

SLNC Youth Programs Town Hall

Date: Thursday, May 11

Time: 7:00pm- 8:00pm

Location: Vernon Library

Agenda

Chair: Sue Cairns, Programs Board Rep

Welcome: Sue Cairns

Introductions from Sue for everyone hosting the meeting and let the parents introduce themselves.

- Thank you everyone for coming tonight, we really appreciate it. We are nervous as this is a stressful time, so we would like to clear the air. There have been a lot of hard feels going around, its because we all care so much. As difficult things are difficult to work through. We are hoping to provide a bit of information and sum up everyone's questions and concerns that have come in. Most of you are volunteers at the club, not everyone in the room is but most of you are. Thank you everyone for coming together, and Quinn for being here to be an athlete rep.

Board Report: Marshall Moleschi (HR chair)

- Decision and Input from the Board
 - a. The role as a board member is to help set the broader direction for the club from all the feedback that is brought to the board's attention, and monitor how things are going, do evaluations and work out the best direction to move forward with.
 - b. There are 10 board members and it important that they can divide up the workload evenly between all of them.
 - c. Two years ago, the club made the move towards a head coach with an assistant coach. This increased the coaching and staff resources, along with adding significant complexity. The board really wants to make sure that both cross-country and biathlon get the equal attention that they deserve from the coaches, that athletes' needs are met, and parents have a leader to go to.
 - d. We received feedback from staff, parents, athletes and from research about what some other clubs do. Change was required so that the head coach is not spread too thin and to make a collaborative team model where the XC and Biathlon coach work both collaboratively, and directly with their individual athletes. To do this remodel, legal advice was sought. Based on that, the decision was made to restructure by eliminating the current club head coach model and implement a 2-coach, sport-focused model, with equal roles for each coach, and create a clear map for athletes to know who their coach is. This will create clarity of roles,

increase responsibility, accountability, and streamline reporting to the board for more effective communication. This will also help to give more stability to all SLNC programs as we continue to grow into the future.

In addition, it will enable prompt responses to athletes and parents.

- The XC Coach Job has been posted in many places, such as Cross Country BC, Nordiq Canada, the SLNC Website, and Newsletter. The posting will also go to appropriate venues in the USA.
- GM Interviews are under way. Troy is moving on to his new position June 1st and has done a really good job at bridging the process and getting staff in place to take over roles as a bridge the gaps until a new GM is in place.
 - a. The board is hoping to offer the position to the new GM soon.
 - b. There is a summer plan in place in case it takes a little longer than expected to get a new GM in place.
 - c. Anyone can apply for the new position, including Jacqueline, if they wish too.
- Really important to get parent voices heard, the board depends on that. This will be key to make the new structure sustainable and to help the board frame future decisions.

Programs Report: Eric Schryer (Head Biathlon Coach/interim XC Academy Coach)

- We did have a program survey that went out at the end of the season. Eric will only talk to JD and Academy results of the survey. We had over 50% response that they were not happy with program satisfaction, and that feedback was received repeatedly over the course of the season, in conversations with athletes and parents. JD athletes and parents felt like second class citizens. So, we made a change to level out the programs to make them all equal on the race team. This should help so that it does not matter which program athletes are in.
- Explaining Email
 - Yes, the email had some emotion behind it. It is an uncomfortable topic to talk about. Being uncomfortable is important, Eric has felt uncomfortable, and a lot has come down to Eric's shoulders in the last month or so. He is open to feedback, and it is best heard when directed at the person and admin. When people are CCing 10 people in an email it creates a mob and creates unfair bias. He wrote it with respect and the most respectful thing to him is being honest. He respects everyone in this room and was speaking his truth. He is open to people not agreeing with him, and open to discussing issues with anyone, his mind could be changed on the issue. He is human and makes mistakes. He is asking that when discussing issues, it is done in a respectful manner.
- Programs Restructure
 - Two program changes are being proposed for the future.

