Competition-Coaching Introduction L2T

Step 1:

Developing a successful team

**Reference Material
for On Snow Workshop**

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Table of content

The following section complements the information provided in section 8 of your NCCP Introduction to Community Coaching Reference Material and section 1 of your NCCP Community Coaching Reference Material.

1.1 Athlete Recruitment

Note: Sections 1.1.1 and 1.1.2 provide generic information on the subject of athlete recruitment. The details provided may be more or less applicable to the sport of cross-country skiing. They are intended to offer ideas and insights that can be adapted as and when applicable to the cross-country skiing scenario.

1.1.1 Recruitment Strategies

Have a Game Plan

The great baseball philosopher Yogi Berra once said, "You got to be careful if you don't know where you're going because you might not get there." In his inimitable style, he was probably trying to say that in order to get where you're going, you have to know where you're going. This is very much the case with recruitment and the efforts directed at bringing new participants into your sport.

Recruitment, as in any marketing effort, is a step-by-step process that requires careful planning in order to receive optimal use of resources and achieve the best results. An organization, for example, that produces an expensive recruitment brochure or video, without giving any thought to audience or messaging, may be missing opportunities or spending far more time, effort and money than is necessary. You wouldn't go into a championship final without a game plan - don't go into a recruitment drive without a communications strategy.

Define Your Objectives

At the end of the day, what do you want to achieve with your recruitment strategy? How are you going to use this strategy? How many athletes and what quality of athletes?

Know your objectives in order to keep your recruitment efforts on track and to evaluate whether the strategy succeeds in meeting these objectives.

Define Your Audience

Who do you want to attract to your sport? People with the potential skills to participate in

your sport are your primary audience. However, secondary audiences such as coaches, parents, schools and community groups should also be considered. The key is to define an audience that is relevant - that is, one that would respond to your messages - while being fairly inclusive so that you don't miss any opportunities.

<u>Do Your Research</u>

Attracting athletes to a sport is no different than attracting buyers to a product. To be successful in recruiting athletes, you need to "sell" your sport. Recruitment efforts should therefore outline the benefits. Think about what there is about your sport that is appealing to an athlete. What can you offer athletes?

As well as looking at how you would like your sport to be perceived, look at how your sport is currently perceived by the general public and if these perceptions (whether accurate or mistaken) will be an obstacle in your recruitment strategy.

This preliminary research will help you define your messages and audience. For example, if your sport has a reputation as being an aggressive sport and you want aggressive athletes, your messaging should reflect this. On the other hand, if your sport has a reputation for being an aggressive sport and you want to refute this perception, your messaging should downplay the aggressive nature of your sport and promote other attributes.

<u>Food for Thought</u>: If you anticipate some negative response to your recruitment efforts, be prepared with reliable, objective facts and figures to refute negative attitudes about your sport. This need not be a "visible" part of your recruitment communications – that is, if you decide to produce a brochure, highlighting in it the "drug-free" aspects of your program may only invite negativism which may not have materialized without this reference. However, information (key messages and responses) about "Drugs in Sport" is useful to have in your back pocket, should it become an issue during recruitment efforts or at any time if it becomes an issue in the media.

<u>Define Your Messages</u>

Now that you are clear about your recruitment objectives, audience and what your sport has to offer, it's time to define your specific messaging. This is information you want to get across in all communications, whether visual or verbal. "Messages" can be factual - ''the Bunnyrabbit Program at the X Cross-Country Ski Club can accept more participants; phone 555-2222 to enroll your child" - or implied – a video showing kids having fun, verbal endorsement from a sport role model, etc.

Messages (and all recruitment communications) should invite the audience to respond both literally and emotionally. After your recruitment effort – through written material, videos or face-to-face contact - potential recruits should see themselves involved in your sport, and will also have the information they need to respond.

Messages/communications materials can be tailored according to the target audience's information needs. An example of a matrix of audience/messages is below:

Audience	Their Information Needs (Messages)
Parents/Children/ Coaches	✓ Great sport to be involved in ✓ How to get involved, etc
Media/Public	✓ Promotes healthy lifestyles ✓ Provides healthy alternatives for children and teens ✓ Athletes are good role models ✓ Sport teaches important life lessons
Schools, Universities, Colleges	✓ Great sport for your athletes/coaches ✓ Sport can help build student morale ✓ Sport can generate revenue ✓ Provides healthy alternatives for students ✓ Promotes healthy communities ✓ Athletes are good role models ✓ Sport teaches import lessons outside the classroom

Food for Thought: "Sell your messages to yourself." Make sure that your messages are consistent and clear, and that "messagers" (i.e. coaches and other spokespersons) are clear on the messages. This is vital - first, you want to be sure that everyone understands the game plan, and second, you want to be sure that everyone is on the same page of the play book.

Know Your Limitations

Recruitment takes time, effort and, in some cases, money. Decide in advance what your resources are, and how you will use them to achieve your recruiting objectives. Prioritize your efforts and keep a running "inventory" of your progress. Game plans need to be flexible when challenges arise (e.g. budget, other time commitments).

Coordinate With Other Communications Efforts

Marketing (i.e. recruiting) can be expensive if it is "ad hoc" and developed in isolation of other considerations. Check with other people in your organization to see if joint marketing opportunities exist. For example, if someone in your organization is trying to find corporate sponsors, see what communications materials are being developed and if a similar piece for recruitment can be developed at the same time. Or, if someone in your organization is meeting with a school official to discuss shared use agreements, see if there is an opportunity to expand this meeting to include a discussion with the appropriate school official to discuss school-based programs and other recruitment possibilities.

1.1.2   Developing Your Recruitment Game Plan

<u>Show Them, Tell Them, Sell Them…</u>

Recruitment need not be a big budget item. In fact, many of the most successful recruitment practices will not cost a dime. What follows is a "menu" of activities which you could consider in your recruitment efforts. Again, when choosing and implementing activities, bear in mind the use and appropriateness of messages, audience, timing, budget and other resources.

<u>Timing Is Everything</u>

Recruiting is a year-long activity. However, to get the most bang from your communications buck, you should plan to schedule most of your efforts around times that make sense to your training/ competition schedule and which can take advantage of other opportunities (see below).

For obvious reasons, you will want to focus a lot of recruitment energy in the weeks or months leading up to your "training camp" or "pre-season." However, take advantage of other events during the year where you can piggyback on the exposure already achieved:

- ❑ **Your Sport's Championships**. If your athlete/team reaches the championships, this is the time to promote your sport to potential recruits. People like to be associated with winners.

- ❑ **Your Athletes' Winning Streaks**. Don't rest on your laurels. If your athlete or team is in the news (positively), take this opportunity to recruit.

- ❑ **Major Sporting Events**. It is not a coincidence that following the Canadian team's success at the 1996 Summer Olympics, many rowing clubs starting printing off their program brochures. In Victoria, British Columbia, the post-Olympic "rowing high" brought media exposure and hundreds of recruits to the city's rowing clubs. Likewise, a hockey club may want to promote itself during the Stanley Cup playoffs, or during the NHL pre-season, when hockey interest is at its zenith.

- ❑ "**Captive" Audience Events.** Check your local school, university or community

calendar to see if there are any events or periods where your sport could promote itself to prospective recruits. Look for Career or Sport Days at schools (see personal contact activities for more ideas).

In all of the above examples, inject the "personal touch" into your efforts by highlighting your athletes and/or involving a local personality or high performance athlete.

<u>Personal Contact</u>

Personal contact is critical. Nothing attracts attention and generates emotional responses like the "sound and fury" of your sport. Invite prospective recruits (and/or their parents) to watch your athletes in action and/or participate in one of your practices. Or bring the action to them. Offer to have one of your coaches do a demonstration or make a presentation about your sport at your local elementary school. If possible, have some of your athletes take part.

