

THE WALES ALPINE SKI RACING DEVELOPMENT PLAN

2014-2017

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is this about?

The Wales Alpine Ski Racing Development Plan sets out the pathway that Welsh registered skiers who are interested in alpine racing and racing on dry slopes are expected to follow and some of the important roles that we at Snowsport Cymru Wales will play in supporting the development of ski racers. It explains our role in developing ski racing, and how ski racers can benefit from the training opportunities that we will offer, how the national squads will be selected and developed, how younger up and coming ski racers will be supported, and how we will work with clubs to support ski racing at a local level.

Inevitably, the document cannot answer all the questions that might arise and this FAQ hopes to fill in some of the gaps. If you still have any queries, then please do not hesitate to contact us.

Who is leading the programme?

The programme is being led by the programme manager John Hallett (johndavidhallett@hotmail.com) and our chief executive and head national coach Robin Kellen (robin@snowsportwales.net)

What is the programme trying to achieve?

The programme aims to do a number of things. Firstly, it aims to provide a clear pathway for skiers to follow as their skills develop and as they gain experience of ski racing and training in both a club environment and eventually perhaps, as a member of one of the national squads. It describes what we will do to support the development of Wales' best performing skiers while helping young and developing ski racers to remain motivated and clear about how they too can reach the top.

Secondly, it provides a simple framework for clubs to follow so that their own programmes can ensure their ski racers have the best opportunity to gain a place initially in the Wales Ski Academy, and later on if their performance is of the right standard, to be invited to join the Wales Race Squad or the Wales Elite Ski Team.

Our aim is to see young ski racers adopting the activity as their 'sport of choice' and by doing so, grow the number of people involved in ski racing in Wales as well as the number competing at the highest level ultimately up to Olympic representation.

Where can I find more details?

The document which sets out the whole plan can be found on www.snowsportwales.net or by contacting Snowsport Cymru Wales direct.

How are people selected for the Elite Team and Race Squad?

Selection to the Elite Team and Race Squad is by invitation only. The programme manager and head national coach will monitor ski racers performance closely throughout the year and a selection panel will make a decision on who to invite towards the end of each calendar year. There will be no mid-year selections, and those selected will be members of the appropriate squad for the whole of the following calendar year.

We have set out the criteria that ski racers must meet before being considered for selection but simply producing race results is not the end of the story. Members of the squads will be expected to demonstrate a genuine commitment to the programme as well as excellent technical ability, and have real potential to progress further.

In exceptional circumstances, for instance where a ski racer is resident abroad, we understand that meeting all the criteria may not be possible and this will be taken into consideration in making our selections.

How are people selected for the Race Academy?

The Wales Race Academy is the gateway to the national squads, and club coaches will be asked to nominate Wales registered racers for inclusion in the Academy based upon their potential to eventually challenge for selection to the national squads. If you feel you meet the criteria for membership of the Academy and you have not been invited to participate in the programme, speak to your club coach who may want to speak to the national head coach and discuss your situation.

What happens if I meet the criteria for a higher level squad or could meet the standard required for the Academy mid-year?

We understand that young skiers all develop at a different rate and we want to encourage them to progress. So we will monitor all of our registered racers performance throughout the year and if we feel that someone is developing very quickly, we may invite them to train with one of the national squads or the Academy without being given membership status.

So non Academy skiers may be invited to train with the Academy, while Academy level skiers may be invited to train with one of the national squads if they are of a suitable standard.

Being offered 'train with' status does not necessarily mean that you will secure selection in the next year but it will give you some great experience and help us assess how we can help you make the grade.

Some young ski racers who are at the transition from non-seeded racing to seeded racing may show great potential but will not have had the opportunity to achieve the points required to join the Academy. Where this is the case, they may be invited to train with the Academy and then as soon as they have secured the required points, they will be awarded full Academy status.

How are young racers who are not selected for the squads catered for?

Membership of the Wales Elite Team and Race Squad is limited to the most exceptional skiers and membership of the Academy is also restricted to ski racers who have some experience under their belts and show real promise. This leaves a significant number of young aspiring ski racers who are the future of our sport and we are planning to do a lot to help them and invest in their future.

