Mental Training For Juvenile Athletes

A 28-Week Training Guide for Coaches

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Introduction

➢ “Mental Training for Juvenile Athletes” is a practical, step-by-step 28-week mental training program designed to help coaches of Juvenile ski racers integrate mental training into their coaching practices.

➢ The program is divided into 4 parts: Dryland training, On-snow training, Provincial and National Race Series, and Season Evaluation. It is designed to start with dryland training in mid-September and finish at the end of March, one week after the National Championships. The program is tailored so the athletes peak at the Provincial (week 24) and National (week 27) Championships.

➢ During the first 10 weeks of the program (i.e., before on-snow training starts), one 30-60 minute mental training session should be scheduled per week for the introduction of basic mental skills. Mental training is also integrated into dryland at this time.

➢ During Part II of the program, mental training is integrated into on-snow training and off-snow mental training sessions are limited to training camps.

➢ Part III focuses on race preparation for the Provincial and National Championships.

➢ Part IV comprises the season evaluation.

➢ A summary page for each week can be found in the Pocket Pro.
Quick View Weekly Training Guide

Based on 2002/2003 calendar, week 1 starts 16th Sept, week 24 (Provincials) starts 24th Feb, week 27 (Nationals) starts 17th March

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Mental Training Session</th>
<th>Dryland Training</th>
<th>On-Snow Training</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1 – Developing awareness | Identify athlete goals  
Develop performance profiles                                    | Foster 100% effort and commitment  
Develop a team “motto”                                                            | None              |
| 2 – Goal setting | Set season goals                                                                       | Work towards physical goals set earlier in the week                              | None              |
| 3 – Activation control | Introduce the concept of activation and how to control it                             | Control muscle tension during training exercises                                  | None              |
| 4 & 5 – Imagery | Introduce the concept of imagery and develop basic imagery skills using a variety of exercises | Use imagery to improve performance by increasing motivation and improving technique | None              |
| 6 – Positive attitude | Develop confidence and a positive attitude                                               | Use positive self-talk  
Develop cue words  
Highlight training                                                               | None              |
| 7 – Focus/attentional styles | Introduce the different attentional styles and how they relate to performance  
Develop focusing skills using a variety of exercises                           | Use different attentional styles for each exercise to discover how focus affects performance | None              |
| 8 – Prerun focus | Develop attentional cues  
Develop start area and start gate routines                                          | Develop plans to maintain an on-task focus                                         | None              |
| 9 – Training and race plans | Develop training and race plans                                                       | As for week 3                                                                     | None              |
| 10 – Evaluation | Develop an evaluation tool for training and racing                                      | As for weeks 4 & 5                                                                | Establish on-snow protocol  
Evaluate training sessions                                                        |
<p>| 11 – Introducing mental skills on-snow | None                                                                                   | As for week 6                                                                     | Use the 5 key prerun questions                                                  |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Activity Description</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 12 – Pre-Christmas training camp (3-5 days) | Set goals for the camp  
Evaluate training  
Evaluate technical, tactical, and mental skills  
Set/adjust goals for development of technical, tactical, and mental skills  
Develop relaxation and imagery skills | None  
Develop basic mental skills: activation control imagery, and thought control |
| 13&14 – Mental skill development | None | None  
Develop basic mental skills: activation control imagery, and thought control |
| 15&16 – Christmas training camp (10 days) | Set goals for the camp  
Evaluate training  
Season-to-date evaluation  
Develop a refocusing plan  
Develop relaxation and imagery skills | None  
Develop basic mental skills: activation control imagery, and thought control  
Refine prerun routine  
Implement and refine the refocusing plan |
| 17-20 – Mental skill development | None | None  
Develop basic mental skills: activation control imagery, and thought control |
| 21-23 – Race preparation | None | None  
Race simulation |
| 24 – Provincial Championships | Evaluate day’s racing and plan for next day | None  
Racing |
| 25-26 – Evaluation and refinement | Evaluate race series and plan for Nationals | None  
Refine race plans  
Race simulation |
| 27 – National Championships | Evaluate day’s racing and plan for next day | None  
Racing |
| 28 – Season evaluation | Evaluate season  
Set goals for the summer | None  
Free-skiing |
PART I

WEEKS 1-10

DRYLAND TRAINING
Week 1 — Developing Awareness

Background for Coaches

Fundamental to any kind of improvement is an awareness of the current skill level and an image of the desired skill level. As a coach, you need to help each of the athletes you work with develop an understanding of himself or herself both as a person and as a skier *right now* then help them identify where they want to be in the future. A useful tool to help with this process is performance profiling (Butler & Hardy, 1992). Performance profiling will allow you to discover the athletes’ perspectives of their performance and/or self (e.g., how they feel about their preparation for racing; what qualities they consider to be important for achieving their goals etc.). Specifically, you will be able to identify what they perceive their strengths to be, areas they wish to work on to improve, and areas that may be resistant to change. Information gained from performance profiling can then be used as a platform for goal setting (week 2).

Mental Training Session

**Objectives:**
- Athletes will illustrate their season goals
- Athletes will develop their own performance profiles

**Materials needed:**
- Paper
- Coloured pens/pencils
- Examples of skiers’ illustrations of their goals (Appendix A)
- Blackboard and chalk (or flip chart, whiteboard etc)
- Blank performance profiles (Appendix B)
- Example of completed performance profile (Appendix C)

**Guidelines for conducting the session:**
1. Ask the athletes to draw a picture to illustrate their season’s goals. That is, what they want to achieve this season; what they want from skiing and the *Train to Train* program; what skiing means to them etc. Encourage them to consider and incorporate all aspects of skiing and ski racing (e.g., technical improvement, social, enjoyment) into their pictures. Asking the athletes to illustrate their goals rather than state them in writing requires them to think in a broader sense than just saying “I want to ski fast” or “I want to do my best”. You can show them some examples if necessary.

2. Provide the athletes with an opportunity to share and discuss their pictures with the team.

3. As a team, brainstorm for the skills, qualities, and/or characteristics necessary for the attainment of these goals. Encourage the athletes to consider all aspects of performance (i.e., physical, mental, technical, and tactical). List these on the blackboard.
4. Ask the athletes to pick the 10 most important qualities they will need to achieve their goals. Provide the athletes with a blank performance profile and ask them to write these qualities around the outside of the profile (see Appendix C).

5. On a scale of 0-10 (10 is the highest level), ask the athletes to rate where they would like to be on each of these constructs and mark this on the profile (i.e., ideal self; dark line in Appendix C). Note that because they have already identified these qualities as important, most ratings will probably be 9s and 10s.

6. On a scale of 0-10 (10 is the highest level), ask the athletes to rate where they are right now on each of these constructs (i.e., current self; shaded area in Appendix C).

7. By looking at the discrepancies between the ideal and current self on the profile, you and the athletes can identify (a) the athletes perceived strengths; (b) the areas the athletes would like to improve in; and (c) areas that might be resistant to change.

8. If the athletes are unable to complete their profiles in the time allotted, ask them to complete them during the week and bring them to the next session where they will use them as a base for goal setting.

**Dryland Training**

*Objective:*
- To foster 100% effort and commitment during training

*Guidelines for conducting the session:*
1. Sitting in a group at the start of the session, ask the athletes to think back to the illustrations they created in the mental training session. What is it that they want to achieve this season? What will it take to achieve them? Emphasise the importance of hard work during the off-season. Get the athletes psyched to give 100% effort in training.

2. Talk about the importance of dryland training and the role it plays in developing a base for the on-snow work to come. As a team, choose a word or image that sums up commitment and dedication for the team. I team I worked with in the past used “PIG”. This emerged from a quotation by Martina Navratilova and summed up the commitment they wanted to give in training: “With fitness you can be involved or committed. Just like with ham and eggs: the chicken was involved, but the pig was committed. You have to be like the pig”. Revisit the word/image often and use it during training sessions throughout the season to foster commitment/motivation.
Week 2 – Goal Setting

Background for Coaches

Goal setting is one of the most valuable mental training tools when approached in the correct manner. Goal setting is an effective means of building self-confidence in addition to being an excellent source of motivation. It will also provide a focus for training. Goal setting is like a map. First of all the destination (long term goal) needs to be identified, then the quickest and most economical way to arrive there needs to be determined (each step being a short term goal or “action step”). Through doing this, attention is being directed towards the task in hand and time and energy are not wasted by taking unnecessary detours. It is important that goals are revisited throughout the season. All too often a lot of effort is invested into setting goals at the beginning of the season and then the goals are never looked at again.

Mental Training Session

Objective:
• Athletes will set their goals for the season

Materials needed:
• Pencils
• Performance profiles athletes created last week
• Goal setting handout (Appendix D)
• Example of completed goal sheet (Appendix E)

Guidelines for conducting the session:
1. Explain the importance of setting goals to the athletes (see “background for coaches” section).

2. Highlight the principles of effective goal setting:
2.1. Ultimately, the goals must be important to the athletes. If they are not committed to the goals they will not put in the necessary energy and effort to reach them. Therefore allow the athletes to take a leading role when setting goals while still providing advice, insight, knowledge, and support as a coach. Goal-setting should be a collaborative effort between the coach and athlete.

