

Bristol Mountain Race Club

Parent Information Guide

1. Introduction

Bristol Mountain Race Club (BMRC, www.bristolraceteam.org), founded in 1965 by several former Austrian National Ski Team members turned Bristol Mountain Ski School staff along with some enthusiastic Rochester families, is one of the first local race clubs in New York State. Club level racing in United States Ski and Snowboard Association (USSA) sanctioned races represents the grassroots efforts in our country's training and development of world champions. BMRC racers participate in local, regional, and national level competitions and have gone on to win at the state level, compete in the Junior Olympics, and even make the U.S. Olympic Team!

BMRC views ski racing not only as a competitive sport, but as a medium through which children can augment their overall development (physical, mental, emotional, social), and learn a variety of life-skills that will serve them well and help them meet their overall life goals. Racing is a family sport requiring a time commitment by parents which ultimately helps their child's growth.

This handbook is intended to be a reference for families of ski racers in the BMRC to help them understand the background organization in ski racing as well as to get through the day to day tasks of ski racing from the beginning to the end of the season.

2. Ski Racing Organizational Structure

FIS (www.fis-ski.com) (Worldwide events - World Cup, Olympics)

USSA (www.ussa.org) (U.S. regional, National Championships)

Western Region

Rocky/Central Region

Eastern Region

NYSSRA (www.nyssra.org) (New York State)

East

Councils:

Mountain

Rip Van Winkle

Adirondack

West

Councils:

Niagara Frontier

Central

Genesee Valley

Hunt Hollow (Central for Kandahar)

Swain

Brantling (Central for Kandahar)

Bristol Mountain Race Club (www.bristolraceteam.org)

Definitions

FIS (Federation Internationale de Ski) 110 National Ski Associations comprise the membership of the FIS. Worldwide events including World Cup races and the Olympics are run by FIS.

USSA (United States Ski and Snowboard Association) is a member of FIS and is the overseeing organization of ski racing in the United States. All races that BMRC participates in come under the organization of USSA and all members of the BMRC must become a member of USSA. The membership is good for a year and must be renewed annually. A USSA membership number is assigned when a skier first joins the organization and does not change as long as the skier retains the membership.

NYSSRA (New York State Ski Racing Association) is the official governing body for competition in New York for the Eastern Region of the USSA. All members of BMRC must become a member of NYSSRA. Membership in NYSSRA is good for one year and must be renewed annually.

3. Racing Age Levels and Groupings

Racers are divided into age groups based on their age on December 31st of the race year (race season). See <https://bristolraceteam.org/levels> and the Competition Guide at <http://www.nyssra.org>

4. Types of Races

In all types of races, the racer must pass through multiple “gates” down the length of the hill. Each gate consists of one or two poles (slalom) or one or two paneled poles (giant slalom and super G) of the same color (gates). Gates can be oriented in a variety of patterns offset horizontally across the hill (most common) or vertically.

- **Slalom (SL)** – gates are close together forcing racers to make tight fast turns. U12 and U10 racers use “stubby” gates (poles about 2 ft high). U14 and older racers use full height poles which require racers to wear additional equipment (see equipment section) to prevent injury.
- **Giant Slalom (GS)** – gates are placed further apart than slalom and challenge racers to make accurate turns while holding as much speed as possible.
- **Super G (SG)** – This race is a higher speed event over longer hills requiring higher mountains including Bristol. The course has turns spaced out further than the Giant Slalom. U14 racers can train for this event but formal racing does not start until U16 level.

5. BMRC Organization

Relationship with Bristol Mountain

While there has been longstanding cooperative relationship between a BMRC and Bristol Mountain, BMRC has no ownership relationship with Bristol Mountain. BMRC utilizes hill space at Bristol Mountain and has to work with Bristol Mountain in attaining the hill space it needs. BMRC coaches are not Bristol Mountain employees or part of the Bristol Ski School; they are paid by BMRC. The manpower used to run races at

Bristol is primarily volunteers and coaches from BMRC, with some assistance from members of other clubs and the public. BMRC is not part of the Bristol Ski School program but works with the school in attracting racers from the Forerunners program to the race club.