"Personal" exposure to your sport is particularly useful if your sport does not receive much coverage from mainstream media or if it requires specific equipment or facilities not usually available in schools or fitness centres. If the appropriate facilities are not available, improvise by teaching the skills of your sport using similar equipment, such as roller skis for cross-country skiing, or a trampoline for diving.

Look outside of the "converted." Recruiting athletes from another sport – particularly a similar sport to cross-country skiing – such as running, cycling or swimming – may be a productive avenue to pursue.

Other activities could include:

- ❑ **Mini Camps**. Hold sessions to teach sport skills to boys and girls in your community. Offer sessions at times and locations which will attract the most participation, e.g. after school, during spring break when working parents may be receptive to an activity for their children. Use other events, such as the Olympics, as themes for mini-camps. Throw in other events such as barbecues, kayaking, etc. to make it fun.

- ❑ **Outreach Programs**. Work with local Boys and Girls Clubs, Big Brothers and Sisters and other community groups. Not only will this provide recruitment opportunities, but your sport organization will build a reputation as being responsible "corporate citizens" (which may also come in handy when your organization is looking for corporate sponsorship). Use messaging that incites an emotional response from parents, community leaders and athletes - e.g. "Join a Team, Not a Gang."

- ❑ **Introductory Sessions/Classes at Local Recreation Centres.** Offering a beginner's course or session at the "Y" or other fitness/recreation centre may

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attract recruits to your sport, or identify a "diamond in the rough" - someone with athletic skills appropriate for your sport.

❑ **Novice Events**. Add a novice event or "Corporate Challenge" to your major competitions to encourage people to try your sport (bike races, triathlons, etc.). Hold introductory clinics before and follow-up clinics after the events to generate interest and teach new skills.

Make the most of opportunities. Your sport organization may have coaches-in-training or athlete role-models-in-training who could use recruitment opportunities to further their own objectives. For example, a level three coach could teach a phys ed class for her/his practicum, while giving your sport important exposure to potential recruits.

<u>Ambassadors of Sport</u>

Delivering messages "straight from the horse's mouth" is another successful way of recruitment. Encourage your athletes, particularly ones with leadership skills and success in athletics, to become spokespersons and role models for your organization. These people should be participating in your mini-camps, practice sessions, etc. and if they have the appropriate skills, should be encouraged to speak about your sport (and the benefits of sport in general) at awards dinners, recognition ceremonies, graduations, to the media, etc. Other ideas:

❑ **Create Excitement!** Have your athletes wear their (clean) team jerseys to school and events.

❑ **Mentor.** Have your athletes invite a friend to participate in a practice session.

❑ **Hold Social Events.** Hold fund-raisers, dances, social events, car washes, etc. that promote your team or athletes. Position your sport as a "social" activity - an avenue for making friends, being part of a team, etc. Promote your athletes or team as an important part of the community - get them involved in other causes (charity fund-raisers, runs, etc.).

<u>Create "Celebrity" Partnerships</u>

If your sport has a professional or semi-professional team (university, college, junior league), club or individual, get them involved with your recruitment activities. Even if your sport doesn't have an affiliate team or club, find one with similar characteristics (e.g. triathlon may find a track and field, swimming or cycling celebrity).

Cultivate a relationship with the professional team or celebrity (generally through the team's public relations department). Ask for free tickets for your athletes (and get your athletes to attend these games together, wearing team jerseys), hold "dream camps" for potential recruits (similar to what the National Baseball Association in the U.S. does) or for invitations to attend training sessions etc. Invite celebrities to your workouts or pre-season training camps, and invite the media to cover these sessions. In short, build mentorship opportunities for your athletes. This partnership will:

❑ help in your recruitment efforts, as affiliation with celebrities is positive exposure (particularly if the media picks up on this activity – i.e. free advertising);

❑ provide your athletes and the community with positive role models;

❑ provide your athletes with "expert" advice; and

❑ show a progression from your community organization to the professional ranks (which is particularly relevant to career-minded athletes). In order to generate these opportunities, convince the public relations department/athlete/team that this exposure:

✓ reflects well on their organization, as they are seen as "good corporate citizens";

✓ generates excitement about their organization, which may translate into increased ticket sales; and can be a good scouting opportunity.

Look at "celebrity" partnerships as opportunities to meet other objectives. For example, you could get local businesses to sponsor these events, or you can use these opportunities to help raise money for your club or to help pay expenses to maintain these partnerships. As well, these partnerships can enhance athlete development efforts - the expertise you receive from a professional athlete may translate into better performance from your athletes and thus, better opportunities for recruitment.

Media Relations

Develop a relationship with your local sport reporters/announcers: give them feature article ideas about your athletes; provide them with updates on your team's progress, etc. There's a lot of competition for media attention, so give the media a story they will want to tell. At the same time you need to be selective about contacting them. Don't hound them, but offer solid opportunities for articles that will attract reader/listener/viewer interest and response.

Recruit outwards. If some of your athletes are from communities near you, commission a writer (a journalism student at your local university or college may do this for free) to do features on them to send to their home town media (i.e. "Home Town Kid Does Well"). Show their community that their decision to join your organization was a good one.

Posters, News Releases, Brochures

These are the big-ticket items and the ones you should consider if your budget permits. Work with the people in your organization who do marketing or public relations to coordinate promotion material.

Things to keep in mind while designing communications material:

❑ Keep it simple and focus on key messages.

❑ Invite reader/audience to respond (e.g. include contact number for more information, invite them to a practice/training camp).

❑ Make it visual - show big, clear, professional photos of athletes in action, having fun. A sign of a good poster, for example, is one clear image. Hang a draft of your poster on a wall 20 feet away and see what jumps out at you. If it's a bunch of small type and small photos, try again. If it's one positive, inviting image that attracts your attention, you've got a winner.

❑ Exude professionalism - spend a little more on the design. You don't need a full-colour glossy brochure, but a hand-typed piece of paper (like the ones with rip-off phone numbers at laundromats) doesn't project an image of a professional

organization.

Social Media

The most modern and cheapest way to engage your community is through the various social media accounts currently available such as twitter, facebook and instagram. Actively posting content including pictures, videos and information on a regular basis through social media will create awareness and reach to a broad demographic. Use your team's social media account to interact with other related sport entities online such as stores, clubs and athletes to create awareness of your program. The more shares, tweets, reposts and blogs you can generate the more likely you are to have significant interest in your program.

Be a Peacock!

Show others that your team/organization is proud of its accomplishment. If you have a club house, display your trophies, photos and other souvenirs in a visible place.

Keep the Troops Happy!

Word of mouth is the best recruitment method. If your athletes enjoy the sport and feel that they are progressing well, chances are they will want their friends and family involved. Encourage them to be ambassadors for your sport. Make new recruits welcome. Develop "novice" competitions/ events to make them feel comfortable with competition and new skills.

Evaluate

Look also to other organizations. Learn from others - take their success and adapt their practices to a model which works well for your organization.

1.2   Team Building

Cross-country skiing is an individual sport that is practised in a team environment. A good team environment is essential – firstly, because it is one of the motivating factors that draws athletes into and then keeps them in sport, and secondly, because being part of a team where individuals demonstrate mutual respect and trust for each other will enhance the athletes' self image and confidence.

To assist you in developing a successful program, a list of standard team building principles and practices has been provided below. Note: although this list focuses on the needs of athletes in the L2T stage of development, it can be adapted to meet the needs of other age groups as well.