2.2. The goals must be realistic with regards to the amount of time available and the athletes’ ability and motivation.

2.3. Although goals must be realistic, they should also be challenging. Athletes should feel satisfied when they achieve them as this will help build self-confidence. If the goals are too challenging or unrealistic, they may never reach them and this could work to undermine self-confidence. If goals are not challenging enough, the athletes will not derive any satisfaction from them once they have achieved them and so they will not serve as a building block for developing self-confidence.
2.4. The goals must be within the athletes’ control. They should be performance (quality of skiing) and not outcome (result) oriented. A goal that is within an athlete’s control is one that is not dependent on how well other people perform. Outcome goals can lead to frustration and anxiety.

2.5. Write goals in specific concrete terms (e.g., improve leg strength by 10% by September 1st). Avoid “do your best” or “feel good” goals.

2.6. Goals should be assessable/measurable (e.g., you can determine whether leg strength has increased based on the weight you can squat). The athletes should know whether or not they have achieved their goal.

2.7. Write goals in positive terms - avoid using the word “not”. Focus on behaviours you want to achieve or gain rather than what you want to omit (e.g., ‘keep weight forward’ as opposed to ‘get out the back seat’).

2.8. Include target dates for goal completion.

3. Provide the athletes with the performance profiles they completed last week and the goal setting handout.

4. Ask the athletes to identify their dream goal (i.e., what they want to achieve in 10 years time) and their long-term goal (i.e., what they want to achieve in 3 years time) and write them in the appropriate place on the handout. Athletes should follow the principles of effective goal setting.

5. Once the long-term goals have been set, the athlete is ready to set season goals. Season goals should be set for all areas of skiing – mental, physical, technical, tactical, and enjoyment. Athletes should use the performance profile as a starting point (where are the biggest discrepancies between the ‘current self’ and the ‘ideal self?’) to identify the areas they need to focus on to improve. The season goals should be written in the appropriate places on the goal setting handout.

6. Then, ask the athlete to identify the “action steps” (or short-term goals) that will help them attain each of these goals. Write each “action step” on each step of the stairs along with the goal completion date (see Appendix E for an example of completed goal sheet). You can also break each action step down further, as in the example. Don’t forget the principles for effective goal setting when writing the goals.

7. Throughout this process, provide the athletes with input and guidance. Meet with the athletes over the upcoming weeks to help them complete their goals.

8. Once the goals have been set, encourage the athletes to post them in visible places to remind them of what they are working towards. After the goals have been set, the athletes should see this as a contract with themselves.
Goals should be revisited, reassessed and adjusted as necessary – they are not carved in stone. If an athlete fails to attain a goal that’s OK, maybe it was unrealistic in the first place. Help them adjust it and encourage them to GO FOR IT AGAIN! Be aware that not all athletes will attain their goals; you will have to help some of them cope with this failure.

**Dryland Training**

*Objective:*
- Athletes focus on working towards the physical goals they set.

*Guidelines for conducting the session:*
1. At the start of the session, give the athletes the physical goal sheet they completed. Ask them to identify one thing that they can do during dryland that will help them achieve their goal. Get them to write this daily goal in their journal and share it with the rest of the group.

2. During dryland encourage the athletes to support each other in the attainment of this goal.

3. At the end of training ask them to answer the following questions in their journals:
   - Did you achieve your goal?
   - If so, how did this make you feel?
   - If not, why not?
   - What specific actions are you going to take in the future to ensure you achieve your goal?
**Week 3 — Activation Control**

**Background for Coaches**

Activation refers to the physiological activity in your body such as heart rate, respiration rate, muscle tension, and adrenaline level. Low levels of activation are characterised by sleep and restfulness, whereas high levels are characterised by high energy and tension. Athletes have a zone of activation within which they will perform their best. If their activation level is too low they may become bored and lack motivation. Conversely, if the activation is too high they will experience nervousness and tension. Nerves often lead us to contract every muscle in our body instead of just the ones necessary. Consequently, this affects co-ordination and timing which negatively affects performance. In order to maximise the opportunities for a successful performance, athletes need to be able to identify their optimum level of activation for performance and then adjust their current level as required.

**Mental Training Session**

**Objectives:**
- Athletes will understand what activation is.
- Athletes will learn how to use appropriate strategies to adjust their activation level as necessary

**Materials needed:**
- Blackboard and chalk (or flip chart, whiteboard etc)

**Guidelines for conducting the session:**
1. Understanding activation
   1.1. Introduce the concept of activation with the athletes. Ensure they understand what activation is (physiological activity in the body) and that successful performance requires them to be at the correct level of activation. The optimal level of activation will be different for each athlete and each task (compare ski racing to golf). Emphasise that this optimal level of activation needs to be achieved in the start gate, or at the top of a training course, not part way down the course.
   Useful questions to initiate discussion:
   - How many of you experience nerves before a race?
   - What are nerves? How do you feel when you are nervous? How do you experience nerves? [write their answers down in 2 columns based on whether the manifestation of the nerves is psychological (e.g., scared I’m going to crash, fear of injury etc.) or physiological (e.g., butterflies, muscle tension etc.)] Highlight that today you are going to focus on the physiological aspect of nerves (i.e., activation).
   - How do you deal with your nerves? That is, how do you decrease your activation level if it is too high? [after discussing this guide them through a relaxation exercise (examples below)]
   - How do you increase your activation level if it is too low? [after discussing this guide them through an activating exercise (examples below)]
2. Decreasing activation – More often than not, athletes will find that they need to decrease, rather than increase, their activation level before a race. The following activities can be used to teach athletes how to decrease their activation. These exercises should be done in a quiet spot. Once they have been learned and the athletes are able to reduce their activation levels effectively, abbreviated versions can be used to decrease activation in a performance situation where time is limited.

2.1. Abdominal breathing – When under stress, we tend to breathe in short, shallow breaths. This prevents the lungs from filling up completely. With this type of breathing, stale air remains in the lungs and oxidation of the tissues is incomplete. This can lead to muscle tension. Conversely, by learning to breathe properly, tension can be reduced.

Sit upright with your back straight. Inhale very slowly; as you do, push your abdomen out. This will move your diaphragm down and fill the lower part of your lungs. As you continue to inhale expand your chest and fill the middle part of your lungs. Then, lift your shoulders and collarbones slightly to fill the upper part of the lungs. Hold the breath and then exhale slowly drawing in the abdomen and lowering your shoulders and collarbones. Empty your lungs from the top to bottom. When you exhale think of a relaxing word or image that you can associate with this feeling.

2.2. Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR) – This technique works on the assumption that a relaxed muscle cannot be a tense muscle. First, you need to get the athletes to become aware of the contrast between the different feelings of a tense and relaxed muscle. You can get the athletes to rate the degree of tension they feel on a scale from 1 (relaxed) to 10 (tense). Once they are able to do this, there is no reason why, with practice, they cannot change or adjust these levels. The following script will help you guide the athletes through PMR. You could even record the script onto a tape for each of the athletes. Make sure you pause for 10-20 seconds between each instruction to give the athletes time to fully experience the tension and relaxation. This activity should be done in a quiet place.

- Lie down in a comfortable position on your back with your arms at your sides and your legs slightly apart.
- Close your eyes and start to focus on your breathing. Don’t try and control your breathing, just let it happen. Each time you exhale, exhale some tension out of your body.
- Clench the fist of your right hand. Become aware of the tension in your hand and forearm. Relax. Notice the difference in the feelings when you are tense and when you are relaxed. Note that you control the feelings of tension and relaxation. Repeat. Repeat with other hand.
- Contact your biceps by bending your right arm. Relax. Repeat. Again, notice that it is you who is controlling the tension and relaxation in your muscles. Repeat with other arm.
- Scrunch up your face. Notice the tension around your eyes, your mouth, your nose. Relax. Repeat.
- Tighten your jaw by clenching your teeth. Notice the tension. Relax. Repeat.
• Press your head into the ground. Notice the tension in your neck. Relax. Repeat.
• Shrug your shoulders. Relax. Repeat.
• Tighten your stomach muscles. Relax. Repeat.
• Tighten your butt muscles. Relax. Repeat.
• Tighten your thigh muscles by pushing your heels into the ground. Relax. Repeat.
• Now point your toes and feel the tension in your calf muscles. Relax. Repeat. Now pull your toes towards your knees and feel the tension in your shins. Relax. Repeat.
• Scan your body for any remaining areas of tension. Try and exhale any tension left in your body.
• Return your focus to your breathing and enjoy these comfortable feelings of relaxation. While you did this exercise you controlled the amount of tension and relaxation in your muscles. When you are feeling tense in the future, you can do this exercise to relax your muscles as you now know that it is you who controls the tension. When you are ready open your eyes, stretch and slowly sit up. You should feel energised and ready to go.

3. Increasing activation – Although athletes will normally have to decrease their activation level prior to racing, after many delays in the start gate it may be necessary for the athletes to get themselves pumped up. The following exercises will help increase activation.

3.1. Intense breathing – Just how abdominal breathing can decrease activation levels, intense breathing can serve to increase activation levels. Intense breathing means exhaling hard – breathe in for a count of 8 and then out for a count of 4.

3.2. Physical movement – In order to energise and get pumped up move your body. Get the athletes to jump up and down, run up the hill 10-15 metres, swing their arms.

3.3. Cue words – Cue words can be used to control activation. Words and phrases such as “go for it”, “attack”, “hustle” will act to increase athletes’ activation levels.

3.4. Music – Listening to upbeat music will get athletes pumped and ready to perform.

**Dryland Training**

*Objective:*
• Athletes control the level of muscle tension during training activities

*Guidelines for conducting the session:*
1. Get athletes to identify what level of activation they are at the start of dryland. Rate on a scale of 1 (sleepy) to 10 (very excited and pumped). You want them pumped for the training so work to increase their activation levels using the examples above if necessary.