Officers

A number of dedicated parents volunteer for Officer Positions for the BMRC. See web site for up-to-date list of club officers.

Program Director

Jeff Jenkins

Role of Coaches

The coaches' responsibility in the race program is to raise the racers' technical skiing ability and mentor the racers on the mental aspects of the sport. They are responsible for the racers during training sessions and races. They are not responsible for off hill activities (lunch, break time, after skiing, etc.). The coaches make themselves available to parents for questions, updates and reassurance before or after practice (but not during). Coaches most likely will seek out parents only for equipment needs or behavioral issues. They are focused on the racers, not the parents. After all races, the coaches are "off" and parents will have responsibility for their children. Questions or problems concerning coaching should first be directed to the Program Director (Jeff Jenkins) and then, if not resolved, to a club officer.

6. BMRC Volunteer Program

A strong parent volunteer program is critical to the functioning of BMRC and all families are expected to fulfill a volunteer requirement. Without the help of parent volunteers we could not run the many events we are hosting for your children. There are many advantages and savings to hosting events at Bristol but it does require a strong volunteer effort from all families. See <https://bristolraceteam.org/races/volunteering-at-bristol-mountain/> for additional information.

Race Administrators

RA's are the key role and foundation of the Race Organizing Committee (ROC) for every race. They are a USSA Alpine Official and require certification by taking a course in the Fall. The RA is the liaison between the club, NYSSRA, volunteer staff, coaches, athletes and the Bristol Mountain management. It is a critical role that is not only extremely rewarding, but also one of the best ways to learn, understand, and be part of all aspects of a race.

We are always in need of RA's. Anyone interested in becoming an RA is teamed with an experienced RA for an event. Planning, organizing, and running the event will be done together allowing you to learn as you go without the pressure of sole responsibility. Some have taken the certification class in the Fall to learn the basics and then apply them as they co-RA an event. Others have co-RA'd an event and then taken the certification course the following Fall. Either way is effective and makes the process much easier and less intimidating. Anyone interested in becoming an RA or a co-RA please contact any Club Officer.

7. Fundraising

Fundraising is vital to BMRC. BMRC is a not-for –profit educational organization qualified under IRS rule 501(c)3. We raise funds or accept donations to help provide quality coaching, coaching education, necessary new equipment, etc, etc...while controlling membership costs. We need everyone's help and support to properly network amongst friends, family and employers to garner support.

8. BMRC Alpine Training Program

BMRC utilizes the guidelines established by the USSA in conjunction with our own personal resources, experience and philosophies, to design and implement our Alpine Training Program. The guiding USSA document is known as the Alpine Athletic Competencies. Developed and implemented by USSA, this document has become the cornerstone for alpine athletic development and coaching in the United States. NYSSRA and BMRC have the authority and mission to adopt and modify these guidelines to best fit our own unique and individual programs. We at BMRC have designed our program to best facilitate our unique relationship between Bristol Mountain, our Membership, Coaches, and Friends. A detailed description of our Alpine Training Program is available from Jeff Jenkins, Program Director (jjenkin5@rochester.rr.com)

Winter Training Schedule

See web site for training times for each age group.

Pre-Season Dryland Training

Starting in early October we will have preseason conditioning on Sunday mornings. This will continue until mid November. Please check the web site for updates.

Early Season On-Snow Training

On occasion, BMRC coordinates an early season training camp which has included trips to Mont Tremblant, Okemo and Colorado in the past.

Christmas Camp

The Christmas Camp is during the week between Christmas and New Years. The fee for this camp is included in the annual training fee.

Afternoon Training Program

For committed and dedicated athletes, an Afternoon Training Program has been designed to maximize their training and racing potential. See web site for details.

9. Preparing for the Race Season

August

Assess equipment needs and start shopping.