- One being the ages to Academy.
 - The ages that are currently under consideration are to move Academy from Grade 8 entry to a Grade 10 entry are still under review and feedback and the decision is not final. In talks with Glen and the school board, we are revisiting an entry age for grade 9's skiing 1 day a week during the day and still skiing on Tuesday and Thursday nights to be with their peers. This would be a change from the 4-5 days a week that the older Grades 10-12 ski during the day. This will keep it so that athletes are still training with their peers. We as program staff would love to hear what people's thoughts are on this model. Eric really believes in this specifically for this for the athletes and young women. If we train them too hard, they will drop out at the age of 18, and if they lose their peer groups. Some kids get peer relations in school, and some don't so that makes this flex work well and is age appropriate.
- The second is the name changes to match the LTAD
 - It is as simple as there is an odd gap between Biathlon and XC race categories. So, then kids don't feel like they are falling between the gaps by training under a different name that they are racing under.
 - Name change for Bunnies to Track Attack is not happening. They will be kept as Bunnies, Jackrabbit and Track Attack as recommended and advised by the SDP Coaching Group.

Eric recognizes that we are all here and should have been consulted. The Programs Committees used to be active prior to COVID, and it fell apart during those years. This situation is one to learn from so we can have structures in place to communicate more effectively going forward.

Programs Committee: Sue

With Eric shouldering a lot of the groundwork, the Board is trying as best as they can to support Eric. The board does not intend to make more significant decisions regarding coaches. The Board is working hard to make sure that they get the right professionals in place. As parents and community, we need to respect Eric's time so that he can get space where he can. This can be done by not texting, or expecting answers to emails on Sunday's and Monday's as they are his day off.

- History
 - We had a programs committee in the past. Parents had been involved in them. COVID stopped everything, so there was a gap created. At the same time more programs staff were hired. It was a decision to try to have the staff members as the only program committee members. That was a mistake. This happened as it was thought to be beneficial to try to give staff time to gel and not be told how to do things by parents. There was no program parent committee this year and that

caused a lot of stress for staff, the board and parents. The board cannot step in and pick up all the pieces. We need to bring the committee back in on this. We are about to have a new GM and XC hopefully over the summer. These are the professionals that will need to work on the structure for what the committee will look like. Once that is in place, staff will make a call out to the parents to apply for positions that are specific. This will create working groups that will get things done and take stress off the staff. There will be a structure in place before we put the call out to parents. The board has to approve the structure of these refurbished committees. We are asking for some patience to get all these steps taken.

- How do we make sure that our voices are heard, and coaches are supported? Full apologies. Without the committees we do not have communication with parents, and or athletes. This was a huge learning experience. We need you to think about stepping up to the board and to the committees. We understand that it's a busy time raising your families. However, we need more program voices at the board level. Sue would love to see more program parents at the board level as it can be a lonely time.
- It is important not to place blame on individuals. Things just got more complex.

The board is there to help with the high-level operational items and support where needed.

Q & A: Marshall acting as MC

Questions (Q), Comments (C), Answers (A), and Responses (R):

Q: Curious about the coaches' contracts, how long are the current athletes expected to be working with the same coach?

A: Contracts are reviewed every year. Eric volunteered that his contract was a 1-year contract with intent to sign for 3 years based upon review. The intent is to have a long-term retention plan in place.

Thank you, Eric, this has been a lot, for all of us.

C: In terms of finding a new coach, slow down and take the time to find the right person, even if we have to mentor someone with a coach from overseas.

R: We do have a plan in place in case we do not get a coach soon. We are even advertising into the US to find a coach. Please everyone spread the word.

Q: The club has grown a lot since we had committees in place pre-COVID. If more than 1 person applies for the same position on the committee, can we have the parents vote for who they think would be the best fit for that role?

A: This is something that we can look into if we do have more than 1 person applying for the same role.

Q: How does “winterfit” fit into all of this without getting lost without a head coach and who is the coach contact without a head coach?

A: Winter fit falls under the skill development coach and Deirdra will step in when needed to. All the other program coaches will step in when and where needed to fill in any of the gaps.

C: There will be a WinterFit Representative on the Programs Committee

Q: What’s the plan to communicate with athletes in terms of program changes and direction with Post Secondary Athletes that don’t have parents?

A: Always go to our coach first. Suggestion to have an Athlete rep on committees, join the board. Really important for athletes to have board experience. For a long-term athlete going forward as Biathlon Canada and Nordiq Canada all have an athlete rep.

Q: What if we do not get parents to join the committees as it is the same faces in these room that have always been there.

A: Monitor new parents and parents of younger athletes and ask for parents’ feedback. It is more important to have ways for the information to get to the board than to have committees.