2. During training exercises the athletes should remain relatively relaxed so they are not holding tension in their muscles and therefore working inefficiently. For example, in hill training you want a relaxed form with shoulders relaxed and not held high. Get athletes to imagine smoothing out their muscles, making them longer. Also, remind them to breathe deeply.
throughout.

3. End dryland with a stretching and relaxation session (you can use PMR or abdominal breathing as described above).
Background for Coaches

Imagery is the creation, or recreation, of experiences in your mind using all of your senses (i.e., sight, sound, hearing, smell, touch, movement). Imagery is most effective when the images created are vivid, under your control, and include emotion (e.g., pride, satisfaction). There are two sorts of imagery – internal and external. Imagery from an internal perspective means that you replicate what you see through your own eyes from within your body. Conversely, imagery from an external perspective is like seeing the image on television from outside your body. Although both types of imagery are valuable in their own right, internal imagery is particularly important due to its kinaesthetic (movement) value.

Mental Training Sessions

Objectives:
• Athletes understand the concept of imagery and recognise its value in ski racing
• Athletes engage in a number of exercises to develop their imagery skills

Materials needed:
• TV & VCR
• Video of World Cup skiing
• Paper and pencils
• Cones

Guidelines for conducting the sessions:
1. Understanding imagery
   1.1. Introduce the concept of imagery with the athletes. Ensure they know what imagery is (creation of an experience in the mind using all the senses), that imagery can be done from an external or internal perspective, and discuss ways in which imagery can be used to benefit them in skiing and life.
   Useful questions to initiate discussion:
   - What is imagery?
   - Why do skiers use imagery?
   - How do you use imagery?
   - Which senses do you find it easy to image in? Most difficult? To help the athletes determine this, guide them through a number of short imagery scenarios and in each one emphasise a different sense. For example, to emphasise hearing, ask the athletes to imagine skiing down a perfectly groomed run. Ask, “what sound do your skis make? How is this different from if it’s icy?” Or for seeing – imagine watching your favourite World Cup skier racing. “How well can you see him/her as he/she skis slalom/GS? What is his/her body position?” Or for movement – imagine yourself skiing really well. “How is your body moving? How does it feel when you transfer your weight correctly?”

2. Once the athletes have a basic grasp of what imagery is, engage them in a number of exercises which will help them develop their imagery skills. Because imagery is such an
important mental skill in ski racing, it is suggested that you spend 2 sessions introducing and
developing this skill. Below are a number of exercises you can use. The first exercise uses
imagery as a means to relax, the second, third, fourth, and fifth facilitate the development of
imagery skills within the context of skiing, and the sixth and seventh are fun games that will
develop imagery skills and promote spatial awareness.

2.1. Imagine a relaxing place – Ask the athletes to lie down in a comfortable position and
close their eyes. Then guide them through the following script.
Imagine a place that is quiet and where you can relax. Maybe this place is at the top of
the mountain on a warm summer day or by a lake. Imagine yourself there feeling
comfortable and warm and relaxed. Breathe slowly and imagine breathing any bad
feelings or thoughts or tension out of your body. Let them evaporate through your skin
or out your body with each breath you take. Let your body feel heavy and relaxed, feel
the ground as it supports you. Everything is quiet and you feel calm and happy. In your
mind, take a look around this special place you are in. Imagine that it is a bright sunny
morning and you can feel the warmth of the sun on your body. The air is clean and
fresh. The sky is a beautiful mix of blues, with small wispy white clouds. Everything is
calm and you feel peaceful and still. Whenever you feel worried you can come to this
place in your mind to relax and get a feeling of calmness. When you open your eyes,
you will continue to feel great and look forward to the rest of the day.

2.2. Imaging good technique (external perspective) – Show the athletes video clips of World
Cup skiers. Choose a specific run and show it to the athletes a number of times. Ask
them to pay close attention to the skier’s technique and the course itself. Then, ask them
to close their eyes and image what they have just seen. With practice, their imagery
should last as long as the run itself as they image in real-time. You can time how long it
takes for the athletes to complete their imagery in order to monitor their improvements.

2.3. Imaging successful skiing (external perspective) – Ask the athletes to imagine that you
have just video-taped their best run ever. Ask them to watch this tape in their mind.
What do they see? As they recreate this experience encourage them to make the image
as vivid as possible by using all their senses. They should try to imagine themselves
skiing at the same speed as they would actually ski it (i.e., in real-time). What do they
look like when they are skiing well? What sound do their skis make on the snow? How
do their bodies move as they make each turn? What does it feel like to make these great
turns? If they have trouble with this exercise, show them a video of themselves skiing.
Ask them to watch the tape then immediately use imagery to reproduce what they just
saw. If their mental image starts to breakdown, turn the tape back on again and repeat
the exercise until they are able to create an accurate image of how they ski.

2.4. Imaging successful skiing (internal perspective) – Ask the athletes to close their eyes and
imagine that they are skiing down their favourite run. Encourage them to do this activity
from an internal perspective (i.e., as if they were inside their own body and they would
see what they see looking out of their eyes). What can they see? (looking ahead to
terrain changes) Hear? (skis on the snow) Feel? (wind on their face). As they make each
turn in their mind get them to move their bodies in the correct way too. Don’t forget to
encourage the athletes to use emotions in their imagery. How do they feel when they skied an awesome run? Again, encourage the athletes to image in real-time.

2.5. Imagery control – Sometimes the athletes will find that when they are imagining themselves skiing they make mistakes. It is critical that if this happens they “rewind” their imagery and correct the mistake. Often it helps to slow down the imagery – this will make it easier to correct mistakes. As the athletes get better at controlling their imagery they can speed up the images so they are doing imagery in real-time. If they still encounter problems, it might help them to start off imagining someone else skiing with correct technique. Once they are able to do this, they should find it easier to imagine themselves successfully executing the skill. If the athletes still have trouble, make the transition from the other person to themselves in stages. For example, first imagine their face on the other person’s body before trying to imagine themselves fully.

2.6. Skiing on paper – Get the athletes to draw a course on a piece of paper and then study and learn it. They should focus on using imagery to memorise the arrangement of “gates” and the spaces between them. Encourage them to trace the correct path with their finger. After a couple of minutes, ask them to close their eyes and trace the course with a pencil. See how well they learned the course and how much better they get with practice.

2.7. Imagery to learn a course – Create a mini-course using cones. Allow the athletes to walk through it with their eyes open and ask them to “learn” the course. Emphasise the use of imagery rather than counting the number of steps they need to take forwards and sideways between the cones. Once they feel they have memorised the course get them to walk through it with their eyes closed.

Dryland Training

Objective:
- Athletes use imagery to improve their performance during dryland (e.g., increase motivation, improve technique etc)

Guidelines for conducting the sessions:
1. At the start of the session get the athletes to reflect on their goals for the upcoming season. Remind them that in the performance profiling they said they needed to get stronger and fitter in order to reach their goals. Encourage the athletes to think back to the pictures they drew and recreate these images in their mind. Images of “bulging muscles”, “agile athletes”, “fast reaction times etc”. Use this to foster motivation for the session.

2. Ask athletes to imagine themselves achieving their season goals. What are the feelings (e.g., satisfaction, sense of accomplishment) associated with this? Get them psyched for this training session.

3. Use imagery to help improve technique and get into a positive mind-set during exercises. For example, to prevent leaning too far forward when hill running, imagine being pulled
upright by a rope coming out the top of your head. When feeling tired think of having “light legs” or running like a gazelle. Imagine that you are an arrow cutting through the air. If people pass you, imagine a rubber band being attached to the back of their shorts and have them pull you up. Or imagine there is a fishing hook attached to them and reel them in. When muscles are “burning” with fatigue, imagine “putting out the fire” and return to having fresh legs.
Week 6 — Positive Attitude

Background for Coaches

The difference between an athlete having a good or bad performance may only be to do with what she is thinking immediately prior to the performance. Thoughts can impact feelings that in turn affect actions. Consider why some races cause anxiety and choking whereas others do not. The physical challenge remains relatively unchanged, but the mental challenge can become greater depending on what the athlete is thinking prior to racing. How athletes appraise the situation can have a huge impact on her performance. Compare the athlete who sees the upcoming race as a challenge upon which she can evaluate how much she has improved, to the athlete who believes she must win the race in order to secure sponsorship, make it to Nationals, please her parents, or demonstrate her self-worth. The former will likely be excited at the prospect of the upcoming race, be able to focus on relevant performance cues, and execute a good run. Conversely, the second athlete will likely be focusing on task irrelevant cues (What if I crash? What if I don’t finish?), therefore be ill-prepared for the race, exceptionally nervous, and consequently not have a good run. Although the physical challenge is the same for both athletes the second athlete has made it into a much harder race for herself. It is imperative that athletes have their minds working for them and not against them — developing confidence and positive thinking can help.

Mental Training Session

Objectives:
- Athletes understand the importance of a positive and confident attitude
- Athletes learn a number of techniques for developing a positive and confident attitude

Materials needed:
- Blackboard and chalk (or flip chart, whiteboard etc)

Guidelines for conducting the session:
1. Through discussion, highlight the importance of having a positive and confident attitude. Ask athletes to think of a good performance and reflect on what they were thinking prior to that. How does that compare to their thinking prior to a poor performance? Why do they feel nervous before some races yet not before others? Highlight that the way they feel before performing is due to how they appraise the situation.