❑ Treat all skiers equally; having favorites would be like bringing a virus into your team.

❑ Tell each athlete something positive at every practice session; if you miss them at practice, call them when you get home.

❑ Require all individuals involved with your program – athletes, support coaches and parents - to respect each other.

❑ Arrange for social time following practice sessions.

❑ Practice together as a team as much as possible.

❑ Keep your team in touch year-round.

❑ Build overnight trips to competitions into your seasonal plan.

❑ Schedule social activities (e.g. fundraising/car wash, pizza/hot chocolate at a home following practice) and developmental activities with a strong social component (e.g. team hike and campout) into your seasonal plan. Refer to sections 6 and 3.1.2 of the NCCP L2T (Dryland) Reference Material for more information.

❑ Coordinate out-of-town trips, hikes, etc. so that the athletes travel together.

❑ Provide a number of camp opportunities annually as part of your program - club camps, regional camps, camps during the off-season, camps at Xmas, etc.

❑ Provide club/team clothing - racing suits, warm ups, coats, vests, toques, T-shirts, ball caps, etc.

❑ Enlist the help of parents to undertake special team building initiatives - for example, developing a DVD featuring each team member in some way, and handing out a copy to each athlete and coach at the end of the season.

❑ Incorporate specific team building exercises such as those described in the section on Physical Challenges (i.e. The Rock) into your plan for the season.

> A team is a group of individuals with common goals working together to achieve those goals.

1.2.1   Communication

Communication can be defined simply as the "timely transmission and receipt of information". Information is relayed through two main channels - verbal and non-verbal.

This can be further divided into three sub-groups - physical action, written/spoken words and visual image. These communication methods are used by each of us daily.

❏ Verbal Communication

This form of communication is fundamental to the exchange of ideas between people. It is highly effective and economical and it works well in both one-to-one and small group situations. Moreover it allows athletes the opportunity to paraphrase, bridge, clarify and restate the information on the spot.

However, as a rule of thumb, the effectiveness of verbal communication decreases as the size of the group increases. In this situation you may choose to apply non-verbal techniques to ensure an effective exchange of information occurs.

❏ Non-Verbal Communication

Non-verbal communication can take many forms and may occur in a number of mediums. Since our definition of verbal communication is the exchange of ideas expressed orally, then all other forms fall into the category of non-verbal communication.

The forms of non-verbal communication are as varied as one's imagination. Common examples include video, email, twitter, instagram, facebook, websites, newsletters, correspondence, magazines, pamphlets and so on.

Non-verbal communication techniques are as important as verbal techniques, each form having its advantages when utilized in the appropriate application.

The application of both verbal and non-verbal communication strategies can be planned ahead and facilitated.

Ongoing communication is necessary not only between you and your athletes, but also you and their parents/guardians. Conventional methods for ongoing communication with both are small group meetings, email/newsletters. This continues to be an effective way of distributing information and receiving feedback.

Some suggestions for utilizing communications to help build a successful program are provided below:

❏ Newsletters (email)

The newsletter is a standard communication tool. A newsletter can provide your athletes and their parents with need-to-know information in an easy to read format. It does not need to be a professionally laid out document – the objective is simply to relay need-to-know information in a manner that is both timely and easy to produce. This is a perfect task for a mom or dad who would like to help out but who doesn't feel comfortable on skis.

Information that could be included in a newsletter:

✓ Scheduling information, details about upcoming sessions, notification of changes, etc.
✓ Upcoming special events: ski tournaments, club functions, skill assessments, etc.
✓ Progress report for the program as a whole – e.g. how the team is progressing

according to the set objectives.

✓ Sponsorship information: recognition of the contributions of program sponsors (the club, local ski shop, etc).

✓ Profiles of a volunteer coach or other helper (e.g. the person who takes care of refreshments after practice; the club groomers, etc.). Name a "Volunteer of the Month" to profile a volunteer for recognition.

✓ Athlete information: upcoming birthdays, other special information about team members that should be shared, etc.

✓ Requests for volunteers for any tasks requiring additional help.

Ensure that you keep accurate email records so that your information is being received to the correct contacts in the program. This can be a time consuming task, it is recommended that you use an email management tool such as mailchimp to help manage this process.

❏ Communications Among Program Leaders

Good communication among the program leaders is imperative in order to achieve the following important objectives:

✓ **Convey Information.** Much of the program information can be distributed via email, shared could storage (dropbox, google drive), at meetings or one on one. Regular meetings can be scheduled, perhaps before or after the on-snow sessions (when everyone is at the ski area anyway).

✓ **Encourage a Good Atmosphere**. The individuals leading the program should support one another continuously with encouragement, praise and other forms of positive reinforcement. This will carry over into communications with the athletes and is crucial if your program is to be successful. This type of communication (ongoing positive support) is best given on a one to one or small group basis.

The program leadership should make a concerted effort to:

✓ Ensure that each volunteer receives a warm greeting at each session.

✓ Ensure that each of the coaches receives a positive personal comment each session.

✓ Recognize extraordinary service by individual volunteers.

✓ Regularly recognize individual coaches (or the coaches as a group) before the parents and athletes.

✓ Never be critical of the program or its volunteers in public.

❏ Post-Season Communication

Information should be made available, perhaps through a final team email/ newsletter containing pertinent information such as:

✓ the closing activities - dates, times, locations, agenda for the closing/wrap-up event of the season (activities, banquet, award ceremony, and/or evaluation);

✓ a year-end report – the successes and failures of the past season and anticipated modifications to the program for next year;

✓ a thank you – to volunteers, sponsors, the association and others who contributed to

the program during the past season; and registration for next season.

In addition you might choose to use this opportunity to hold a post-season face-to-face meeting with the parents of your athletes to obtain feedback from them. The purpose of the session would be to find out what they thought about the past year's program and to get some guidance to help you with your planning for next season. A word of warning, however – an evaluation session needs to be designed carefully to bring out both the strengths and weaknesses of the program, and should evaluate the "program" rather than the people delivering it. Don't allow the opportunity to be used as a gripe session for unsatisfied parents. Keep it focused on the athletes and their accomplishments and how they might accomplish more and/or enjoy it more.

In Summary:

❏ Communication is the key to a successful program.

❏ Program leadership depends upon communication.

❏ All modes of communication should be used, and all channels kept open.

❏ The vast majority of communication should be of a positive nature in order to keep the program upbeat.

❏ Communication is a two-way street - sending AND receiving.

❏ A message is only effective if both parties understand it.

❏ Keep working at communicating more effectively!!

1.2.2   Concept and Importance of Team Building

As athletes progress from the FUNdamentals stage of athlete development to the Learning to Train stage, there is a transition from coaching a group (FUNdamentals) to coaching a team (Learning to Train). It is important to understand the differences and considerations for both so that you can adapt your coaching to properly manage this transition.

The following section provides information on the concept of team building. This information is generic in nature but can be adapted for team building of children, teen and adult groups. The concepts outlined in this section will be a helpful tool for team development for the various types of teams you will interact with as a coach. The latter include but are not limited to athlete teams, coaching teams, programming teams and parent support teams. Comprehensive understanding of these concepts and good facilitation will aid in the development of an effective and healthy team environment.

Understanding Teams versus Organizations and Groups

❏ **Organization**

✓ Relatively large and impersonal.
✓ Little inter-member interaction and reciprocal influence.

❏ **Group**

✓ Small and may impact members' feelings and self-image.

✓ Important psychological needs (e.g. social contact) are better satisfied.

✓ Members can contribute to goal accomplishment by working independently.

✓ Members play a variety of roles.

❏ **Team**

✓ Small, with members having a stronger sense of identification.

✓ Greater task interdependence.