September

Pre Season Registration Requirements: All racers must:

1. Have a Bristol Mountain ski pass
2. Join the Bristol Mountain Race Club <https://bristolraceteam.org/registration/>
3. Join NYSSRA – this can be done online at www.nyssra.org
4. Join USSA – this can be done online at www.ussa.org
5. U19 and older racers choosing to race in FIS races will need a FIS license through USSA.

October

Finalize equipment ordering/purchasing

Dryland training starts

December

Race Schedule is available at www.nyssra.org.

Make travel arrangements for out of town races including post season races.

Race Registration

See website <https://bristolraceteam.org/races/entering-races> for details on registering for races. Note that there is a deadline for registering for races – DON'T miss the deadline

10. Race Season

As racers get older they should be given increasingly more responsibility to independently prepare for and participate in races. By the time they are U16s (14+ years old) they should be able to prep their skis and get all their equipment ready on their own.

Typical Race Routine

Night Before

- prep skis
- check that all equipment is ready, get a good night sleep

Race Day

- 7:30 am- arrive at ski area, register (racer turns in bib deposit and gets race bib and lift ticket). Some areas require a “bib deposit” of \$20 or a credit card. Parents can sometimes get discounted tickets as well.
- 8:00 am – dressed and ready to go.
- 8:15 am – meet with coaches and head up the hill for race course inspection.
- 9:00 am – after race course inspection racers should take at least 2 runs to warm up.
- 9:30 am- First run starts. It is critical that racers be at the top of the race course ready to go when it is their turn. While the race starts at 9:30, the last racer may not go until 11:30. The last racer does not have to wait 2 hours at the top of the hill but needs to keep a close eye on how the race is running so he/she is ready to go when his/her time comes.
- 12:00-12:30 racers get lunch while race course is reset for second run.
- 12:30 – 1:00 meet with coaches for second run course inspection.
- 1:00 – 1:30 second run starts.
- 3:30 – awards ceremony starts after race hill is cleaned up (the more people that help with clean up the sooner awards ceremony can begin).

Tips

- Pack a nutritious lunch and water.
- Post-season races: Bring checkbook if your racer may qualify for the next race.

Race Course Spectating Rules

On the day of a race there are strict rules about who can and cannot ski on the designated race hill. Racers are only allowed on the hill with a coach to inspect the course prior to the start of each run. Typically course inspection starts about one hour before the start of the race. After that the race hill, including the start and finish areas, is closed to all skiers except coaches and course maintenance workers.

Spectators can sometimes have a difficult time watching the race due to inaccessibility of the race hill. Many races are best observed by standing at the finish line or by walking up the hill (ski poles and snowshoes can make this easier). Spectators must stay outside of fenced off areas and well clear of the course. Spectators should avoid activities that may distract racers as they go down the course.

11. Equipment

Equipping ski racers can be a daunting and very expensive task. It is very important, however, that racers are properly equipped to maximize their comfort and performance. Cutting corners by buying cheap equipment often doesn't payoff but, with careful planning and shopping, the cost of equipment can be made more manageable. Multiple sources of equipment exist and each offers pros and cons. These include

1. Local ski shops: they can offer off-the-shelf in stock new equipment and in September/October they can facilitate purchasing the most up to date equipment directly from suppliers at racer discount pricing (“**Pro-forms**”). Discounts at ski shops, however, are often comparable to pro-form prices. A benefit of

buying from a ski shop is they may offer you a guaranteed trade in worth 50% of the price you paid at their shop. Local ski shops may not always have what you need in stock as the season progresses so it is wise to stock up early. Local ski shops can also have a generous supply of used **RACE** skis and **RACE** boots which, if bought carefully, can work fine at a substantial savings. Other options include buying versus leasing equipment which can be discussed with shop sales staff.

