potentially an insulating mid-layer, as well as a wind-resistant outer layer. Depending on conditions, more clothes may be needed. **PLEASE NOTE:** Skiers with insufficient clothing for conditions will be sent in and made to sit out practice.

THE TEAM ROOM

FXC skiers may utilize the team room adjacent to the stairway in the large ski building during the on-snow season. This use comes with responsibilities such as keeping the room clean and representing the club with good manners. Skiers can store their gear bags in the team room during practice.



THE IMPORTANCE OF FUELING YOUR SKIER

Ski practice is hard work and it is important that skiers have enough water and food to keep them sustained before and after practice. Make sure your athlete has a full water bottle and a snack for recover. Simple snacks like a half a peanut butter sandwich or an apple with cheese are a good choice. Also it is important to Prep parents to remind their skiers that the snacks available for Jr. Nordic skiers are not for FXC. Prep skiers should keep their recovery snacks in their gear bags in the team room.

UNIFORMS & TEAM WEAR

Each skier will be issued a team uniform to wear at races representing the Nordic Ski Club of Fairbanks. Skiers are expected to return laundered uniforms at the end of each season. FXC is able to obtain ski jackets, buffs, hats and other ski related clothing at a club prices and offers these items to skiers. These items are optional. Information is sent home periodically by email about clothing orders or existing inventory available for purchase.

RACING PHILOSOPHY

The NSCF's junior racing programs view competition as an opportunity to apply the skills one has learned during training, much like a test in school or a recital for a dance class or a concert for a music group. As such, skiers are strongly encouraged – but not required – to take part in local races. It is important to recognize that results mean little in terms of eventual performance until a skier is about 16 years old, and an exclusively results-based focus can often be distracting (at best) to older skiers. With that in mind, we try to keep the **focus on the process of racing**: application of skiing skills, racing tactics, and challenging ones abilities. Parents, your help and reinforcement of this focus is very much appreciated! (And we will talk more about it at our Winter Parent Meeting!)

We feel strongly that skiers should race **age-appropriate distances** as these allow a skier to ski at high speed for the entire distance. This allows the skier to reinforce their best technical skills and high energy skiing instead of low-energy, or even fatigued or sloppy habits. It is easier to start with speed and develop the endurance to ski fast for longer races than the other way around. Youth-oriented races in Fairbanks like the Town Race Series, Turkey Day Relays, Besh Cups and Interior Youth Festival all feature age-appropriate distances. Longer spring events such as the Tour of Anchorage and Sonot Kkaazoot should be viewed more as endurance challenges, and the emphasis should be on completing the distance, more than racing as hard and as fast as possible. At this level, we feel 5-15 races is a good number of competitions over the course of a season.

| Team | How Many Races per season? | How Long Should those races be? (generally) |
|----------|----------------------------|---|
| Jr. Devo | 5-15 | Up to 3k (U10/U12) |
| Prep | 10-20 | Up to 5k (U14), up to 7.5k (U16) |
| Comp | 15-30 | Up to 10k (U16), up to 15k (U18), up to 20k (U20) |

When a skier reaches the Prep Team level, we encourage them to consider **travelling** to start to **experience** racing at different venues and in different conditions and the habits that help them travel intelligently and successfully as a ski racer. Usually this is through the Besh Cup series (see below). A logical progression would be to race the Besh Cups in Fairbanks one year, and the next year try one out-of-town race weekend, before trying the whole series. Individual approaches to this vary, so feel free to chat about it with your child's coaches.

RACE FORMATS

Classic and Freestyle – races are designated either classic or free technique. In classic technique races, only classic technique can be used

(herringbone, classic stride, kick double pole, double pole, turning techniques, etc.), whereas in free technique any technique can be used although most skiers opt to skate with the possible exception

of races held in extremely slow (cold) conditions when the advantage of skating may be lost.

Interval Start (aka Individual start): the traditional XC racing format where skiers start at intervals of 15 or 30 seconds and their start time is subtracted from their finish time to determine results.

Mass Start: a race where the whole field starts at once and the first racer across the line is the winner. For junior races the 'field' is typically one or two age groups that are racing the same distance that day.

Sprint races are generally shorter races where skiers race each other in a series of elimination heats to determine the results. In local races (Town Series), the heats are usually seeded randomly, whereas at larger regional (Besh Cup) and national races the heats are seeded by a qualifier which is an interval start race around the sprint course held in the morning before afternoon heats. **Ski-cross**

races are typically conducted in a sprint (elimination) format with heats and include technical features like jumps and gates to increase the challenge on a skier's technical skills. [For the youngest skiers, the goal is typically to have them race multiple times during sprint-type formats to help them gain race experience, so even if they aren't among the top skiers in their first heat, they usually have the opportunity for another round.]

Pursuit Races are a rare format where the previous day's (or multiple days') results are used to determine the start order for the race (fastest skier first) and the results for the event are determined by order of finish across the line.