Firstly, young skiers should be actively involved in their club training programmes, and we have asked clubs to align their training groups into three simple levels. That way you can see how you progress within your club environment. You should also gain as much experience as you can skiing on dry artificial slopes and indoor snow slopes in the UK as they can. Getting ski miles in on snow in the mountains is a fantastic way to develop the basic skills you need to become a racer and clubs such as Dragons organise trips that give young skiers a great introduction to skiing fast on real snow. Summer racing in events such as Club Nationals and in series such as the Gloucester Summer Race League or one of the other regional series is a good way to gain experience and we will be monitoring how our Welsh skiers are performing in these events to spot where our next generation of racers is coming from.

We are organising a programme called 'Future Talent' where we will be asking clubs to organise a couple of skiing clinics where we will be providing guest coaches to help young skiers develop their skills, as well as giving us an opportunity to see how you are doing.

We are also planning to identify skiers in the under 12 and under 10 year age groups who are regularly competing in entry-level races and are registered with Snowsport Cymru Wales and they will be awarded 'Young Star' status, and they will be invited to train alongside the younger Academy racers when it is appropriate. At the same time their progress will be tracked to see that when the time comes, they are able to join the Academy.

If I am not selected, can I appeal?

There is no opportunity to appeal against a decision of the selection panel. The criteria for selection are very clear and we will apply these in a fair and transparent way.

Can I apply direct to Snowsport Cymru Wales to be on one of the squads?

No. Membership of the national squads is by invitation only and membership of the Academy will be by nomination of club coaches and subject to agreement by the head national coach.

Can squad and Academy members be dropped or lose selection?

Yes. In the first year, that is 2014, we will take into consideration a commitment by ski racers to meeting all of the criteria. If after the first year, it is clear that this commitment isn't being met, they will be dropped in 2015.

We want to develop a genuine team ethos and we can only do that if our athletes make the necessary effort to support the programme. We understand this will mean travelling to training sessions, cost, and use of holiday time or changes to working patterns for those in employment but to succeed, we require our top skiers in particular to take a professional approach to the programme.

What are the benefits of selection?

You will be recognised as a member of one of the home nations official development squads and we hope that this will enable you to secure the support of your school or employer when it comes to enabling you to attend training sessions and races. You will also be invited to attend sessions that are specifically established for the squads including the annual camp which in 2014 is being held at Landgraaf in July and August.

Members of the Elite Team and Race Squad will have additional support which is set out in our development plan, while there will be team kit for both national squad and Academy members which can be bought at the lowest price we can achieve.

How do squad and Academy members find out about what is happening?

We will let you know by email about anything and everything you need to know. We have also established a Facebook site and members of the national squads and Academy will be asked to sign up to this and keep a close eye on it.

What am I committing to if I am selected?

What we expect national squad and Academy members to commit to is set out in our framework document.

What is happening to the winter Excel training programme?

The Excel programme which has offered a winter training programme at Pontypool for some years will finish at the end of the 2013/14 season. Late in 2014, a new programme will take its place following the same format but it will be called the Wales Ski Academy and all those

selected for the Academy will be invited to attend. We will also open this up to other Welsh ski racers so that they can train alongside Academy skiers and we will invite English ski racers to attend likewise, but those selected for the Academy will train separately as a team.

What is the role of clubs and how do they get involved?

Clubs are the backbone of skiing in the UK and are vitally important to this programme. We have asked clubs to establish a uniform grading system for their ski racers while club coaches will be engaged in the process of selecting ski racers for the Wales Ski Academy.

How does this programme fit with any UK-wide programmes?

Our programme along with those run by the other home nations governing bodies for snowsports and the English regions, up to and including BSS (British Ski and Snowboard) will evolve and we intend to work closely where we can with partners elsewhere to maximise the effectiveness of our programme to the benefit of Welsh skiers. That may mean sharing training camps and inviting guest coaches to support us, but we intend to ensure that the identity of the Wales teams is very clear.

As programmes emerge on a UK level, we will adapt our programme so that there is a clear progression for our highest achieving ski racers into the GB team.