2. The big advantage of buying from local ski shops is that you get the benefit of their experienced and professional knowledge in helping you purchase equipment right for you. Local ski shops often provide sponsorship support to racing events so returning business to them is appreciated by them.
3. Friends, family, fellow ski club members
4. Internet
 - a. Reliable Racing <http://www.reliableracing.com>
 - b. The Race Place <http://www.the-raceplace.com>
 - c. Artech <http://www.artechski.com>
 - d. Race Club swap sheets <http://emails.bristolraceteam.org/swapnshop.cfm>
 - e. Craigslist
 - f. eBay

MAKE SURE YOU HAVE YOUR NAME ON EVERYTHING

Boots

Boots are the most important item for both performance and, more importantly, racer comfort. It is imperative that boots fit properly and comfortably since racers spend many hours a week in their boots. Since kids grow rapidly, buying boots to last 2 years is probably unrealistic. In fact, sometimes boots bought in August or September may not fit in January. Sometimes used boots in good condition can be found but new boots may be worth the extra cost. In addition to size (which is typically based on foot length in centimeters) boots designed for racing with appropriate stiffness is also important. Boot stiffness is measured by the “Flex” rating of the boot– younger lighter racers should be in the 60-90 range, older stronger racers can go over 100. Coaches can help with flex recommendations.

Proper fit is often done best by a fitter in a ski shop. Shop bootfitters can also sometimes “tweak” the boot for a customized fit if necessary. With experience, however, individuals may be able to find proper fitting boots on their own by following these steps:

1. Take the liner out of the boot shell. Wearing the same thickness of socks that will be worn while skiing, put your foot in the liner and make sure the toes are touching the end of the liner. The toes should not be bent back, nor should there be extra room. Liners do pack out (become looser) after some use.
2. If the foot fits well in the liner, put the foot in the shell without the liner. Slide the foot to the front of the shell so the toes touch the front. For proper fit, there should be room for 1 to 2 fingers behind the heel in the shell. A two-finger fit will factor in some room for growing. A tight fit is important for performance.
3. For proper flex, it is important that the skier can smoothly flex the boot forward keeping the heel on the ground (if the heel comes up in the boot when flexing you do not have an acceptable fit). The boot should not bulge irregularly when flexing. Remember, the boot will flex much less on the ski hill in cold weather, so the ability to flex the boot in the shop is key.

For “difficult to fit feet”, either off-the-shelf or custom made footbeds may help. Footbeds are not necessary for everyone, however.

Skis and Bindings

Skis are rapidly evolving and anything older than 2-4 years may be obsolete. Race skis are expensive and appropriate skis can have a definite impact on racer performance. U12 and U10 racers, or racers just starting out, will do fine with one pair of all around junior race skis. As racers progress they will benefit from having skis designed specifically for different racing disciplines (SL, GS and Super G). FIS/USSA institutes ski size regulations and between 2012 and 2016 there have been a series of changes making some skis obsolete requiring the purchase of new skis. These regulations can be found on <https://bristolraceteam.org/resources-for-parents/> or under “Coaches” tab at www.nyssra.org or the USSA website.

Before purchasing any equipment make sure it falls within their specifications.

It is also not a bad idea for racers to have a pair of recreational skis (twintips are popular or an older pair of race skis) so they don't trash their good race skis when free skiing.

Choosing ski length is often difficult and you may get conflicting advice on what length is best for your racer. There is no “right answer” for choosing a ski length. Coaches, followed by ski shop personnel familiar with race equipment are probably your best resources in choosing a ski length. Factors to consider for ski length are:

1. Discipline (SL,GS or SG) they will be used for
2. Height of racer
3. Weight and strength of racer
4. Skill of racer
5. FIS/USSA regulations

(mainly affects U18 and older racers, note there are different rules for men and women)

Choosing a ski length in reference to the racer's height is the most common starting point. For starting racers looking for all-purpose multi-event race skis, skis at approximately nose height are a good starting point. Slalom skis typically are at chin to nose height, GS skis about equal to top of head. SG skis typically run 185-195 for U16s and 200+ cm for U18s. Second year U16's should consider the length rules for U18's so there is not too big a jump for the following season. Heavier, stronger, or more experienced racers may favor skis on the longer side of the spectrum.

Bindings are sized according to their DIN setting range: lower DIN for smaller skiers (3-10 range), higher DIN (6-18 range) for larger more advanced racers. Bindings are often sold in combination with the skis being specific for that ski manufacturer only. While bindings may be removed and installed on another pair of skis, most skis that are resold come with bindings so removing the bindings may reduce the resale value of the skis.

