



# PARENTING FOR SUCCESS

Winter Sport Parent Information

## PLAYING OTHER SPORTS



Bode Miller plays in a U.S. Open qualifying match in 2010 (photo by Madeleine Dreith/USTA)

**What sports are great for my child? These seem to cross over very well, but the timing of their season and your child's enjoyment are very important factors as well. Watch out for early season conflicts.**

**Alpine/telemark:** Such a diverse skillset is required that most sports contribute. Mountain biking, gymnastics and tennis are a few good ones. Endurance sports fit best in summer.

**Cross country:** For younger skiers, a love of outdoor activities in general is key – hiking, biking, etc. But think agility, quickness and coordination too.

**Freestyle:** Acrobatics play a huge role, rooted in gymnastics/tumbling. Team sports provide a good balance to the individual nature of skiing.

**Jumping/Nordic Combined:** Think athletic balance. There are two very specific focuses in these disciplines, so complementary sports should add multi-directional movement.

**Snowboarding/Freeskiing:** The coaches love skateboarding for its skills, but gymnastics is big too. Soccer gets a nod for footwork and teamwork.

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I am often asked what role other sports play in the development of skiers and snowboarders, and which sports are best to participate in during the off-season. The answer depends on many factors. In a [landmark study of winter Olympians](#) from 1984-1998, and repeated in 2014, it was found that from age 10-14 athletes participated in three sports on average over the course of the year and two sport involvement continued through high school. There are potential physical, mental and social benefits to this approach. So what sports are best? The question I ask first is, what does the athlete enjoy doing? Once you've asked your child what other sports they like doing, here are some things to consider to help guide them:

- For athletes through age 12, or before puberty, participating in multiple sports helps them develop a broader base and discover their true passion. Skills between sports transfer particularly well at this stage. Specialization at this point is not necessary in skiing and snowboarding and can even have a negative effect. This is the time to take advantage of the variety of options within the SSWSC or in other sport and recreation programs in summer.
- While multiple sports are good, don't overdo it. Make sure your child has some free time and can balance school, social, work and sport. It's not unusual for a child to not want to go to a practice or game from time to time, but if it's continual it may be a sign that they are overbooked.
- Specialization before puberty has many short-comings and potential dangers and is not necessary in skiing and snowboarding. Take advantage of the variety of options within the SSWSC or in other sport and recreation programs in summer.
- Post-puberty athletes still benefit from multiple sports, but if they are serious about skiing/snowboarding, balancing the schedule becomes important. **Communication is key.** When kept in the loop, SSWSC coaches will work with you and your multi-sport athlete to develop an efficient plan that maximizes skill development without over training.
- Consider the season. A year-round training program for skiing or snowboarding will be more general from May-August, then gets more specific and has higher intensity during September-November. Summertime is usually easy to fit any active sport, but fall can be trickier to match. Fall seasons that cut into early season on-snow time are particularly tough for skiers/riders.

SSWSC is fortunate to have incredible venues affording year-round training. For committed high school and post graduate athletes, these facilities provide a crucial edge. For other SSWSC athletes, a variety of other program options should be looked at along with other sports to make up a well-rounded athletic base, strong in body and mind. Allow your children make choices and find their passion as you help to guide.