✓ Members have more differentiated and specialized roles.

✓ Members often play a single or primary role.

Importance of Team Building:

❏ A **sense of purpose** exists. Members have issues and topics that are of mutual interest. Members of the team work together to achieve a common goal.

❏ **Benefits** accrue from team membership. Teams provide a range of benefits for the organization and the individuals, over and above getting a task done.

❏ **Increased creativity** results. Individual ideas spark off one another, and the process of working in a team seems to generate more and more possibilities. The key to leading and understanding teams is that teams actually let you release creativity.

❏ **Coordination** is facilitated. Team members all play a part in getting the whole job done, instead of seeing their own little process as being the start and finish of it all.

❏ **Personal support** is provided. Good teams operate rather like an extended family whose members trust, like, help and care about each other.

❏ **Induction** occurs naturally. Team members help newcomers find their place in the team.

❏ Teams encourage a sense of **ownership**, the act of passing over to people the responsibility for their own decisions and their own actions.

1.2.3 Team Player Styles

There are four team-player styles: contributor, collaborator, communicator and challenger. Each style is briefly described below:

Contributor

❏ Freely shares all relevant information and opinions with other team members.

❏ Helps the team use its time and resources.

❏ Pushes the team to set high standards and to achieve top-level results, and insists on high- quality outputs.

❏ Completes all team assignments and other relevant work necessary for the completion of team tasks.

❏ Accepts responsibility for all actions as a team member.

❏ Completes all work in his/her regular job area and all other tasks not related to the team.

❏ Provides the team with clear, concise and useful presentations at team meetings.

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- ❑ Provides technical training for other team members and serves as a mentor for new team members.

- ❑ Has a clear set of priorities.

Collaborator

- ❑ Helps the team to establish long-term goals and clarify its current objective or tasks.

- ❑ Helps the team see how its work fits into that of the organization as a whole.

- ❑ Regularly reminds the team of the need to revisit its goals and action plans.

- ❑ Encourages the team to establish plans with milestones and appropriate task assignments.

- ❑ Pitches in to help other team members who need assistance.

- ❑ Works hard to achieve team goals and to complete current tasks, even though he/she may not agree with them.

- ❑ Does not gossip about other team members or share negative comments about the team process with non-members.

- ❑ Flexible and open to new ideas or data that may alter team goals.

- ❑ Often works outside his/her defined role to help the team achieve its goals.

- ❑ Willing to share the limelight with other team members.

Communicator

- ❑ Resolves process problems such as conflict among team members or lack of involvement by some members.

- ❑ Listens attentively, and without judgment, to all viewpoints.

- ❑ Helps the team to relax and have fun by joking, laughing and discussing personal interests.

- ❑ Acknowledges and praises other team members for their efforts.

- ❑ Communicates enthusiasm and a sense of urgency about the team's work.

- ❑ Periodically summarizes the status of a discussion or proposes a possible consensus.

- ❑ Encourages other team members to participate in team discussions and decisions.

- ❑ Helps people on the team get to know each other and to know what skills and resources each can contribute.

- ❑ Gives feedback to other team members – feedback that is descriptive, specific and intended to be helpful.

- ❑ Receives feedback from other team members without becoming defensive.

- ❑ Reminds the team to take time periodically to assess team effectiveness and plan for improvement.

<u>Challenger</u>

- ❑ Candidly shares views about the work of the team.
- ❑ Inclined to disagree openly with the leadership of the team.
- ❑ Often raises questions about the team's goals.
- ❑ Pushes the team to set high ethical standards for work.
- ❑ Speaks out, even when views are contrary to those of a vast majority of the team.
- ❑ Asks "why" and "how" and other relevant questions about presentations at team meetings.
- ❑ Sometimes is accused of not being a team player because he/she differs from conventional wisdom.
- ❑ Challenges the team to take well-conceived risks.
- ❑ Honest in reporting team progress and stating progress facing the team.
- ❑ Willing to blow the whistle on illegal and unethical activities of the team.
- ❑ Will back off when views are not accepted and will support a legitimate team consensus.

1.2.4   Factors Affecting a Team

Once a team is formed and functioning, there will be numerous factors that will continue to affect it and its members. These include both internal and external factors. These factors continue to affect the team in positive and negative ways.

<u>Team Motivation</u>

Motivation is a key component in ensuring team success once the team is performing. Motivation can be defined as "the force that moves people to do something" (Hayat 2001).

There are two main types of motivation, one intrinsic (occurring within oneself) and the other extrinsic (due to outside factors; like a "reward and fine" policy). The table below shows some intrinsic and extrinsic factors to bear in mind to ensure that the whole team remains motivated:

Intrinsic Factors	Extrinsic Factors
✓ Interesting/challenging assignments ✓ Responsibility ✓ Achievement ✓ Recognition ✓ Advancement ✓ Appreciation	✓ Physical work environment (e.g. temperature, comfort, noise level, safety) ✓ Context in which work is done (e.g. salary, benefits, time pressure, status)

Team Members' Roles

Members of a team take on different roles at different times and stages. This is important to note as a team leader, in order to recognize the strengths and weaknesses of team members and to resolve conflict. For example, if there is more than one member of a team playing the same role on the same assignment and at the same time, there is potential for conflict.

The following are ten common roles:

- ❑ Coordinator.
- ❑ Monitor/evaluator.
- ❑ Energy source.
- ❑ Disrupter.
- ❑ Implementer.
- ❑ Completer/finisher.
- ❑ Resource investigator.
- ❑ Specialist.
- ❑ Shaper.
- ❑ "Recognitioner".

1.2.5 Ten Ingredients for a Successful Team

- ❑ **Clarity in team goals.** A team works best if everyone understands its purpose and goals. If there is any confusion or disagreement, the team needs to work on resolving these issues.
- ❑ **Clear vision.** As a youth group, all team members should be in agreement over the group's mission and have a clear vision. If the mission is too large, it will need to be reduced to a more manageable size.
- ❑ **A plan.** A plan helps the team identify what type of advice, assistance, training and other inputs and materials it may need. It also gives the team a schedule and an identification of "milestones" (such as a planned youth event). A flow chart could be a useful planning tool.
- ❑ **Clearly defined roles.** The team will operate most efficiently if it taps everyone's strengths, as discussed above, and makes sure that everyone knows her/his tasks and responsibilities.
- ❑ **Clear communication.** The team will be stronger if there are productive discussions, and everyone is kept informed.
- ❑ **Beneficial team behaviour.** Teams should encourage all members to use skills and practices that make discussions and meetings more beneficial.
- ❑ **Well-defined decision-making procedures.** A team should always be aware of how it reaches decisions, and ensures that there is consensus.
- ❑ **Participation.** Since each team member has a stake in the group's achievements,

everyone should participate in discussions and decision-making.

❑ **Ground rules.** These should be established early and followed. Occasionally, ground rules should be reviewed and revised.

❑ **Awareness of the group process.** Ideally, all team members should be aware of the group process – how the team works together.

❑ **Use of the scientific approach in team work.** Good data should be used for problem solving and decision-making. Arguments not based in fact often arise, and the use of correct data could help resolve these conflicts.

Some Factors to Remember When Building a Team

Reasons, resources, roles, rules, relationships, reassessment.

1.2.6 Individual Skills for Effective Team Building

❑ **Written Communication.** Communicates easily on paper with speed and clarity. Presents ideas concisely and in a structured way. Uses appropriate language and style.

❑ **Oral Communication.** Speaks to others with ease and clarity. Expresses ideas well and presents arguments in a logical manner. Gives information and explanations that are clear and easily understood. Listens actively to others.