Poles/Pole guards

Proper length poles insure proper posture and set up for the racer. Starting at the U14 level racers begin skiing slalom courses with tall gates and they need to consider adding pole guards to their poles to protect their hands when hitting the gates. Though it is more expensive, it is easiest to have a dedicated pair of poles for slalom fitted with pole guards and a separate pair of curved poles for giant slalom and SG.

Helmets, Chin Bar, Goggles

All racers are required to wear helmets. In 2015 USSA created a requirement that U14 and older athletes wear helmets that comply with FIS standards for GS, SG and DH events. See <http://ussa.org/alpine-programs/athletes/rules>. There is a sticker (at right) on approved helmets. **NO STICKER, NO START.**



Helmets need to fit properly to offer proper protection. U14 racers and older need a protective chin bar for slalom so it is necessary to buy a helmet that can be fitted with a chin bar. Chin bars are easily secured to and removed from the helmet with 2-4 screws so separate helmets for slalom and GS are not necessary. Goggles should fit flush within the helmet and comfortably on the face. Lighter colored lenses are a more universal shade since a lot of training is done at night. Some goggles come with interchangeable different colored lenses which add versatility but changing lenses may be too much of a task for young racers to do.

Race Suit

A good race suit is tight-fitting with built in padding designed to improve aerodynamics. For U10 and first year U12 racers they are not necessary but you will find that nearly everyone wears one. Given that children grow so quickly and speed suits are expensive, there is a brisk market in used race suits. Check out race club swap sheets, Craigslist or E-bay.

Training Pants

Outer ski pants with full length zippers are essential. These pants are designed to be easily zipped off the last minute prior to racing so racers can stay warm as long as possible. Pants without full length zippers would require the racer to uncomfortably remove his boots on the hill at the start. Some pants also have the ability to be zipped off at the knees so they can be worn as shorts on warmer days.

Shin guards

Required for U14 and older racers. Typically come in 2 sizes; junior and adult. These sometimes are not in stock at local ski stores so internet ordering may be necessary.

Coats/Parkas

Comfortable fit and warmth are key. On race day racers can spend a lot of time standing/sitting on top of the hill. Warm parkas are important on race days, but on training days a lighter coat may be better. The ability to wear different layers of clothing under the coat is helpful to adjust for different weather conditions.

Gloves/Mittens/Hand warmers

Mittens are generally warmer. Good waterproof gloves are important since the hands are often the first things to get cold. Hand warmers can be bought in bulk at BJ's and it's not a bad idea to have your kids keep a supply in their boot bag to use as needed. Some gloves/mittens have a built in pocket to place the hand warmer.

Boot/Gear bag

Racers have lots of gear that they need to carry from race to race. A good gear bag that can carry boots, helmet, shin guards, extra clothing, and lunch is very useful.

Ski tuning equipment

It is a good idea to have at a minimum some edge sharpening tools, an iron for waxing, and a selection of wax for different snow conditions, and a wax scraper. (See The Art of Ski Tuning section)

MAKE SURE YOU HAVE YOUR NAME ON EVERYTHING

12. The Art of Ski Tuning

For a racer to perform at his/her highest potential, the race skis need to be properly tuned and waxed before each race. Experienced ski tuners will take more than 30 minutes on a pair of skis to repair bases, sharpen edges, and wax and texture the base. Specialized equipment can be purchased which makes the job easier and more precise. A full description of ski tuning is beyond the scope of this handbook but all parents and racers should become familiar with tuning techniques. Since the condition of their skis impacts their results, racers need to be involved in tuning their skis. By the time they are a U16s they should be able to handle simple ski tuning tasks.

Ski tuning clinics are sometimes offered in the Fall by manufacturer reps (Swix) and they can be very informative.

Our web site has additional resources for ski tuning and equipment:

<http://bristolraceteam.org/resources-for-parents>

13. Helpful Websites

General ski racing information

<http://www.skiraceparents.com>