Skiathlon Races are an even rarer mass start format that combines both classic and freestyle technique. Skiers start the race classic skiing and then make a pit stop half-way through the race to switch gear and finish skating.

RACE SERIES

Local Races

Town Race Series This is a four-race series held over the course of the winter. Entry is free to all school-age competitors and FXC Prep and Jr. Devo athletes should enter through their coaches the week prior to the race (even if they fill-out the season-long entry form – we use the weekly sign-up to reduce costs for our club throughout the series, so the races can remain free). Youth races are held when it is -10F or warmer, and High School and adult races are held when it is approximately -20F or warmer.

Turkey Day Relays A fun costume relay held the day after Thanksgiving every year. Registration is on your own. See NSCF website and local ski shops for more info as the race approaches and keep an eye out for the early registration deadline!

Interior Youth Festival This is a youth-oriented race day that FXC hosts each March. Three races in one day with an awards ceremony, prize raffle and pizza party at the end. Nominal entry fee and registration is available through the team or local ski shops.

Sonot Kkaazoot This is Fairbanks' big ski marathon each spring, typically starting and ending on the river downtown (conditions permitting). Besides the 50km which climbs from the river to Birch Hill and then skis nearly all the trails at Birch, there is a 20km race held entirely on the River which can be a nice endurance challenge for Prep and Jr. Devo skiers. There is a significant discount for registering early – keep an eye out for information in mid to late February!

Regional Races

Besh Cups – This is a three-weekend, six-race series that serve as qualifiers for Junior Nationals (and Arctic Winter Games in even-numbered years). This is also a great experience builder for skiers interested in qualifying for big races in future years as there are important skills associated with successfully combining travel and racing. Enter via crosscountryalaska.org.

USSA licenses are now required to compete in any USSA sanctioned race, including Besh Cups. Competitor licenses (\$95) are necessary for U16 and older athletes to score points for Arctic Winter Games and Junior National qualification. U14 and younger athletes simply need a general license (\$15). Day of Race licenses are also available, but cost \$10 per day and add a bit of paperwork and logistics to an already busy race morning.

International Races

Arctic Winter Games – Held every even numbered year. U14, U16, U18. Racers from across the circumpolar north. While the field typically involves some very high-quality skiers, the depth is not quite as strong as at JNs so top U16 and U18 skiers will often opt to attend JNs with this in mind.

One last reminder: When registering and representing your club at races, don't forget to list your affiliation as "NSCF-FXC." This helps us with organization (bibs, ski waxing) at certain races, and of course we want to show what an awesome club we are. 😊

HOW CAN PARENTS HELP?

There are many ways a parent can help out. The most essential is getting kids to practice and picked up on time. Parents can also help a lot in providing an opportunity for "team building," or help with one of our monthly program-wide hike in the summer (see above). Hosting a post-tour get together, or potluck/pasta feed are just a couple of ways to enhance the social side of Prep Team. There will be various tasks to help with during the season too, such as uniform sizing and distribution, helping with waxing before races and helping chaperone a tour. Stay tuned to emails from the Team Leader for announcements.

FXC FAMILY VOLUNTEER HOUR TRACKING

A significant level of funding for the FXC program comes from fundraising efforts. We ask all families in the program to volunteer for our various fundraising efforts and we ask each family that has been involved in the program for a year or more to take a leadership role in a fundraiser or other task that helps the program. One of the biggest fundraisers and requires the most amount of effort is the Spring Gala. This event brings in nearly \$10,000 every year. It is never too early to volunteer to help with any event.

By registering a skier with FXC, families agree to fulfill their volunteer commitment. Below is a guide to expected hours.

| Program | Volunteer Hours |
|----------------|------------------------|
| Jr. Devo | 4-8 |
| Prep | 8-12 |
| Comp | 12-20 |

FXC 2017-2018 VOLUNTEER CALENDAR

| Month | Event | Volunteer Opportunity | Did I volunteer? |
|------------------|-----------------------------|--|------------------|
| Year round | Friends of FXC | Letter writing | |
| December | Ski Your Age in K's | Course set up, decorations, advertising | |
| January/February | Besh Cup Bistro | Baking or providing food, helping in the booth | |
| | Besh Cup/NSCF Races | Waxing | |
| March | Youth Interior Festival | Course set up, bib distribution, advertising, clean up | |
| April | Spring Gala | Silent auction items, food prep, decorations, set up and clean up, advertising | |
| May | Trail Run | Course set up, bib distribution, advertising, clean up | |
| June | Chena Hot Springs Bike Ride | Feed stations | |
| August | Golden Heart Trail Run | Course set up, bib distribution, advertising, clean up | |
| | | | |

Remember to sign up at Track it Forward <http://trackitforward.com/site/nscf-fxc>

FXC Parent Volunteer Coordinator: fxcski@gmail.com