❑ **Leadership.** Shows skill in directing group activities. Has natural authority and gains the respect of others. Is capable of building an effective team. Involves all team members and gives advice and help when required.

❑ **Team Membership.** Fits in well as a peer and as a subordinate. Understands own role and the role of others within the team. Shares information and seeks help and advice when necessary. Offers suggestions and listens to the ideas of others.

❑ **Planning and Organizing Skills.** Can make plans and forecasts. Can define objectives and allocate the necessary resources. Sets realistic targets and decides priorities. Devises systems and monitors progress. Makes good use of his/her time.

❑ **Decision-Making.** Evaluates alternative lines of action and makes appropriate decisions. Identifies degrees of urgency for decisions. Responds to situations quickly and demonstrates flexibility.

❑ **Motivation.** Shows energy and enthusiasm. Works hard and is ambitious. Is able to advance the work with little detailed supervision. Sets own targets and is determined to achieve them.

❑ **Personal Strength.** Is self-confident and understands own strengths and weaknesses. Is realistic and willing to learn from past failures and successes. Is reliable, honest and conscientious. Can cope with pressure and control emotions.

❑ **Analytical Reasoning Skills.** Can quickly and accurately comprehend verbal and numerical information. Is able to analyse arguments objectively and to reach logical conclusions. Can present well-reasoned and persuasive arguments.

1.2.7 Factors That Facilitate Teamwork and Cooperation

❏ Task Structure

- ✓ Members have good knowledge of tasks.
- ✓ There is a consistent and clear link of tasks with the team's mission.
- ✓ Members have a meaningful piece of work, sufficient autonomy to perform it and access to knowledge of its results.

❏ Group Boundaries

- ✓ The membership of the team is appropriate for the task to be performed.
- ✓ Members have collective knowledge and skills to perform the work.
- ✓ Members have sufficient maturity and interpersonal skills to be able to work together and resolve conflicts.
- ✓ Members may have differing perspectives and experiences but can communicate with and relate to one another.

❏ Norms

- ✓ Members share an appropriate set of norms working as a team.
- ✓ It is necessary to regularly scan and review prevailing norms to ensure that they support overall objectives.
- ✓ It is necessary to ensure that conflicting norms do not confuse team members.

❏ Authority

- ✓ There is firm authority that is also flexible in enabling the team members to make their best efforts.
- ✓ There is competent team leadership that allows the group to comply when conditions demand it (such as in emergencies).
- ✓ The team leader is able to establish a climate for team members to feel empowered to provide expert assistance when appropriate.
- ✓ Team members feel comfortable in questioning the leader on decisions that have no clear right answers.

Facilitating Factors	Hindering Factors
✓ Clear mission and performance standards. Every team member knows what the team is trying to achieve and how well he/she has to perform in order to achieve it. ✓ Members share common values, beliefs or goals. ✓ Low levels of task or lateral independence. High levels of communication between parties.	✓ Members compete for scarce resources and/or rewards. ✓ Members are under high levels of stress and face uncertain or incompatible demands (e.g. role ambiguity and role conflict). ✓ Leader's action is inconsistent with organizational vision and goals.

1.2.8 Organizational Shells

As shown in Figure 1.1, a "team" is the smallest unit within an organizational environment. Team members may come from different groups, sections or divisions and are tapped because of their recognized expertise in achieving a specific, well-defined and time-bound task. The team's task has the imprimatur, or official support, of the organization. Team members are guided by certain organizational norms. An organization belongs to a larger structural or environmental group or setting. For instance, a village-level agricultural credit organization (i.e. sport club) may be a member of a federation or a coalition of agriculture-based organizations at a higher territorial level (i.e. Provincial/Territorial or National Sport Organization).

Figure 1.1: Environment
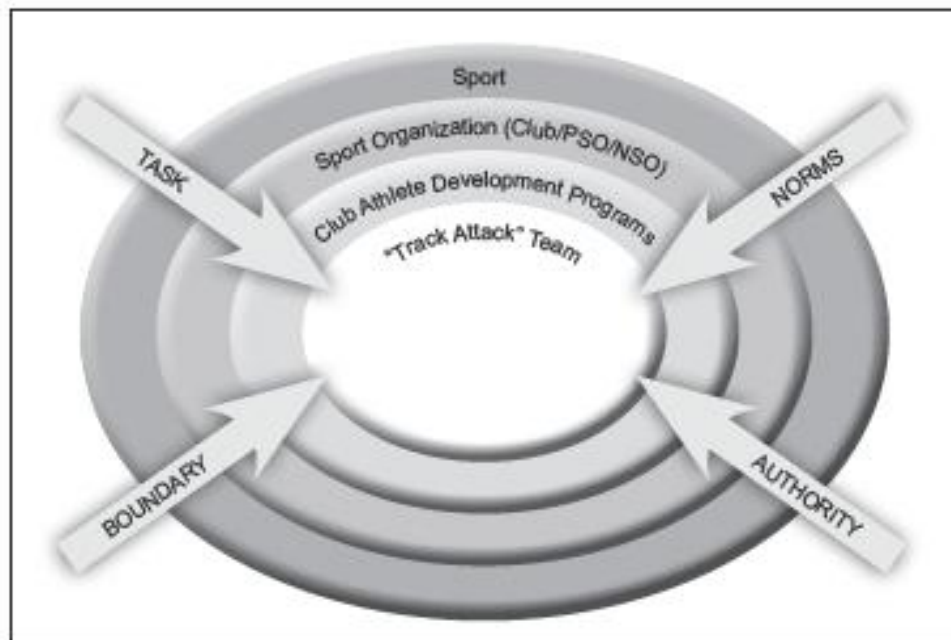
1.2.9 Team Building Using Physical Challenges

Nations are built upon the concept of teamwork – the kind of teamwork that promotes cooperation and cohesiveness over competition, teamwork in which everyone contributes a part to make a stronger whole. Each "team" in our society, whether it is a sales force, a manufacturing group, a sports team, or a family, must work together for a society to flourish and operate smoothly.

When an organization has a goal, the members mobilize, enthusiasm builds and excitement grows as the group moves toward success. Every member on a successful team wants to play a part, because each is concerned with the outcome of the group's efforts. Sometimes a team falls short of its goal, indeed a team might break down if its members do not know how to organize, interact and plan for progress. But the excitement, the enthusiasm and the concern for the group's progress will have helped them learn about accomplishing goals. Even if a group falls short of its target, each participant wins by learning more about becoming a team member. Individuals achieve simply by experiencing the

process of team building.

Sport lends itself particularly well to developing cooperative learning. Although sport is primarily concerned with physical fitness and skills, it is also about social, psychological and personal development.

Team building is a concept. Physical challenges can be used to teach it.

When a team cooperates on physical challenges, all members need to believe their teammates are listening to their ideas. Naturally, some ideas will work, some will be rejected and some will need to be tested.

When athletes work together on a challenge, they learn to disagree, to speculate, to take turns and to diminish tensions. The physical challenges offer athletes exactly these experiences.

Teaching athletes to be parts of a team and to be good citizens will enhance their self-concepts and will involve them in success.

A successful experience in team building doesn't just mean scoring a touchdown or kicking a goal. A successful experience might be contributing an idea and being listened to. We all feel good about ourselves when we can influence the direction of a group. All students and athletes need an opportunity to establish relationships so they feel part of a group. Experiencing success should permeate physical education and sports. Sometimes only a talented few gain the success experience of recognition for their accomplishments, but everyone involved in team building will attain this reward.

Lastly, one of the important success experiences all athletes have a right to achieve is fun. Athletes should have fun through play, and look forward to coming back for more fun.