2. Brainstorm with the athletes on how they can work towards developing a positive and confident attitude. Make sure use of the following techniques is discussed:
   2.1. Goal setting – set realistic goals and recognise improvements (see week 2)
   2.2. Imagery – imagine successful past performances (see weeks 4&5)
   2.3. Highlight training – Encourage athletes to focus on highlights. Highlights can be any positive thing, regardless of how small. Research has indicated that when individuals
spend time thinking about and recording their highlights, they experience more enjoyment and have more positive self-perceptions. Ask the athletes to identify their highlights for the day so far – remember, it doesn’t matter how small they are so everyone should be able to identify at least 3.

2.4. Positive self-talk – Teach the athletes how to make their internal dialogue or self-talk more positive. Positive thinking does not mean convincing yourself that you can do something that you truly know you cannot, but instead it is having confidence in your ability and what you can do.

2.4.1. Self-talk has a tremendous impact on both performance and enjoyment. Self-talk can be both beneficial and a hindrance. Ask the athletes to brainstorm for positive ways in which self-talk can be used. Make sure the following are covered:

- skill learning and correction – technical cues (e.g., quick switch, low shoulders, hands forward)
- attention control – attentional cues (e.g., gate)
- creating mood/appropriate activation levels – “relax”, “calm”, “let’s go”
- source of motivation – “keep it up”
- building self-confidence – “I can do it”
- problem solving - “If _____ happens, I will _____”

2.4.2. However, quite often self-talk is negative. Again, this may act in either a helpful (“fire-up”) or harmful (“give-up”) way. Unfortunately, more often than not, negative thinking is deleterious to performance. It affects our ability to focus, undermines our confidence, creates tension, becomes self-fulfilling, causes us to ski for others rather than ourselves, and causes us to change tactics. Get the athletes to share some of their negative self-talk when skiing. Create a list on the left-hand side of the blackboard.

2.4.3. Ask the athletes to change this negative self-talk into positive self-talk (see table below for guidance on how to do this). Write this on the right-hand side of the blackboard. In future, when you hear athletes being negative ensure they replace their negative self-talk with a positive statement immediately.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Type of Negative Thinking</strong></th>
<th><strong>Cognitive Restructuring Techniques</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Don’ts”</td>
<td>Rephrase negative self-talk to positive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limitations</td>
<td>View it as a challenge - What do you have to do to make it happen?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Put downs</td>
<td>Confront it - What would you think if somebody else said this to you?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“What ifs”</td>
<td>Put it into perspective - What’s the worst that can happen?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prefix it with “So” and develop a plan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-doubt</td>
<td>Confront it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concern about what others think.</td>
<td>Change the perspective.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-performance preoccupations</td>
<td>Leave them behind. It may help to physically do this. For example, dig a hole in the snow at the top of the hill and fill it with your troubles until after the race/training. “Tree it” – physically touch a tree and transfer your worries.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Dryland Training**

**Objectives:**
- Athletes maintain a positive attitude throughout dryland, eliminating all negative self-talk
- Athletes develop their own cue words to help them push through mental barriers during dryland exercises
- Athletes focus on the positive aspects of the dryland session

**Guidelines for conducting the session:**
1. At the start of the session, remind the athletes about the importance of being positive. Encourage positive interactions between and among team-mates and coaches. Ensure you are a role model at all times. If you hear any comments ask the athlete to replace it with something positive immediately.

2. Before each exercise, get the athletes to identify a cue word or phrase that will help them push through any mental barriers they might face (e.g., I’m tired, this is hard, my muscles hurt) (NB – it doesn’t have to be a different cue for each exercise). When the going gets tough, the athletes can repeat this to themselves. They can even write it on their shoe to remind them. For example:
   - “push”, “let’s go”
   - count breaths or steps (switch focus from pain to something else)
   - “This is for Nationals” – what the athlete is working towards, to act as a motivator
   - “ripped” – something that sums up season goals, what the athlete is working towards
   - “Tiger Woods” – symbolises the attitude of never giving up
   - “Tomba” – symbolises great strength
   - “PIG” as in “With fitness you can be involved or committed. Just like with ham and eggs:
the chicken was involved but the pig was committed. You have to be like the pig” – Martina Navratilova.

3. At the end of the session ask each athlete to identify at least 2 highlights from the session.
Background for Coaches

When you tell an athlete to concentrate what *exactly* are you asking him to do? There are different types of concentration, or attentional style, and different tasks require the use of different attentional styles. Consider the type of focus a goalie in soccer needs compared to a golfer just about to execute a shot. The goalie needs to pay attention to his team-mates’ positions, the positions of the opposition, his own position in relation to the posts, and the ball. On the other hand, the golfer needs to clear her mind and pay attention only to a single swing thought.

Good performance is dependent on the ability to identify the attentional focus you need for a given task, get this focus, and then switch from this focus of attention to another as the situation demands. Athletes need to be able to focus on the relevant cues while ignoring distractions. Using the example above, it easy to see that a golfer will need a much narrower focus of attention than the goalie in order to perform well. There is also another difference in the type of focus required by these two athletes; that is, whether their attention is directed internally or externally. As the golfer imagines, or *visualises*, the shot she wants to play, her attention is focused inside her mind. Conversely, as the goalie scans the pitch watching the fast paced action remaining aware of all the players’ positions, his attention is directed externally.

Dr. Robert Nideffer distinguished between 4 types of attentional focus or attentional style. In ski racing, athletes need a different attentional focus for each aspect of race preparation as well as the race itself.

**Attentional styles:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Broad</th>
<th>Narrow</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>internal</strong></td>
<td><strong>external</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analyse (plan tactics)</td>
<td>assess (course inspection)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visualisation</td>
<td>Rehearse</td>
<td>Gates ahead</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Broad-external:** generally used to assess a situation
**Broad-internal:** generally used to analyse and plan performance strategy
**Narrow-external:** generally used to execute a specific skill
**Narrow-internal:** generally used to mentally rehearse (visualise) performance

Mental Training Session

**Objectives:**
- Athletes understand the different attentional styles and how these relate to performance
- Athletes will experience the different attentional styles and learn exercises to improve their focusing abilities within each attentional style
Materials needed:
- Blackboard and chalk (or flip chart, whiteboard etc)
- Pens/pencils
- Number grid (Appendix F)

Guidelines for conducting the session:
1. Introduce the concept of focus with the athletes.
   Useful questions to initiate discussion:
   - What does concentration/focus mean?
   - Why is concentration/focus important in skiing?
   - When do you find it most difficult to concentrate/focus?
   - When do you find it easiest to concentrate/focus?
   - When do you get distracted when you are skiing?
   - When does your mind wander when you are skiing?
   - When do you lose your concentration when you are skiing?
   - What are the things (i.e., performance cues) that you should be focusing on/paying attention to when you are skiing?

   It is important that the athletes understand good performance is dependent on focusing on relevant performance cues while ignoring distractions. Brainstorm for potential distracters and identify relevant performance cues. List these on the board. The table below provides some examples:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Distractions</th>
<th>Performance cues</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>People talking</td>
<td>Terrain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear of crashing</td>
<td>Line</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equipment</td>
<td>Cue word</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weather</td>
<td>Visualising technique</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Introduce the concept of attentional styles with the athletes and the relevance of this for skiing (see “background for coaches” section).

3. Guide the athletes through the exercises detailed below so they experience the 4 attentional styles. These exercises will also serve to improve their focusing skills within each of the attentional styles. Once you have done all 4 exercises, ask the athletes which they found easiest. Everyone has a favoured attentional style and finding out each athlete’s focusing strength may provide you with some insight on how their natural focusing ability may impact their skiing. For example, an athlete who finds it difficult to maintain a narrow-internal focus may not be able to remain focused well enough to engage in effective imagery prior to racing and therefore may suffer from not knowing the course well enough. Consequently, improving this skill through these exercises may help. Start off doing the exercises for about 45 seconds each and then extend the time as the athletes improve.

3.1. Broad-external – listen to all the sounds around you. Don’t get “stuck” on one sound. Keep switching your attention, paying attention to every sound you listen to.
3.2. Broad-internal – passive thinking: allow thoughts to enter and leave your mind without dwelling on them. Again, don’t get “stuck” on one idea or thought.

3.3. Narrow-internal – focus on your breathing. Count your breaths. Don’t become distracted by inner thoughts or things that are going on around you.

3.4. Narrow-external – focus on a small object e.g., pencil, mark on the floor, zipper. Concentrate on all the minute details and remain focused on that one object to the exclusion of everything else, including your thoughts.

4. Grid exercise – The purpose of this exercise is to improve scanning, memory, and concentration skills.

4.1. Provide each athlete with a pen/pencil and a number grid (give it to them face down and tell them not to look at it).

4.2. Explain the task: Starting at 01, the athletes must cross off as many numbers, in sequence, as they can in 1 minute.

4.3. When everyone is ready, tell them to turn over the grid and start the task. Time one minute, at the end of which the athletes must stop, turn over the grid, and remember which number they got to. Ask the athletes how they did.

4.4. Now get the athletes to find a partner. One of the pair repeats this exercise while the other tries to distract them by talking – no touching allowed! Start at a number a few higher than the highest number reached in the first exercise.

4.5. Repeat 4.4 with the other partner searching, again starting at a number a few higher than the one reached in the second exercise.

