



PARENTING FOR SUCCESS

Winter Sport Parent Information

LONG-TERM ATHLETE DEVELOPMENT



Long-term athlete development is taking the right steps at each developmental phase to allow athletes, such as young Johnny Spillane here, to reach their full potential in the long run.

In the last couple of decades we have learned much more about how children develop in sports. For the past three years I worked with the U.S. Olympic Committee and a handful of national sport governing bodies on a task force to review the research and propose an American model for sport development that would maximize athlete outcomes. We were focused on long-term athlete development, LTAD for short, which is a system for optimizing training, competition and recovery for athletes at various stages of their development. It entails doing what is right for kids whether they are participating solely for fun and enjoyment, if they have dreams of becoming an Olympian, or something in between. LTAD considers a child's physical, cognitive, emotional and social development as they progress through adolescence and into adulthood, and identifies opportunities at each developmental phase where we can focus our efforts to get the most benefit for their performance down the road. Here is a brief summary of what we've learned:

- Children's needs are much different than those of adults, and training and competition structures that prepare kids for success as adults don't necessarily look like the adult version.
- Many factors contribute to competition success at junior ages that are outside our children's control. Results are but one small indicator of future success, and are often over-emphasized.
- Age-based systems have many shortcomings, particularly in the years just before and through the adolescent growth spurt, due to varying rates of maturation and its influence on what the athlete is capable of.

Check out the USSA Training System for your child's sport from the links below :

- [Alpine Training System](#)
- [Cross Country Training System](#)
- [Freeskiing Training System](#) (will be posted by USSA soon)
- [Freestyle Training System](#)
- [Ski Jumping/Nordic Combined Training System](#)
- [Snowboarding Training System](#)
- [USOC American Development Model](#)

You can also type the above into the search box on www.ussa.org.

The best training and competition opportunities for our children may not be what we would expect. There are no shortcuts to success. Seeking short-term success over long-term development principles can have dire consequences. Sport parents receive a lot of conflicting messages. One example is the so-called 10-year, 10,000 hour rule for achieving mastery in sport. This has led some to seek higher volumes of specialized training at young ages. This is not consistent with the LTAD approach. In skiing and snowboarding, the average age of top performers at the elite levels is getting older, despite the attention garnered by young phenoms like Mikaela Shiffrin or Chloe Kim.

If our children have aspirations of reaching the top of their sport, they have a long journey ahead, and we want to be sure they are getting the right programming that will keep them progressing. The many life lessons learned through sport are enhanced when our children look back on their involvement with satisfaction rather than frustration. An LTAD approach increases the chance they'll have a positive experience. In future articles, I'll elaborate on how we at the SSWSC implement LTAD principles into our programming and how you as a parent can help support your child in what should be a long and rewarding journey in skiing and riding.



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