Challenge #1 – The Rock

Following is an example of an introductory team building challenge called "The Rock".

"The Rock" challenge appears simple, but it requires the group to balance for a specific amount of time on an object (the rock). The object you use as the rock determines the difficulty of this challenge.

All group members must balance on the rock (or be off the floor) for a slow count of five. The group needs to find a way to help each other maintain balance; that could mean group members will experience close encounters with one another.

The challenge is mastered when the entire group is on the rock (or off the floor) for a slow count of five. The coach must see the task completed and is the person who counts to five. You'll need a rock (an old tire or sturdy box) and several mats to place under the rock. The size of the tire (rock) used in this challenge can make a significant difference in difficulty. So use smaller rocks for smaller-sized groups. A larger group (such as ten group members) may need a larger rock. This task does not require much room. Place the rock in the center of the mats. Most groups first believe the task is easy. But success does not always come quickly. Because this task requires athletes to hold on to one another closely, some athletes will debate if death is more desirable than touching someone else, while others will love the close encounter.

Nov. 13, 2017

<u>There are four simple rules</u>:

- ❏ All group members must be off the floor and on the rock.
- ❏ All group members do not have to be touching the rock as long as they are off the floor.
- ❏ Once you have been on the rock, touching the floor for even an instant means the group must start over with no one on the rock.
- ❏ No last names or put-downs may be used.

Please note that the mat is considered part of the floor. Once a group member gets off the floor or mat, that person should not step down onto the floor or else a sacrifice occurs.

Most groups step onto the rock, hold on to one another tightly, start counting to five and fall over. After a few such failures, the group learns it must plan to step onto the rock and hold onto others while maintaining balance.

One method is to hold on to someone directly across from you on the rock. As more group members get onto the rock, balancing becomes more difficult. Some groups try to have everyone put one foot on the rock and then all add the second foot on the count of three. Some group members may try to stand in the middle of the rock and have others surround them. Or a group may try to lie horizontally on the rock and on top of one another.

Whatever method they use as a solution, it will reinforce group behavior and athletes will find satisfaction when the group works well together.

<u>Challenge #2 - Newspaper Shelter</u>

Following is an example of a team building challenge that allows for team interaction while exploring communication skills, cooperation, planning and having fun.

- ❏ Team Size: 8-12 athletes.
- ❏ Materials: Newspapers and masking tape.
- ❏ Instructions: The group is told that they are stuck in the desert or on a deserted island. They have to build a structure that is free standing and will protect the entire group from the sun. They have 20 minutes to plan how they are going to build the structure. After the 20 minutes they have 20 minutes to build the structure, but they cannot talk during the building phase.
- ❏ Processing Questions:
  - ✓ What worked during the process? What hindered the process?
  - ✓ How did you plan your structure?
  - ✓ What roles emerged during the process? Was there a leader?
  - ✓ Did everyone have an active role?
  - ✓ How did it feel to not be able to talk during the building phase?
  - ✓ Did you work as a team? How do you know?

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✓ What did you learn about yourself and your organization during this exercise?

❏ Coach Notes: Take care to not set this exercise up as a competition between teams. They will probably assume it is, but one interesting question you can ask is why the teams did not work together to build the shelter.

Challenge #3 – Limited Senses

Following is an example of a team building exercise that explores the dynamics of communication, problem solving and leadership.

❏ Team Size: 8+ athletes.

❏ Time: 30 minutes.

❏ Props: One blindfold for each athlete.

❏ Objective: For the athletes to line up in numerical order without talking.

❏ Instructions: Create a clear space in a large area with adequate safety procedures. Ask several coaches/parents to act as buffers. Give each athlete a number and instruct him/ her not to share it with anyone. Do not give the athletes consecutive numbers – leave a few out. For example you might give out the numbers 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 9, 10, 14, 17 and 18. Note, however, that you must have a number 1 and the number that represents the number of participants in the activity. Blindfold each athlete and instruct the group not to talk. The goal is for the athletes to put themselves in numeric order without seeing or talking. Ask for questions and then say "ready, set, go!"

❏ Coach Notes: Frustration will result when participants use various methods to communicate – e.g. foot stomping, tapping, etc. - without finding the missing numbers. You will see some participants give up. After some time, tell the group that there are some missing numbers. You will see leadership emerge, and watch how fast they get it together.

Challenge #4 – Welded Ankle

Following is an example of a team building challenge that explores communication, leadership and cooperation.

❏ Activity: A no-prop, no-sweat initiative that works as well indoors or out, with both small and large groups.

❏ Team Size: 10+ athletes.

❏ Time: Varies, depending upon group size. For a group of 10, allow 20 min. to half hour.

❏ Props: None.

❏ Instructions: Mark off beginning and end lines for the space across which the group must travel. Brightly colored rope, cones, flags, upturned coffee cups, etc. will work. Have the group assemble behind the start line and explain that the group must travel over the end line while maintaining continuous contact with their feet. If anyone in the group loses contact with his/her partner's foot, the entire group must start over.

❏ Coach Notes:

✓ While any configuration that satisfies the requirement is allowable, most groups find that they do best with a single line, shoulder-to-shoulder formation. If they want to try

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another set-up, by all means encourage the group to be creative.

✓ Variation: Ask several individuals to be "coaches" who stand off from the group and provide verbal assistance. How do they go about providing their advice? How is it received?

1.3   Creating the Right Image

For your program to be successful, it is essential that your local community is aware of and has a positive image of the sport of cross-country skiing, and that your club and its programs are well regarded.

To better understand this aspect of sport management and the contribution you, as a coach, can make towards creating an image of cross-country skiing that will attract children to the sport, and thereby your Track Attack program, you are encouraged to complete the following exercise with the other program leaders you work with as a preliminary step to developing a recruitment strategy for your program.

Image Assessment

The items listed in the image assessment below are commonly-used vehicles for promoting sport. This exercise will allow you to reflect on how effective the sport of cross-country skiing is at reaching into your community and help you identify areas for improvement.

❑ Check the box that most appropriately describes the level of impact (Low, Medium, High).

❑ Complete the assessment with the target age range in mind (i.e. the Learning to Train stage of development).

❑ Discuss a public relations strategy for your own program area.

A positive image of cross-country skiing is successfully conveyed through …	Low	Medium	High
Posters			
TV coverage			
Videos/DVDs			
Magazines			
Provincial/national newspapers			
Local newspapers			
Radio			
Internet			
Trading cards			
Club or team uniforms			
Other ski-related clothing			

Regular clothing (e.g. t-shirts, ball caps)			
Bumper stickers			
Recognition at school (e.g. announcements)			
Success of local/team athletes at high profile events (e.g. Canada Games)			
Hosting of high level events/competitions			
Club/team special events/activities			
Word of mouth			
Other			

1.4   Retention

Understanding why children participate in sport is not a simple matter. One of the difficulties is that children have many reasons for getting involved, and some of their reasons change from day to day. To encourage children to stay involved in sport, parents and coaches must understand these reasons.

In general, children participate in sport in order to have fun, improve skills, belong to a group, be successful, gain recognition, get fit and find excitement. Conversely, they drop out of sport because of other interests, boredom, lack of success, too much pressure, loss of interest, friends leaving or because it ceases to be fun.

Dr. Terry Orlick, professor of sport psychology at the University of Ottawa, says children play sport because it makes them feel good. They need to feel wanted, valued and joyful. But if he or she is suddenly benched or pulled from the lineup because the team needs to win, a child might feel incompetent and rejected. Children don't join a team to sit around and do nothing. Sport is not enjoyable for children if they don't get much opportunity to play. Studies have shown that children would rather play for a losing team than be members of a winning team and sit on the sidelines. If they're not playing, they'll lose interest very quickly.