4.6. How did the distraction affect the athletes’ performances?

Dryland Training

Objectives:
- Athletes discover how their attentional style impacts their performance in dryland exercises
- Athletes develop their focusing skills within each of the attentional styles

Guidelines for conducting the session:
1. Encourage the athletes to shift between attentional styles throughout dryland training and determine which attentional style works best for them for each exercise. For example, during hill training the athletes can focus on their breathing or counting their steps (narrow-internal focus); the top of the hill (narrow-external focus); the other athletes and the scenery (broad-external focus); or what they did at school that day and what they are going to do after training (broad-internal focus). Which focus worked best for each exercise? Be sure to highlight how their attentional style can also affect their skiing.
**Week 8 — Prerun Focus**

**Background for Coaches**

In order to have a successful performance, athletes need to have an appropriate on-task prerun focus. An on-task focus requires athletes to pay attention to relevant performance cues while ignoring distractions. Identifying relevant cues and incorporating these into a prerun routine will facilitate the attainment of this focus. Furthermore, by providing the mind with something constructive to focus on (i.e., the routine) there is less chance of getting distracted. A prerun routine should be designed to prepare both the mind (e.g., on-task focus, confident attitude) and body (e.g., optimal activation, muscles warm and loose) for performance.

**Mental Training Session**

**Objectives:**
- Athletes develop attentional cues
- Athletes develop prerun and start area routines

**Materials needed:**
- Paper and pencils

**Guidelines for conducting the session:**

1.1. Attentional cues – Attentional cues facilitate the attainment of a process focus rather than an outcome focus. Ask the athletes how they want to feel (e.g., relaxed), act (e.g., confident), and ski (e.g., technically correct)? Then encourage them to develop cues that will prompt these things. The cues may be visual, verbal, or physical. Below are some examples, but let the athletes come up with their own as then they will be more meaningful. These can then be incorporated into their prerun routine.

1.1.1. Visual – image of correct technique; image of a lion at the top of the course signifying courage; image of a cottage in the country which is relaxing

1.1.2. Verbal – technical cue words (e.g., fast, smooth, forward); a phrase or a line from a favourite song which gets you psyched to ski

1.1.3. Physical – tapping poles together or adjusting goggles to signify a readiness to perform.

2. Performance routines – Before every run of every training session and race, the athletes should make it their primary objective to create the best conditions possible (i.e., be totally prepared both mentally and physically and have their equipment in the best possible condition) in order to maximise their chances of having a successful performance. The athletes need to identify what helps their performance and what hinders it. They should identify what level of activation they ski their best at and what type of focus works best for them. Once they have identified under what conditions they have their best performances, the goal is for them to recreate these conditions before every run. In order to ensure they
approach each run in a consistent manner and are adequately prepared get them to develop and use a prerun routine. The prerun routine will generally comprise mental (e.g., visualising the run, activation control) and behavioural (e.g., adjusting goggles, jumping up and down) components. By approaching each run in the same manner, the athletes are likely to feel more prepared because they are doing something that is familiar and systematic. This will also increase confidence and foster a positive attitude.

2.1.1. Pre-run routine – Provide the athletes with paper and pencils and help them develop their own prerun routine. Routines are individual and each athlete will have a different one but they should be encouraged to consider the following things when developing their routines:
- physical warm up – jump up and down, swing arms
- readying equipment – checking boot buckles, adjusting goggles
- activation check – do they need to psych themselves up (intense breathing) or calm down (deep breathing)?
- imagery – imaging correct technique and course
- focus cue – visual, verbal, or physical

To help the athletes develop usable routines, encourage them to stand up and “walk” through their routines, imagining they are about to ski down a course. The routines can be refined once the athletes start to use them during on-snow training. The ultimate goal is to create a prerun routine that will ultimately be used to prepare the athlete for racing.

2.1.2. Start area routine – For races, athletes should also have a start area routine. All athletes are different – some will want to be in the start area with plenty of time to spare, others will want to spend as little time there as possible. Some will need to focus on the upcoming race, others will want to avoid thinking about it until a few minutes before their start. Get the athletes to develop a start area routine and write it down. The following questions can be used to guide the process:
- What do you have to do to ensure you are physically and mentally prepared and that your equipment is in the best condition possible? How long prior to your race start do you want to be there? What do you have to do to prepare your skis? How can you best organise yourself so you know where everything is? How will you warm-up physically? (run, jump, stretch, and stay warm). How will you prepare mentally? (you should be checking your activation level, ensuring you have a focus that works for you, mentally rehearsing the course, and creating a positive and confident attitude). If it helps you to switch off from skiing make sure you know what you are going to switch your focus to and when you are going to switch it back to skiing. Make sure you know your race plan. Again, go over it in your mind if necessary (e.g., first few gates – explode from the start; in course – focus on flow and rhythm; let it go the last few gates – be strong, push)

**Dryland Training**

**Objective:**
- Athletes develop plans to maintain an on-task focus
**Guidelines for conducting the session:**

1. Highlight the exercises for the session and ask the group to identify the relevant performance cues (e.g., technical/form cues, motivating self-talk). Then, brainstorm for potential distractions (e.g., fatigue, talking to team-mates, thinking about homework, “give-up” self-talk). For each potential distraction, ask the group to come up with a number of ways they can regain an on-task focus (e.g., attentional cues, deep breath, imagery, switch their focus from their pain to their breathing or the number of reps they are doing).

2. During the session encourage the athletes to implement the tools they have learned so far to help them maintain an on-task focus for the session.
Week 9 — Training and Race Plans

Background for Coaches

Training and race plans guide overall mental, physical, and equipment preparation for training and racing. By having a plan athletes will be less likely to forget an aspect of preparation. Furthermore, doing the same thing before every training session and race will make it more familiar and therefore the athletes are likely to be less nervous and more confident.

Mental Training Session

Objective:
• Athletes develop training and race plans

Materials needed:
• Pencils
• Training plan outline (Appendix G)
• Race plan outline (Appendix H)
• Example of completed training plan (Appendix I)

Guidelines for conducting the session:
1. Highlight the importance of developing training and racing plans (to ensure mental, physical, and equipment preparation).

2. Provide athletes with the training and race plan handouts and guide them in the development of their individualised plans. For each component of the plan, athletes should consider what they need to do to prepare their equipment as well as to ensure they are physically and mentally prepared.

Dryland Training

As for week 3
Background for Coaches

Evaluation is critical for improvement and athletes should be encouraged to evaluate their own performances rather than relying on what their coaches say. Make evaluation an integral part of training so athletes are encouraged to evaluate their performance on a consistent basis and are able to monitor their progress. Evaluation profiling is a quick and effective method you can use to evaluate a race or training session. The process of developing an evaluation profile is basically the same as that for developing a performance profile (week 1). In addition to developing the profile, athletes should document the date and site of the training or race, the type of training (e.g., 20% free skiing, 30% drills, 50% gates - slalom) or race (GS), and then sum up the session/race in their own words (conditions, how did they feel it went, how did they perform, what was their race plan, how did they feel during training/going into race etc). This can be used to plan future training sessions and identify what type of race preparation works and what doesn’t. By comparing evaluation profiles over time you can get some valuable insight into how aspects of preparation and performance are related.

Mental Training Session

Objective:
• Athletes develop individualised evaluation tools for training and racing

Materials needed:
• Pencils
• Blackboard and chalk (or flip chart, whiteboard etc)
• Blank evaluation profiles (Appendix J)
• Example of completed evaluation profile (Appendix K)

Guidelines for conducting the session:
1. Highlight the importance of evaluation.
2. As a team, brainstorm for the most important skills, qualities, or characteristics you need for a successful race/training session. Consider all aspects of performance (i.e., physical, mental, technical, and tactical). List these on the blackboard.
3. Ask the athletes to pick the 10 skills, qualities, or characteristics that they believe will contribute most to a successful race/training session for them. You may want the athletes to create 2 separate evaluation tools – one for racing, one for training. Provide the athletes with a blank evaluation profile and ask them to write these qualities around the outside of the profile.
4. On a scale of 0-10 (10 is the highest level), ask the athletes to rate where they would like to be on each of these constructs for a race/training session and mark this on the profile (dark line, Appendix K). Note that because they have already identified these qualities as important, most ratings will probably be 9s and 10s.
5. Collect the evaluation tools and make copies for the athletes to keep in their training files or journals to use to evaluate their training and racing.

6. Following training and racing the athletes should rate, on a scale of 0-10 (10 is the highest level), their performance on each of the constructs and mark this on the profile (shaded area, Appendix K). They should also document the date and site of the training or race, the type of training (e.g., 20% free skiing, 30% drills, 50% gates - slalom) or race (GS), and then sum up the session/race in their own words.

7. Looking at the discrepancies between the ideal position (dark line, Appendix K) and where they evaluated their position to be from that day’s training or racing (shaded area, Appendix K) you can see areas that need to be improved.

8. By comparing evaluation profiles over time you can get some valuable insight into how aspects of preparation and performance are related.

**Dryland Training**

As for weeks 4&5

**On-Snow Training**

1. Week 10 is the first week of on-snow training. Establish the tone and protocol you want right from the start. How do you want the athletes to behave? What attitude do you require from them? Part of your job as a coach, besides performance coaching, is to develop the athletes’ personal and social skills. You should promote athlete autonomy and encourage athletes to take an active role in their learning. By developing autonomy, you will create independent, self-directed, decision-making, intrinsically motivated individuals who can develop and grow in a constructive regard. Five ways to promote athlete autonomy are to: promote reflection and self-directed learning; involve athletes in the decision-making process; give the athletes responsibility for quality training; make goal setting a collaborative effort between coach and athlete; and engage athletes in the evaluation process. Further information on promoting athlete autonomy can be found at http://members.rogers.com/estodel/autonomy.htm.

