

Catamount Ski Team Parents Guide to Race Day

We must help our kids be prepared on race day. The most important goal should be to build confidence and reduce stress. A ski race is based on 2 approximately one minute runs. Our racers need to be confident and focused at the starting gate, as there is no time to make adjustments to the “game plan.”

Their performance will be based on their ability, race conditions, and motivation. Their ability is based on all of their training and will not change on race day. The conditions of the course and the quality of the other racers are out of their control. That leaves how motivated they are as the only variable that can be managed. Are they focused? Do they have a good energy/intensity level? Are they confident?

It is very important to limit the expectations or focus on results. They should be focused on skiing their best and enjoying the opportunity to race.

The Day/Night Before

Typically race day requires an early start, so plan everything that needs to happen the next morning to get out the door.

Ensure everyone gets a good night sleep and are hydrated.

Have a gear check list, check the condition and have it set up to pack in the car. Ensure boots are dry and warm before they go into the car.

Check the weather to ensure you have the right clothing and can adjust travel times.

Give yourself enough time for registration hiccups.

Morning of Race Day

Ensure your racer gets a healthy breakfast. Don't plan a last minute order of greasy food at the mountain. Do pack healthy snacks in order to main energy levels and hydration.

Use a checklist when packing the car.

Arrival at Mountain

Focus on being organized and not rushing and creating extra stress. If something is wrong with the registration, try to leave your racer out of it. Find a coach if you need help.

There is a lot going on, but please recognize that there are many volunteers helping with the race who are good people and love kids ski racing. Treat them with respect and be appreciative. Set an example for our kids and reinforce that they should be polite and respectful.

Keep track of the race bib and lift tickets. Racers have a lot on their mind and there is a lot of commotion. They need help with this.

Make contact with the coaches and know when and where the racers are meeting to go up the lifts and inspect the course. Make sure their equipment is on and they are there before the time they plan to go up.

Only coaches should be on the course and inspecting with the racers.

Do not add additional voices into your racers head regarding the course, conditions and what they need to focus on. They should be getting this from their coaches. As they become more experienced, they should have mental routines and be narrowing their focus. Even perceived parental expectations regarding results can be devastating to the racer's confidence.

First Run

Ensure they understand when they need to be at the top of the course and ready to run. Give enough time for lift travel and potential problems. Check if they still have their bib on.

Understand and pay attention to their bib number and an approximate time for their start. Watch which bib numbers are currently racing and adjust timing. Be aware that many racers do not show up, so numbers will be skipped.

Give them a smile and encourage them to do their best and enjoy their runs. Find a place to cheer them on.

After their finish, be encouraging and do not try to analyze what just happened. Limit the emphasis on the results shown on the board. If they need consolation, show support, recognize their effort, and encourage them to focus only on the next run.

Please recognize that the results on the board or LiveTiming may not be accurate. Also encourage good sportsmanship. Your racer may be very excited, but realize the racer next to them may be close to tears. Encourage them to be supportive to the other racers, especially as they may become lifelong friends based on this shared experience. A word on LiveTiming. It does not enhance performance or the race day experience. Please turn off the smartphone.

The racers may need to head up and get their gear. We should encourage them to ski some runs and make the most of being on snow.

Be available to the coaches and know where your racer is, in case anything went wrong with the run. The coaches may need to protest a disqualification (DSQ) such as a missed gate. Very infrequently there are timing issues requiring a rerun. If the racer thinks something is very wrong with the time or they were interfered with on the course, help them find a coach. Only coaches can manage these issues.

Second Run

Have an idea when the first run will be completed and when the second run inspection should begin. Keep an eye on how the race is actually running, as the second run may be moved up or back.

The racer should have a healthy lunch. Avoid the fatty, greasy foods being sold and candy and snacks other kids bring. Poor diet often results in lethargic racers showing up for the second run. If your racer is going to eat some "comfort" food, save it for after the race.

Basically, follow the same process as the first run, and make sure that bib does not get lost and is on when they show up for inspection and their race start.

After the race avoid analysis and advice. You are there for unconditional support. Let emotions settle down. Do not focus on results.

Once again, the results on the board are preliminary. Nothing is more painful than waiting around for awards only to find out that there was a mistake.

Encourage more skiing and training if there is sufficient time. Our racers should make more of the day than two runs. Encourage them to clear their heads and enjoy some runs with friends and teammates. Make some friends with racers from other programs.

You and your racer should thank coaches and race volunteers for what is a very long day of work.

If you can, stay for awards and be part of the overall success of the racers that day. The kids put a lot of hours in together and the social aspects are important benefit of racing. If your racer is getting an award you should try to stay. Cherish the opportunity to have a group of people applaud their efforts.

Day After the Race

Check their motivational temperature and how they felt about the race. Encourage them to think about what they did well and what they would like to improve. Ski racing is not an easy sport. Tell them you are proud of their efforts. Focus on the process of getting better and not on results.