A study conducted by Dr. Martha Ewing and Dr. Vern Seefeldt of the Institute for the Study of Youth Sports at Michigan State University asked 26,000 students aged 10 to 18 years about their reasons for participating in sport, why they quit and how they feel about winning. The study found that "fun" is the pivotal reason for being in sport - and lack of fun is a leading reason for dropping out. In fact, both boys and girls say that making practices more fun is the most important change they would make in a sport they dropped.


> "It is interesting to note that even top athletes quit their very lucrative careers when sport is no longer fun."
>
> Source: Straight Talk About Children and Sport

1.4.1   Coaching Children to Embrace a "Love of the Game"

Coaches occupy multiple roles in children's lives as sport participants. Coaches must be excellent instructors so that youth learn and improve skills, increase knowledge of strategies and tactics and achieve their goals. Coaches can also inspire children to maintain motivation for participating in sport and, in so doing, allow them opportunities to accrue such benefits as positive self-esteem, enjoyable experiences, long-lasting friendships and a positive attitude toward the value of lifetime physical activity. In short, coaches can ensure that youth want to continue their sport involvement - that is, participate for intrinsic reasons rather than participate for primarily external reasons such as feeling obligated to others to continue. How can coaches maximize their positive impact on youths' motivation in sport?

Figure 1.2 The Ingredients of Motivation
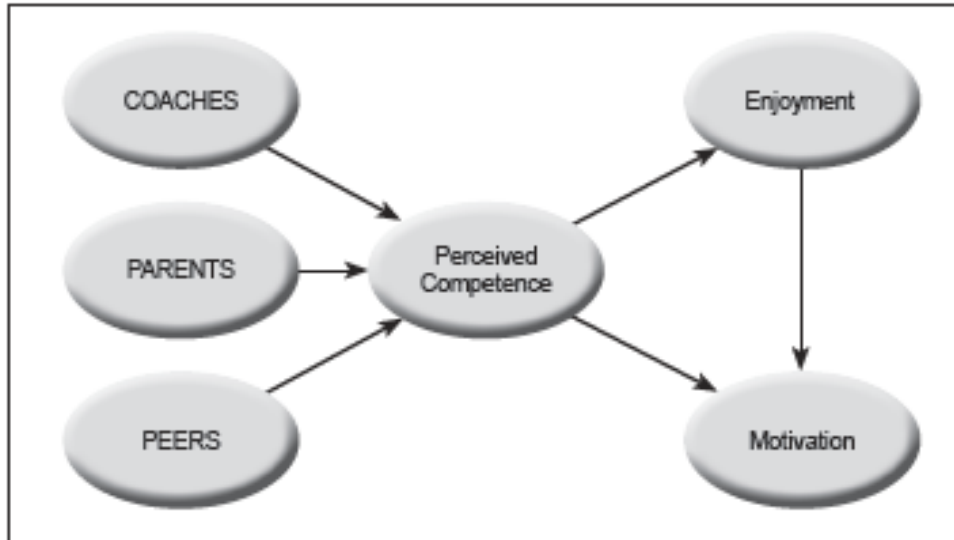
Ingredients of Children's Motivation in Sport

Children participate in sport for multiple reasons, the most prominent among them being *developing physical competence* (learning and improving skills), *attaining social acceptance and approval* (being with and making friends, interacting with parents and coaches), and *enjoying one's experiences* (having fun, doing something interesting). Coaches can maintain and promote greater motivation by engaging in behaviors and structuring practices to meet these motivational needs. The three main reasons children participate in sport means that coaches should be mindful of enhancing players' perceptions of competence, ensuring positive social influence and keeping practices and games fun and enjoyable. These three ingredients of motivation - perceived competence, social support and enjoyment - are necessary for sustaining children's "love of the game."

We can depict all the ingredients of motivation in the diagram shown in Figure 1.2. This visual shows that coaches, parents and peers (teammates, close friends) directly influence children's perceived competence or beliefs about their ability in sport. Perceptions of competence, in turn, influence feelings of enjoyment and motivation in the form of intrinsic/extrinsic reasons, effort exerted and persistence following mistakes. If we hone in on coaches as the source of social influence, we can identify specific coaching behaviors and principles that will maximize the probability that perceived competence, enjoyment and motivation will thrive.

Provide Optimal Challenges

Coaches can satisfy athletes' need for developing and demonstrating physical competence by carefully matching the difficulty of skills or activities with the child's capabilities. Think of optimal challenges as ones that *match the activity to the child, and not the child to the activity.* In short, optimal challenges are those that are at the cutting edge of a child's potential. Goals that are too easy are boring and simplistic; goals that are too difficult are likely to invoke anxiety and fear of failure. Coaches can ensure optimal challenges by

setting hard but realistic goals for all participants, outlining developmental skill progressions that allow children to systematically achieve goals, and modifying facilities, equipment or activities to optimize task difficulty relative to the child's skill level.

Maximize Social Support

Acceptance and approval by adults and peers strongly influence children's perceptions of competence, enjoyment and motivation. Coaches can make an impact on these elements in several ways.

First, they can provide *frequent and contingent informational feedback* on how to improve skills. The term *contingent* means specific to or directly related to level of performance. For example, a baseball coach might praise a player for executing correct technique in hitting a ball to the opposite field, and then follow-up with information on how to get out of the batter's box and up the line to first base more quickly.

In response to a skill error, focusing on information for improving on the next attempt, rather than punishing the error, is a contingent and effective means of motivating players to sustain their effort. The literature clearly shows that frequent, contingent instruction by the coach to enhance sport skills and strategies sends a message to players that they have the ability to improve, and this is a motivating factor.

A second means of coaches providing social support is through *contingency and quality of praise and criticism*. Contingent praise might be our baseball coach reinforcing a player for making the correct decision in response to a fielder's choice, while contingent criticism might be *constructively questioning* a player for committing a mental error on a play he/she has mastered many times before.

This latter behavior should suggest to the athlete that the coach believes he/she has the ability to do better. This brings us to the term *quality of praise and criticism*. Quality refers to the appropriateness of the feedback. Is it too much or too little? For what level of performance or task difficulty is it given? The general rule for ensuring quality or appropriate feedback is:

❏ don't give excessive praise;

❏ don't give praise for mediocre performance; and

❏ don't give praise for success at easy tasks that everybody can do.

Make Sure Sport Experiences Are Fun

Fun does not have to solely mean pizza or McDonald's after the game. Enjoyment can be part of the fabric of practices and competitions. Children and adolescents experience fun when there are opportunities for high levels of action, personal involvement in the action and affirming friendships.

Activities during practice could be structured to maximize action by eliminating waiting in line, ensuring sufficient equipment and keeping things moving with short but intense and varied activities. Children also enjoy having some input to their experiences. Although coaches certainly make up the practice plan and orchestrate the pace and content of

activities, children can   be part of the decision-making process such as choosing warm-up drills or an activity at the end of practice. Providing some opportunity for autonomy translates to greater fun and enjoyment

Create a Mastery Motivational Climate

The motivational climate refers to how the learning environment is structured, what behaviors are valued and how individuals are evaluated. A **mastery motivational climate** is one in which success and valued behaviors are defined in self-referenced terms such as learning, effort and improvement, and mistakes are viewed as part of the learning process.

By contrast, a **performance motivational climate** is one that emphasizes norm-referenced definitions of success such as comparison to teammates' performances and game outcome. The sport environment is one that contains some mixture of both mastery and performance climates.