2. Develop a warm-up routine with the athletes so when they arrive on the hill they know what they have to do to have an effective warm-up while you are organising the training, setting gates etc.

3. At the end of the training session, provide each athlete with a copy of the evaluation tool they created and ask them to evaluate their day’s training. The completed evaluations should be kept together as a training record and used to identify the athletes’ strengths and weaknesses and monitor their progress. Give the athletes the opportunity to adjust their evaluation sheets if necessary. Evaluations should be completed after every training session and race. Get the athletes into the habit of doing this from the beginning of the season.
PART II
Weeks 11-20

On-Snow Training
WEEK 11 – INTRODUCING MENTAL SKILLS ON-SNOW

During the first 10 weeks of this program athletes were taught the basic mental skills: goal setting, activation control, imagery, thought control, and attentional control. Now athletes must start to integrate these skills into their on-snow training. A simple way to do this is to get them into the habit of asking themselves 5 key questions prior to each run. At first, you may need to stand at the top of the run and direct the questions to them. If time is an issue, and you can’t ask all the athletes all the questions, ask different athletes different questions. Remember the goal is to promote athlete autonomy and encourage the athletes to think for themselves and ensure they are mentally and physically prepared before each run by asking themselves:

1. What is my **goal** for this run? (e.g., be aggressive, run a straighter line)
2. What is my **focus** for this run? (e.g., keep my arms in front)
3. Can I **see** myself doing it? (use imagery to mentally practice what you want to achieve)
4. Am I at my optimal **activation** level? (Am I too psyched up? Too relaxed?)
5. Am I **committed** to making this run? (Will I give it 100% and fight all the way down?)
WEEK 12 – PRE-CHRISTMAS TRAINING CAMP

Objectives:
- Set goals for the camp
- Evaluate training
- Evaluate technical, tactical, and mental skills
- Set/adjust goals for development of technical, tactical, and mental skills
- Develop relaxation skills
- Develop imagery skills
- Develop thought control skills

Evening Mental Training Sessions

Set goals for the camp
- Each athlete should set goals for the camp. Provide them with goal setting sheets and remind them of the principles for effective goal setting (see week 2). Encourage them to set technical, tactical, and mental goals for the camp. Be available for questions during this process and guide the athletes in setting realistic yet challenging goals. During the camp, strive to help the athletes reach their goals.
- Each night, or morning before going to the hill, ask the athletes to identify one thing they are going to do that day in order to get closer to achieving their goals.

Evaluate training
- Use evaluation profiling at the end of each day to evaluate the training.

Evaluate technical, tactical, and mental skills
- Use performance profiling (see week 1 for guidelines) to evaluate the athletes’ technical, tactical, and mental skills. Compare this profile to the ones created in week 1.
- Use a questionnaire to evaluate the level of the athletes’ technical, tactical, and mental skills
- And/or discuss the level of technical, tactical, and mental skills with the athletes individually

Set/adjust goals for the development of technical, tactical, and mental skills
- Based on the evaluation of their technical, tactical, and mental skills, get the athletes to revisit the goals they set at the start of fall and amend them as required. If necessary, provide them with new copies of the goal setting handout.

Develop relaxation skills
- Choose a relaxation exercise to guide the athletes through (avoid doing this right after dinner)
  – Abdominal breathing (week 3)
  – Progressive muscle relaxation (week 3)

Develop imagery skills
- Show video from the day’s skiing and ask the athletes to use imagery to replay in their mind what they just saw on TV. Remind them to use all their senses when doing imagery. If they made a mistake while skiing, ask the athletes to correct the mistake mentally and then
imagine themselves skiing that run correctly. (See the imagery section in “Mental Skill Development” below for more detailed guidelines.)

**On-snow**

Continue to develop the athletes’ basic mental skills (i.e., relaxation, imagery, and thought control) by integrating mental skills exercises into the on-snow training. The following section on “Mental Skill Development” provides a number of examples how this can be done. Be imaginative and create your own mental training drills and exercises as well.
WEEKS 13, 14, 17-20 – MENTAL SKILL DEVELOPMENT

During Part I of this mental training program, the basic mental skills were introduced. In week 11 the athletes started to get used to the idea of integrating mental skills into their on-snow training by thinking of 5 key prerun questions. Now it is time for the athletes to develop these skills further, integrate them into their skiing, and start to recognise how they can help their performance. Include mental training and mental skill development in all aspects of the athletes’ training. Use the terms frequently so the athletes become more and more familiar with them.

At this time, focus on developing three basic mental skills: activation control, imagery, and thought control. Below are a number of mental training exercises that can be seamlessly integrated into technical and tactical training. You may want to focus on developing a specific skill in each training session or try to integrate all of them. Be imaginative – these are only a few examples.

PART I – ACTIVATION CONTROL

- Finding the zone – Ask athletes to vary their activation level before each run to find the level of activation they ski best at. Athletes can use tools such as deep breathing, progressive muscle relaxation, cue words, intense breathing, physical movement, and music to vary the levels.

- Getting in the zone – Once the athletes have identified the activation level they ski best at, instruct them to control their activation so they are at that optimal level before each run. Once they are able to do this in a non-stressful training environment, increase the pressure and get the athletes to create that same optimal level of activation. You can increase pressure by simulating a race, setting a harder course etc. Towards the end of the day, athletes may be getting tired and will probably need to increase, rather than decrease, their activation level in order to get into the optimal zone.

- Skiing outside the zone – To highlight the importance of being in the optimal activation zone, get athletes to ski while they are out of their zone. Help them get really relaxed before a run, using some form of relaxation exercise, or really tense, by asking them to contract all the muscles in their body, and then get them to ski. They will find that being overly relaxed or overly tense will affect their co-ordination and skiing performance.

- Speed work – Speed training is often nerve inducing for skiers. When doing speed work, encourage athletes to use the activation control skills they have developed. Deep breathing, switching focus, imagery, and the prerun routine will help control nerves before a fast run.

PART II – IMAGERY

- Mental practice/rehearsal of skills – Athletes should be engaging in quality imagery of correct technique as often as possible in order to ingrain what they are working towards. Encourage athletes to do imagery in the lodge before going out onto the hill in the morning and after lunch – arranging a group imagery session may help. Lift rides also provide ample
time for athletes to engage in imagery between runs. You can also do imagery as a group at the top of a run.

- Video – When you video the athletes skiing, use the playback sessions as an opportunity for them to develop their imagery skills. Find a run where the athlete skied well. Play it for them and ask them to image the run, or section of the run, in their mind. Ensure they emphasise how the movement feels. In sections where they did not ski as well, provide feedback and then ask them to use imagery to imagine themselves skiing that section of the course incorporating the change you suggested. Do not move on until they are able to do this correctly. If they have trouble, tell them to imagine someone else (e.g., their favourite ski racer, coach, team-mate) skiing that section correctly. Once they are able to do this, they should find it easier to imagine themselves successfully executing the skill. If the athletes still have trouble, make the transition from the other person to themselves in stages. For example, first imagine their face on the other person’s body before trying to imagine themselves fully.

- Mental practice when injured – Mental imagery can be used as a means of practice when athletes are injured or too fatigued to physically practice. World Cup racers have reported that using imagery when they were injured allowed them to return to racing at a level close to the one they were at before injury.

- Imagine skiing gates while free skiing – “I started to free ski more consciously, controlling all of my movements. I set imaginary gates in front of myself. I tried to feel all the movements during free skiing” ~ Marc Girardelli

- Ski yesterday’s course – [This exercise can only be done if you are skiing the same run as the previous day]. After a couple of warm-up runs, ask the athletes to recall the previous day’s course. Get them to use imagery to imagine themselves skiing the course successfully at least 3 times from top to bottom. Once they have done this, get them to ski the same run pretending they are in the previous day’s course, imagining the gates are there but without them actually being set.

- Imagery before drills and exercises – After explaining a drill to the athletes ask them to imagine the correct position of their bodies at each point in the drill before they actually do it. Encourage them to emphasise the feeling of their body position and changes in rhythm in their imagery.

- Use images to help with technique – Rather than using imagery to imagine what the correct technique looks like, use images as analogies to illustrate what you want the athlete to do or feel. For example, in the “hip lift” drill, when you are emphasising the importance of feeling “tall” or “lifting” ask the athletes to imagine they have a rope coming out the top of their head that is being pulled upwards.

- Inspection – Set training gates and teach the athletes how to inspect the course while incorporating imagery into the inspection. Once they have figured out what line they need to take, ask them to then imagine themselves skiing that line. How will the gates look as they
approach them? Encourage the athletes to continue using imagery when they ride up the lift to ensure they really know the course and how they are going to ski it. By encouraging this in training, it will become second nature in races.

- Inspection II – The “GS line drill” helps athletes who run too straight or direct at the gate by placing a stubbie a foot outside the gate thereby encouraging athletes to leave room for their body. After the athletes ski this a couple of times and have a better understanding of how to approach the gate with the right line, ask them to use imagery to imagine how this looks as they are skiing it. By repeating this mentally they will start to ingrain when they should start their turn.

- Ski next to the course – Once the athletes have inspected the course and learned it, ask them to ski next to the course (not actually in the gates) imagining they are skiing through the gates.

