



PARENTING FOR SUCCESS

Winter Sport Parent Information



Events like SkillsQuest have been developed to promote and reward fundamental skill development. (USSA photo)

Check these tips to help your child be successful in the fundamentals stage:

- Do not place pressure on your child for results.
- Ask your child what they are learning at practices.
- Talk to your child's coaches about what they are teaching and how your child is progressing, then praise your child for improvement in these areas.
- Give your child time to explore their skiing and riding outside of training times, either with friends or with family.
- Ensure your child's equipment fits and functions well. Ski boots are the most critical piece of equipment for learning the fundamentals. Kids that have to compensate for poorly fitted boots may ingrain improper movement patterns.
- Fundamentals training often takes place outside the competition courses. Understand that freeskiing and freeriding days are just as important as those in the course!

FUNDAMENTALS DEVELOPMENT STAGE

We introduced the concept of long-term athlete development (LTAD) previously. LTAD is focused on doing the right things at the right time in an athlete's development based on their physical, social and cognitive maturity and their previous experience in sport. There are particular opportunities for young athletes prior to the adolescent growth spurt to develop good movement patterns in a variety of activities related to their sport. This is referred to as the FUNdamentals stage in some circles, with the word "fun" in capital letters to emphasize that the fundamentals must be taught in a fun and engaging way for children of these ages. Technical fundamentals are the main focus in our programs through age 12-13.

The challenge is that a fundamentals approach can be in conflict with the prevailing attitude of some sport parents and current youth sport culture. Consider the following analogy.

Imagine a pyramid where the blocks of the pyramid represent training. Now suppose two programs offer 100 training sessions, represented by 100 blocks to be used to build a pyramid. One coach places all of the blocks on a base level, making a very broad foundation. Another coach places 24 blocks on the foundation, then starts stacking upward, and by the end has a pyramid standing 8 blocks high. Like the taller pyramid, these athletes stand out in competition, earning great results and garnering praise from parents and coaches alike. Next season, the athletes have 125 sessions. The pyramid with the broad foundation starts to build upward, though still slowly. As blocks are added to the taller pyramid, the blocks fall off the top into a pile of rubble at the base of the pyramid. It does not grow taller, the good looking structure starts to become obscured, but it still stands tallest. After several seasons, as the number of training sessions increases, the pyramid with a broad foundation grows toward the sky at an increasingly rapid pace. The pyramid with the narrow foundation has lost its shape and grows in an erratic fashion, if at all. Perhaps the coach and athlete recognize the problem, and work to re-arrange the foundation and start to build up again. But during this time, the other pyramid is growing too quickly to keep up. The pyramid that started with a broad foundation rises highest in the long run, much as the results can for the athlete with the most solid foundation. Those blocks at the bottom of the pyramid represent work on fundamental sport skills.

While this analogy of development is simplistic, it should give us, as parents, pause about the culture of winning prevalent in youth sport, and how it can drive expectations. Can we, in the face of seeming demands for immediate success, have the patience with our children and provide the support that they need to develop such a broad base? This is the approach we ask our coaches to take, and with your support, are confident it will lead SSWSC skiers and riders to achieve their full potential in the long run.



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