The key is for coaches to recognize, praise and emphasize athletes' personal improvements because such actions are under athletes' control and thus more motivating than emphasizing peer comparisons. The acronym TARGET identifies elements of a mastery motivational climate, and also reinforces some of our earlier coaching concepts. TARGET includes:

❏ **T**ask (optimal challenges vs. standardized goals).

❏ **A**uthority (player choice vs. coach-directed only).

❏ **R**ecognition (reinforcing effort and improvement, not only outcome).

❏ **G**rouping (cooperative teamwork vs. competitive orientation).

❏ **E**valuation (assessing improvement vs. normative criteria).

❏ **T**ime (adequate time for learning and improvement).

Help Children Help Themselves

Coaches can also motivate athletes by teaching them self-regulated learning strategies. These allow children to depend on themselves, not only adults, to monitor and evaluate their skill improvement and performance. Self-regulated learning consists of *self-observation*, *self- judgment* and *self-reinforcement*. These processes refer to monitoring one's behaviors to assess progression toward skills, comparing one's current performance with desired goals and reacting positively or negatively concerning progress toward goal achievement.

Strategies such as goal setting, reframing negative to positive self-talk and encouraging adoption of effort attributions for performance setbacks allow children a constructive means of:

❏ evaluating their progress and readjusting their sights;

❏ maintaining a positive mental attitude rather than getting down on themselves; and

❏ seeking out alternative strategies as a means of problem solving rather than ascribing skill errors to factors outside of their control.

Coaching to embrace a "love of the game" means understanding that multiple reasons underlie children's participation patterns. The major reasons children play sports are to develop and demonstrate physical competence, experience positive social interactions with adults and peers and have fun and enjoyable times. These three reasons form the ingredients of intrinsic motivation - one that is synonymous with an inherent desire to continue involvement.

To maximize motivation, coaches can positively affect children's sport experiences by providing optimal challenges, maximizing social support, ensuring enjoyable activities, creating a mastery motivational climate and helping children help themselves. Each of these principles can be easily customized with sport-specific examples, and applied during practices and competitive events to maintain, sustain and enhance children's "love of the game."

1.4.2   Why Do Teens Drop Out?

Organizations that offer both children and teens a variety of learning activities (for example, 4-H or Scouts) usually have more than half their participation from children in the nine to 11 year age range. Typically, individuals join as children and participate throughout their elementary school years. Then, as they proceed towards adolescence and high school, their involvement declines dramatically. Organizations and their professionals and volunteers will inevitably question what is wrong with their program and what they might be doing to send their participants elsewhere. However, a close at early adolescence will reveal that individuals leaving these types of programs often do so because it is a natural part of their developmental (growing up) process – not because of a programming glitch.

Children and Preadolescents

For children, entering preschool and then elementary school are early steps into the wider world. Organized programs provide the next approved step as parents begin to expose their children to group experiences. At this stage, children make few decisions themselves and their parents decide which and how many of these out-of-school experiences their children will have.

These organized programs provide an opportunity for children and preadolescents to meet their needs and pursue their emerging interests. At this point, youngsters are beginning to step beyond the home and into the community. Making friends, being with their peers and being part of an organized group are very important to them.

Adolescents

Adolescents, on the other hand, are usually quite comfortable in the community away from home. They are now mature enough to have a say in decisions about what they want to do and what they don't want to do. Typically they will explore and experiment with new interests as well as refine and expand ongoing interests. Further, they may wish to pursue interests and activities of their own and not their parents' choosing. In addition to this there are many more activities for them to choose from - some of which they can access

themselves as secondary schools usually offer a variety of programs including sports that don't require the kind of parental support that children's activities do.

At this point teens will begin to develop some independence from their family. Choosing new activities and dropping others pursued since childhood are one way of doing this. They may even drop activities they like and still enjoy just so they can make some choices themselves. In addition, part-time jobs that offer revenue, and thereby increased independence will become increasingly available. Once they have a part-time job they will find that they have to make decisions about how to spend or divide their non-school time. There will no longer be enough time to pursue multiple interests and do all the things they used to do. Then, too, not all teens enjoy groups. There are some who would rather pursue interests on their own.

Teens that do choose to participate in organized programs often do so for the following reasons:

❏ The guidance and support provided by the program leaders. The teen likes the adult or what the adults are providing. The adults who are successful in working with them will generally encourage creativity and support them in their efforts; provide guidance while giving a major role in democratic decision making; and genuinely like this age group and are comfortable working with them.

❏ The organization's activities are fun, challenging and exciting, or simply different from the experiences they have participated in as children.

❏ They like being part of a group.

In summary, a major portion of teen dropout from organized programs and activities can be viewed as developmentally appropriate and normative. This in no way denies the value of programming for those individuals who want and need the group experiences provided by organizations. It does mean, however, that organizations and programmers may need to adjust their expectations with respect to teen participation.

1.5   CCC Athlete Development Grid

LTAD STAGE	COACH LEVEL	FACILITIES	TECHNIQUE	PHYSIOLOGY, STRENGTH, FLEXIBILITY	MENTAL SKILLS	COMPETITION	OTHER
"Learning to Train" stage of athlete development. Boys 9 – 12 Girls 8 - 11	NCCP Competition Coaching Introduction (CCI) – Learning to Train Minimum 58 hours training.	Varied terrain, including challenging technical trails. Groomed tracks for skating and classic techniques. Lit trail system. Day lodge in stadium area.	Window of optimal trainability for motor-coordination. Introduce dryland ski techniques – ski walking and ski striding. The focus on snow is balance, agility and rhythm. Good technique habits are developed through repeated practice. Use games that reinforce technique being taught. All basic cross-country ski skills (classic and skating) should be refined before the end of this stage. Encourage unstructured play time on snow.	Utilize games to develop skills, speed, power and aerobic fitness. Window of optimal trainability for flexibility. Basic dynamic and static flexibility training with an emphasis on proper technique. Develop strength using medicine balls, Swiss balls, exercises that incorporate the child's own body weight. Include basic core strength exercises. Use ski-related hopping and bounding exercises for developing leg strength and movement skills. Include speed exercises in the practice sessions by using specific activities that focus on agility, quickness and change of direction. Aerobic fitness is increasingly important. Include general aerobic activities 3-4x/wk.	Develop an awareness of the importance of practising basic mental skills. Introduce pre-race preparation. Introduce tactical skills. Introduce the mental skills of constructive self-talk, imagery and confident behaviour. Introduce basic stress management. Introduce basic goal setting.	Racing Rocks! ✓ *Ski Tournaments* ✓ *Double Cross* ✓ *Team Sprints* Midget Championships. Club, regional (and Provincial/Territorial Cup races when held within region). 5-10 competitive experiences per season. Race distances: start with 1.0 km and progress to a maximum of 3 km. 5-10 min. max.). Sprints: 200m. Generally begin after Xmas. Introduce ancillary capacities. Competitive focus should be on personal improvement. Basic rules are learned.	Narrow the focus to three sports. Ensure appropriate ski equipment. Good nutrition; continued education on re-hydration Emphasize group interaction, team building and social activities. Group sessions begin Sept. 15. 1.25 to 1.5 hrs. 3x /wk during fall and ski season. Maximum 70 sessions including competitions and special activities (includes winter safety and ski care education). Ensure "adventure-based" activities are built into season plan. Make good use of snow season.

Important note for all age groups re: race distances. Early season races should be at the shorter end of the range. The maximum distance should only be raced a few times towards the end of the season. When establishing a race distance or deciding which race skiers will enter, take into account: the ability and fitness of the skiers; the difficulty of terrain; the elevation (altitude) of the race site; and whether the skiers are in the first or second year of their age class. The objective is to have skiers race at high speed with good technique, rather than struggle to finish the distance.

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