PART III — THOUGHT CONTROL

- Attentional cues – Encourage the use of visual, verbal, and physical attention cues (see week 8).

- Deep breath – The easiest way to refocus after a distraction is to take a deep breath and then use a focus cue to regain focus. If athletes get mad, upset, frustrated etc. tell them to take a deep breath and provide them with a relevant cue to refocus on.

- “Parking” – If athletes have negative thoughts or worries teach them to “park” them for the duration of a run or training or forever. This activity requires the athletes to leave or “park” any negative feelings, worries, thoughts, and anxieties while they are performing. Encourage the athletes to develop their own form of “parking” – they may want to “tree” their feelings (go over to a tree and touch it, leaving all these feelings in the tree) or bury their feelings (dig a hole in the snow at the top of the run and pour in all the negative feelings and then cover them up). By physically going through the actions of “parking”, athletes will be more likely to leave these feelings behind.

- Thought stopping – Teach the athletes to immediately imagine a big red stop sign or a red flashing light or say “STOP” to themselves anytime they say or think something negative. This will interrupt the negative thought. The athletes should then replace the negative word or phrase with a positive statement. For example, change “I can’t do this” to “I can do this”; “I don’t want to do this” to “I’m going to give this my best effort”; “I suck” to “I’m going to work hard to get better”. Whenever you hear them talk negatively during training make sure they do this exercise and replace the negative thought with a positive one.

- Positive expectancy – Very often, what you expect is what you get. Expectations can lead to feelings of confidence, which will help performance, or they may be perceived as a form of pressure, which will create feelings of anxiety and tension and negatively affect performance. In order to create positive, performance enhancing expectations ask the athletes to recreate feelings and images of previous occasions when they have succeeded. This will help build
confidence and can be used to create positive expectations for upcoming performances/skill mastery.

- Highlight training – Encourage the athletes to look for highlights throughout the day. By always looking for the positive a positive attitude will ensue.

- Technical cues for skill learning and correction – Provide the athletes with a single word or phrase to focus on to help them execute the skill correctly (e.g., shin pressure, hands forward).

- Ask the 5 basic focusing questions – At the top of the run ask the athletes:
  1. What is my goal for this run? (e.g., be aggressive, run a straighter line)
  2. What is my focus for this run? (e.g., keep my arms in front)
  3. Can I see myself doing it? (use imagery to mentally practice what you want to achieve)
  4. Am I at my optimal activation level? (Am I too psyched up? Too relaxed?)
  5. Am I committed to making this run? (Will I give it 100% and fight all the way down?)

- Prerun routine – Remind the athletes to use their prerun routine before every run.

- Shifting sounds – Gather as a group in a safe spot, partway down a run. Get the athletes to focus on a constant sound (e.g., wind in the trees, whirr of the lift, sound of snow makers) then ask them to shift their focus from this sound to another (e.g., a skier skiing past them). Ask them to follow this skier down the hill in their mind and when they can’t hear them any longer return their focus to the original sound. Alternatively, ask the athletes to switch between the sounds every 15-20 seconds. You can also ask the athletes to switch between using different senses. For example, shift from sounds to sights (e.g., bark of a tree, pattern of snow) and back to sounds again.

- Focusing on the move – While skiing ask the athletes to focus on the sound of their skis and how the sound changes as they make their turns. Then ask them to switch their focus to the feel of their legs, then the feel of their arms, to the sound of their breathing, to their internal voice saying “smooth, relaxed”.

- Shifting attentional styles – Certain technical drills (e.g., synchronised skiing, follow the leader, and draw a line) promote the development of attention shifting. In order to successfully do the drill, athletes must switch between an internal and external focus as required.
WEEKS 15&16 – CHRISTMAS TRAINING CAMP

Objectives:
• Set goals for the camp
• Evaluate training
• Season-to-date evaluation
• Refine prerun routine
• Develop a refocusing plan
• Continue to develop relaxation skills
• Continue to develop imagery skills
• Continue to develop thought control skills

Evening Mental Training Sessions

Set goals for the camp
➢ Each athlete should set goals for the camp. Provide them with goal setting sheets and remind them of the principles for effective goal setting (see week 2). Encourage them to set technical, tactical, and mental goals for the camp. Be available for questions during this process and guide the athletes in setting realistic yet challenging goals. During the camp, strive to help the athletes reach their goals.
➢ Each night, or morning before going to the hill, ask the athletes to identify one thing they are going to do that day in order to get closer to achieving their goals.

Evaluate training
➢ Use evaluation profiling at the end of each day to evaluate the training.

Season-to-date evaluation
➢ Ask athletes to look at the evaluation profiles they completed over the last 5-6 weeks and examine them for patterns. Are there certain skills that seem to correlate with good performance? And poor performance? Are there areas in which the athlete is particular weak and should focus on improving? Encourage the athletes to recognise the areas within which they have improved over time.

Develop a refocusing plan
Despite preparing adequately and developing routines, athletes are still likely to become distracted and will need to refocus. Help them develop refocusing plans:
➢ Minimising distractions – Ask the athletes to identify the key things that distract them during training and races and brainstorm for the things that might distract them during training and racing. Then, get them to make a plan in order to minimise these distractions. The athletes should have a strategy so if X happens, they do Y. If Y doesn’t work, they do Z. Encourage the athletes to develop cue words that will help remind them of their plan.
➢ Critical moments – Some athletes have a tendency to repeat certain negative behaviours (e.g., skiing out at the last gate, not starting the run aggressively). Identify the potential causes of the behaviour and develop a plan to eliminate the problem.
Refocusing after a bad run – Not all races will go well and if an athlete has a bad first run they need to be able to refocus for their second run. Similarly, if they are racing over consecutive days they should have a plan for how to put the previous day’s performance behind them. Again, devising a plan ahead of time documenting what to do between runs or days will help the athlete put the bad race into perspective and come to the next run with a positive focus.

Develop relaxation skills
- Choose a relaxation exercise to guide the athletes through (avoid doing it right after dinner)
  - Abdominal breathing (week 3)
  - Progressive muscle relaxation (week 3)

Develop imagery skills
- Show video from the day’s skiing and ask the athletes to use imagery to replay in their mind what they just saw on TV. Remind them to use all their senses when doing imagery. If they made a mistake while skiing, ask the athletes to correct the mistake mentally and then imagine themselves skiing that run correctly. (See the imagery section in “Mental Skill Development” below for more detailed guidelines.)

On-Snow

Refine prerun routine
- Dedicate at least half a day towards the beginning of the camp to work on the athletes’ prerun routines.
  1. Allow the athletes to warm-up.
  2. At the bottom of the hill ask the athletes to mentally go through their prerun routine and refine it if it doesn’t feel right. Ensure they have included the relevant skills and techniques to prepare them mentally and physically for their run and the order in which to do them.
  3. At the top of the run place two gates/bamboo poles next to each to act as a starting gate. Each athlete should go through their routine in the start gate before starting the run. Ensure that each athlete has a focus for the run (e.g., feel pressure on the shins, hands forward etc).
  4. As the athletes return to the top of the run discuss with them how their prerun routine worked for them. Routines should be refined as necessary in order to help the athletes prepare for their upcoming run.
- Encourage athletes to use their routine before EVERY run. Throughout training ask them if they are using it, how it helps them, what their routine is etc. The more you talk about it, the more likely it will be that the athletes use it.
- Create a race simulation so athletes can practice using their prerun routine in race conditions.

Implement and refine the refocusing plan
- Athletes need to become familiar with their refocusing plans so they implement them naturally when necessary. Remind athletes to use their refocusing plan in every instance they become distracted and/or lose focus. The plans should be evaluated and refined as necessary.
Create situations that might distract athletes or cause them to deviate from their routine in order to provide them with the opportunity of using their refocusing plan.

Continue to develop basic mental skills
- Integrate mental skills exercises designed to develop activation control, imagery, and thought control skills into the on-snow training. The previous section on “Mental Skill Development” provides a number of examples how this can be done. Be imaginative and create your own mental training drills and exercises as well.
PART III
Weeks 21-27

Provincial & National Race Series:
Preparation and Racing
WEEKS 21-23 — RACE PREPARATION

The three weeks leading up to Provincials should focus on race preparation. Athletes should be training as they intend to race – going hard from the start and not easing up until they have crossed the finish line. It is critical that athletes develop and ingrain effective race skills and habits. By this stage athletes should have developed their basic mental skills and be using them during training and racing. Training and race plans, along with prerun (start gate) and start area routines, should be second nature to the athletes now. Plans and routines should be tried and tested and have been refined to meet the athletes’ needs. Now is the time to put the season’s work to the test and start to train under more race-like conditions.

Provide many opportunities for race simulation so athletes are able to evaluate their level of performance (both mentally and technically) under pressure conditions. This process may reveal weaknesses that can be worked on over the next few weeks leading up to Provincials. Revisit relevant sections in this guide so you can help the athletes further develop their mental skills as necessary. Furthermore, race simulations may reveal more potential distractions and allow athletes to develop refocusing plans and coping strategies to deal with them.

