

Alpine Course Setting – USSA Fall Coaches Presentation

By Mike Morin, Stratton Mt. School Head Coach

Course Setting - using the following assumptions:

- Safe & Legal
- Set to both appropriate age class and ability
- Use of the hill & it's features – for fun and excitement
- Create appropriate challenges to separate the field

Variations in Course Setting:

- Important to set variation, especially in multi day events.
- Have a plan, create a progression
- Must have a willingness to teach through course setting
- Educate the athletes before they see the course – what the plan is for that training session
- Create an environment through adaptation

“Coaches spend too much time making sure their athletes feel good”

“As soon as a coach sets a course outside the norm, other coaches complain”

**Difficult rhythm changes, including varied distances will force athletes to adapt and gain skills.

Maximum Distance Sets – The “good”

- Develop comfort at speed
- Gives athletes time to develop movement patterns
- Easier to bring direction and shape to the turn
- Movement over terrain is forgiving
- Teaches athletes to “Rip”

The “Bad”

- If the athlete never struggles to stay on line, then they never learn to change tactics
- Low line can cause the “grinding” of speed (loss)
- Athletes can ride in the “back” ...injuries?
- Athlete does not need to inspect

Min Distance Sets – The “Good”

- Forces athletes up and over their skis
- Forces athletes to bring shape and direction to the gate
- Forces the athlete to stand on their skis with power

- In many cases, forces a pole plant and edge release

Quick, quick, quick – is this good?

- Coaches try to set quickly
- Athletes try to inspect quickly
.....all in the effort to get started

Teach athletes to inspect what you set – distance, rhythm changes, terrain changes

Set different and varied courses in terrain (i.e. Gate before the bump, gate at the bump, gate after the bump)

Consider setting something that is NOT easy to finish

Can we teach our athletes to be fast and finish? Yes. It takes a plan:

FAST

- Timing with short distance courses
- Build speed in the sets
- Practice starts
- Dual courses
- Compressed sets
- Set with a direct line (VS round line)
- Show the athletes real speed up close (Nor-Ams, FIS U races, National team athletes)

FINISH

- Make finishing important-not finishing is NOT OK!
- Set long, even rhythm sections on easy terrain
- Require pole plant and quiet upper body
- Make sure they understand simple tactics
- Make them hike
- Set really difficult rhythm changes and demand finishing
- 1000 gates a day with emphasis on finishing

SL as a tool for teaching

- Set 4-6m courses
- Upper body discipline
- Pole plant
- Tactics
- Use pole and no poles
- 1m hop turn courses , brushes, stubbies(picket fence)