

**Mike Kenney, USST Men's Kombi Coach & Trainer –
Speaks at Eastern Coaches Education Session**

On Saturday, Oct 19th, 2014 in Rutland, Vt , Mike joined a roomful of Eastern Coaches to discuss the topic of Functional Ankle Strength in Alpine Skiing. Below are a few concepts from his handout and within his report.

Mike Kenney Writes:

At this time there is no sport specific maintenance program for the ankle joint. Among the reasons I can think of for these omissions are: there is no strength testing protocol available – there is no strength testing protocol available and the sparse musculature surrounding the ankle and the joint structure that serves to articulate the ankle joint is a challenge to isolate and develop. It also appears there is not much going on inside a still, tightly buckled ski boot in terms of range of motion. The unique physiological demands in ski racing require the racer to have a high degree of eccentric, isometric and concentric strength and coordination to stabilize and activate the ankle joint.

Underneath the suits and plastic ski boots of any athlete with superior technique is someone who can sustain and best manage the ever increasing force loads and precise pressure development required in modern ski racing. He looks at weaknesses in the kinetic chain of movement patterns that will lower an athlete's performance potential. Strength deficits or imbalances that appear along the kinetic chain can appear from the ankle joint up through the legs, hips and core. For the very advanced ski racer it is important to keep an eye on the ankle as a critical link in the kinetic chain that transmits power cleanly and efficiently into the ski.

Mike's summary – The performance levels of elite ski racers in the future will be determined by those who can develop pressure on the ski rapidly in a consistently accurate manner while withstanding the high forces involved.

Overall observations from Mike's presentation include:

The ankle joint and strength of that joint, and how it connects to the upper body has a direct relation to the athlete's performance. In fact, it may be directly related to success at the elite level (*Bode and Ted)

Performance includes the ability to control subtle movements under high forces and pressure. Maintaining or finding balance under increasing demands of load, force, and pressure. Ability to react to changes as it directly relates to forces at high speeds, snow surface and terrain changes.

The athlete's boot set up is extremely important!

Adding ankle strengthening exercises to the athlete's conditioning plan is key.

*According to Mike, Bode and Ted have superior ankle strength!