C: Without new energy and succession planning, none of this will work. There needs to be an expectation for new programs families to get involved. This is a strategy being discussed for the fall.

Q: Has there been an opportunity for the board to look at the committee to create descriptions for the committees and roles and is there a plan for the next weeks to months as everyone forgets about skiing after April? It would be a great opportunity to get people together in a room to create these committees, and roles so that parents know what they are signing up for.

A: The board has not looked deeply into these yet but there is a board meeting on Tuesday May 16th. A lot depends on the new GM as well.

C: The Programs Committee is an operational committee governed by the BoD. The BoD, along with staff will create the necessary framework for the Programs Committee. Sub-Committees however are created by, and lead by staff, so there is much more opportunity to have those working committees designed alongside program parents and participants.

C: Surprised and disappointed that the first communication came from Eric and not the board and put Eric in a tough position. This was a board decision and not Eric’s. Going forward

communication needs to come from the board and not Eric when it is a board decision. There is a huge weight put on the staff to do some of the work that the Board should be doing.

R: The Board hopeful will debrief once these issues settle, to review and learn from what happened. It is also important to bring the new GM and Coach up to speed when they are in place, so that the whole organization can learn.

The Board is going to continue to have open and honest communication with the staff. We must make sure that we are following the process with the Committees, so that we do not end up in a place like this again.

C: Plans are being put in place based on theories about peer groups or not keeping kids skiing till they are 18 and does not align with the kids and coaches on snow. There is worry about no academy in grade 8 & 9 for some of our athletes don't see how we bridge the gap for where they need to be in grade 10. Don't see how we can deliver athletes racing at a grade 10 level without daytime training, and the gap in hours that they will be missing out on. Kids are making different choices at 18 to go to school instead of continuing skiing at a high level. Make sure that we have our eyes on the kids that have ski dreams. We are not matching our plans to our reality. There have been no athletes that have skied past grade 12.

R: Sue has watched repeatedly kids burn out around 16yrs and kids keep skiing through grade 12 because they don't know what else to do yet. Is that working, what is it that we want? High performance athletes, or good well-rounded kids.

C: There have been a lot of coach changes at Sovereign and kids have a hard time with that in the Academy age group.

C: Our program needs to support the kids that want to complete.

C: From an athlete perspective training at grade 8 and 9 there was no plan. Coaches worked hard to build zone 1, and Quinn really wanted to train but the coaches held her back and it did help her skiing career if they would have let her train hard at that age her skiing career might not have lasted as long. The kids that were winning in grade 8 all quit, but the ones that were not winning are now on the national team.

C: Most other clubs in the country do not offer daytime training and still meet their training and performance goals.

C: Coaching is like trying to herd cats, it is hard as a coach. The resources are limited. Marry the theory with the reality. Everyone speak up and don't be shy about it. We must keep a wide vision so that we can build, grow, and change with the players.

Q: The programs committee seems to be important. Who is responsible to develop the mandate for the programs committee and who makes it up, what does it look like, what is the structure.

A: At this point the board program person Sue is responsible for getting it in place, then we will work with staff to get the what the committees will look like. Key staff will lead the committees. How it will happen will be sent out by email, TeamSnap, WhatsApp as decided by the new GM and staff. The important thing is that the new GM and staff will get word out. Don't be afraid to reach out to staff or the board if you have more questions. There are terms of reference for the Programs Committee, and it will be revised if need be so that it can work most effectively.

C: Thank you for everyone's time. In reality what we need to look at for academy we need to find something that checks everyone's box, we need a system that we don't have to change for a while, so that they don't leave anyone behind or burn anyone out.

C: Apologies that the communication has been rushed, and under pressure. This puts parents in a tough spot when they are the ones that must explain to kids. This causes confusion

C: Everyone is here because they care about the community and a positive environment for their kids.

Closing: Thank you, everything is not perfect and there are not all clear answers that we all want. Thank you for caring so much and showing up. We want a community where we have each other's backs.

Action Items:

Committees:

- Get the Structure of what the committees look like confirmed and approved.
- Write descriptions for each committee member's role.
- Create application for committees.
- Send out the committee's information.

Communication Platforms:

- Ask parents what the best way is to get communication out.
 - TeamSnap ○ WhatsApp ○ Email
 - Programs Website Calendar

Academy Starting Grade under review

- Current grade 8, recommendation for grade 10