Ideas for race simulation

- Strip down to GS suits
- Wear bibs
- Draw “race” order out of a hat
- Use stopwatches to time runs
- Make the first run in gates count
- Set courses on all types of terrain in all conditions
- Set different styles of course (e.g., fast, turny, lots of rhythm changes etc)
- Insist athletes finish the course – if they crash or ski out the course make them hike back up to the gate and finish the course
- Get the athletes to use imagery to create certain situations (e.g., imagining they had a great first run, imagining they had a poor first run, imagining there is a delay in the course before their turn)
- To develop mental and physical stamina, “race” more race runs consecutively than athletes have to in competition
- Set for success to develop confidence – you want positive and confident athletes going into the race series
Racing guidelines for athletes

- Remember that racing is FUN!!
- Do not change anything leading up to the race series
- Rest. Rest. Rest.
- Prepare fully – do not leave anything to chance
- Be flexible and prepared to adapt to changes
- Be confident – write positive statements about yourself and your ability and stick them up around your room
- Warm-up as usual, follow your race plan, and adhere to your prerun routine
- Commit to the race
- Trust your ability
- Use the mental skills you’ve developed over the year to control your nerves/activation level, help you learn the course, ensure you have an appropriate on-task focus prior to your run, and go out there, have some fun, and ski hard!
- Evaluate your runs at the end of the day and plan for the next day’s race
- If you had a bad day, put it into perspective, refocus, and remind yourself of your race plan for the next day
Weeks 25-26 – Evaluation and Refinement

Athletes have two weeks between the Provincials and Nationals to fine-tune their skills and work on eliminating their weaknesses. Continue with occasional race simulations and allow plenty of opportunities for further skill development.

Immediately after the Provincials athletes should conduct a thorough evaluation of the race series and try to extract as many lessons as they can that will help them at the National Championships. Athletes should also look back over the evaluation profiles they created during the series.

Use the following questions to guide the evaluation:

- What went well? What did you do that worked?
- What could be improved for the upcoming National Championships?
- What do you have to do in the next two weeks to ensure you are fully prepared for Nationals?
- Did you stick to your race plan? Did it work?
- Did you use your prerun routine? Was it effective in preparing you physically and mentally for each run?
- Were you nervous? If so, were you able to deal with it? What strategies did you use? Were they effective?
- Did you feel you knew the courses well before you raced them?
- Did you need to refocus? Were you able to do that effectively? If so, how? If not, what could you do in the future that would be more effective?
Week 27 – National Championships

Racing guidelines for athletes
➢ Remember that racing is FUN!!
➢ Do not change anything leading up to the race series
➢ Rest. Rest. Rest.
➢ Prepare fully – do not leave anything to chance
➢ Be flexible and prepared to adapt to changes
➢ Be confident – write positive statements about yourself and your ability and stick them up around your room
➢ Warm-up as usual, follow your race plan, and adhere to your prerun routine
➢ Commit to the race
➢ Trust your ability
➢ Use the mental skills you’ve developed over the year to control your nerves/activation level, help you learn the course, ensure you have an appropriate on-task focus prior to your run, and go out there, have some fun, and ski hard!
➢ Evaluate your runs at the end of the day and plan for the next day’s race
➢ If you had a bad day, put it into perspective, refocus, and remind yourself of your race plan for the next day
PART IV
Week 28

Season Evaluation
Week 28 – Season Evaluation

Ensure you wrap-up the end of the season.

Athletes should evaluate the season and revisit their goals to see which they achieved, which they didn’t. They should be encouraged to feel pride in their achievements. If athletes did not achieve all their goals they should spend some time reflecting why.

Athletes should set goals for the summer, regardless of whether they are ski related or not.
Appendix A - Examples of Skiers’ Illustrations of Their Goals
BEING POSITIVE  
BEING STRONG

85%  
GOODSCHOOL MARKS

WORK HARD

HAPPY = NO FIGHTS

FINISHING EVERY RUN

LOTS OF SLEEP

SHARP SKILLS
Appendix B - Blank Performance Profile
Appendix C - Completed Performance Profile
Appendix D - Goal Setting Handout

Goals should be:
- Important to you
- Realistic
- Challenging
- Within your control
- Specific
- Measurable
- Positive

Don’t forget to include target dates for completion of your goals

1. *Dream goal (10 years)* – What is your dream goal? What could be possible in the long term if you stretch all your limits?

2. *Long-term goal (3 years)* – What is your long-term goal? What do you want from ski racing in 3 years?

3. *Season goals:*
   - Physical
   - Technical
   - Tactical
   - Mental
   - Enjoyment
Season Goal (Physical): ________________________________
Season Goal (Technical): _________________________________
Season Goal (Tactical): ________________________________
Season Goal (Mental): ________________________________
Season Goal (Enjoyment): ______________________________
4. If you do not meet your set out goals, daily and seasonal, on a scale of 1 to 10, how satisfied will you be?

Completely Satisfied 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Completely Dissatisfied

5. Not all goals set this season will be necessarily achieved - how do you plan to deal with unachieved goals?

6. What do you think you can do as a member of the team to increase team spirit?
Season Goal (Mental): *Use a pre-run routine every race and training run*

- **October 1st**: Be able to monitor and control my activation level.
  - 7/9 - be able to recognise different levels of tension in my body.
  - 15/9 - learn different ways to control activation.
  - 1/10 - engage in relaxation exercises every night before bed.
- **November 1st**: Develop imagery skills so I am able to control the images I create.
- **December 1st**: Be aware of my internal dialogue and be able to control the negative thoughts.
- **December 15th**: Develop a pre-run routine.
- **January 1st**: Use the routine on-snow during training and racing. Refine as necessary.
- **March 1st**: Use my pre-run routine every race and training run.
### Appendix F - Number Grid

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Appendix G - Training Plan

Don’t forget to consider mental, physical and equipment preparation for each section of the plan

Night before
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•
•

Morning before leaving home
•
•
•

Travel
•
•
•

Warm-up
•
•
•

Free skiing
•
•
•

Top of the run
•
•
•

Lift rides in-between runs
•
•
•

End of training
•
•
•
Appendix H - Race Plan

Don’t forget to consider mental, physical and equipment preparation for each section of the plan.

Night before
•
•
•

Morning before leaving home
•
•
•

Travel
•
•
•

Warm-up
•
•
•

Inspection
•
•
•

Start area
•
•
•

Start gate
•
•
•

In-between runs
•
•

End of race day
•
Appendix I - Example of Completed Training Plan

Don’t forget to consider mental, physical and equipment preparation for each section of the plan

Night before
- Progressive Muscle Relaxation followed by imagery of myself skiing gates
- Easy 20 minute run/bike followed by 10 minutes of stretching
- Wax and sharpen skis
- Pack for next day’s training

Morning before leaving home
- Get up 1 hour before leaving for hill
- Bagel and OJ for breakfast

Travel
- Listen to favourite upbeat music
- 5 minutes before arriving - imagery of self skiing, focus on feel of correct movement

Warm-up
- 5 minutes of stretching, jumping, and short sprints up hill before putting on skis

Free skiing
- Start with 2 runs to get the feel of the snow and loosen up. Start with GS turns, finish run with SL.
- Focus on technical cues coach gave me last session - hands forward, wide stance
- 100% focus on every run - at top ask myself, “what is my goal for this run?”

Top of the run
- Review course at least twice using imagery
- Remind myself of my goal for this run
- Go through my prerun routine

Lift rides in-between runs
- Evaluate last run and review coaches’ comments
- Imagine self skiing next run incorporating coaches’ feedback - 5 times
- Set goal for next run

End of training
- Complete training evaluation profile
Appendix J - Evaluation Profile

Summary of Race/Training Session

Evaluation Profiling Guidelines
1. Identify the 10 most important skills, qualities, or characteristics you need for a successful race/training session. Consider all aspects of performance (i.e., physical, mental, technical, and tactical [see attached list of ‘areas for evaluation’ for ideas].
2. Write these around the outside of the “web”.
3. On a scale of 0-10 (10 is the highest level), rate where you would like to be on each of these constructs for every race/training session – mark these as solid lines on the web.
4. On a scale of 0-10 (10 is the highest level), evaluate where you were for the race/training session you are evaluating – shade this area.
5. Look at the discrepancies between the line and the shaded area of your profile to identify your strengths and weaknesses.
6. In areas you were weak, plan how you will improve on this for the next race/training session.
7. Look back over past evaluations. Can you see any relationships between qualities in the profile? What does this tell you?
Appendix K - Example of Completed Evaluation Profile

Evaluating Performance with Performance Profiling

Date: 8/3/01
Hill: MONT CASCADAS
Training: N/A
Race: GS

Summary of Race/Training Session
Had a good race overall - finished 5th.
Inspection was good - had lots of time so was able to improve with coach; then a few times on my own. Used imagery on lift to review key sections of the course.
Very rushed in start area as lift stopped for ages before 2nd run. Had to get set on quickly & was hurried into start gate - I hate that. Was able to focus on run as soon as I was in start gate & went thru my routine with no problems. Felt confident because of yesterday's training.
Stood well technically - both runs kept a good line.

Evaluation Profiling Guidelines
1. Identify the 10 most important skills, qualities, or characteristics you need for a successful race/training session. Consider all aspects of performance (i.e., physical, mental, technical, and tactical [see attached list of “areas for evaluation” for ideas].
2. Write these around the outside of the “web”.
3. On a scale of 0-10 (10 is the highest level), rate where you would like to be on each of these constructs for every race/training session – mark these as solid lines on the web.
4. On a scale of 0-10 (10 is the highest level), evaluate where you were for the race/training session you are evaluating – shade this area.
5. Look at the discrepancies between the line and the shaded area of your profile to identify your strengths and weaknesses.
6. In areas you were weak, plan how you will improve on this for the next race/training session.
7. Look back over past evaluations. Can you see any relationships between qualities in the profile? What does this tell you?