

## **FIS Conference on Youth & Children**

Bucharest, 26-28 November 2004

### **Milan Jirasek, FIS Council Member, President CZE Olympic Committee**

FIS is keen to encourage wider participation of nations, and to bring more young people on snow, for the future of the sport. Important to develop new training methods and new forms of competition. Explained FIS Aid & Promotion and Solidarity projects.

Described the very successful 'Dream Programme' in Korea, where kids aged 11-15 had been invited to participate.

2005 is the United Nations 'International Year of Sport & Physical Education', and FIS plans several programmes and initiatives of education in the sport.

'Skitty' – a scheme to promote FIS Code of Conduct. Nations to invite 'Skitty' (a clown) to their children's events – they must cover accommodation costs; FIS covers the cost of travel and the presentation.

### **Prof. Rolf Carlson, SWE – Snow & Fun**

Activities must be tailored to the interests of kids. Sport is vital to the development of the individual, and coaches must be developed who can bring out the full potential of the child in terms of involvement in sport, not just aiming to produce champions.

- Must value children for what they are, not how they perform.
- It is wrong to look at children who are winning as if they are future champions - there is no evidence to support this.

Re age to start competing – must arrange competition that fits with performance levels and interests, it is normal for them to take part in and enjoy competing.

From a survey at Topolino (snowboarders) it is clear that kids are both social and competitive (girls more than boys), and most are involved in more than one sport. Kids particularly like team events.

It has been shown that the majority of elite performers at children's level are born in the early part of the year. Big variation in physical maturation, with late maturers at a huge disadvantage. Wrestlers are divided in competition by weight as well as age – maybe this should come for snow sports.

Competition must be:

- Varied, so that winning is not predictable – because in that case, the losers may always end up losing (and will not stay). When properly organised (combination of time/style judging, or combination of FIS disciplines, etc) it will have the desired uncertainty of outcome.
- Fun, hence the development of the Topolino event by Walt Disney (Topolino = Mickey Mouse).

Concerns re sponsorship for kids – understood that teams may be supported, but individual sponsorship adds pressure.

**Policy for the various organisations, clubs, nations etc must cover:**

- Participation standards, taking into account variation in maturity, size, age etc.
- Leadership guidelines
- Parental involvement – important to have parents involved from the start, can then direct them to useful areas
- Talent Development
  - Motivation
  - Training
  - Communication (on their level)
  - Relationship with coach, friends
  - Competition at the right level
- Athletic Performance

FIS aims not just to produce champions, but to broaden participation. The top of the pyramid will not be there unless the broad base is also developed and valued.

It is not possible to predict future champions at children's age.

**Children need and expect:**

- Fun – observe kids, e.g. at a skateboard park, they match and compete instinctively as they play. They must be encouraged to take their own initiative. Children will leave the sport if start too early with high intensity training. This is not related to time/volume – as long as they are enjoying it, they will continue for 24hrs a day!
- Motivation
  - Must interest kids early (into clubs as early as age 7)
  - Must not specialise too early, try all snow sports, and then direct to the various FIS disciplines according to their interests.
- Continuity of leadership – great benefits if this is possible
- Social context
  - Proper ethical and moral standards
  - Doping
  - Respect for others
  - Social interaction and behaviour
- Competition and training

## Arno Staudacher, AUT, Sport Director, Stams Ski Gymnasium Fitness for Kids

### Aims of the Programme

- To increase performance capacity
- Maintenance of physical health
- Involvement of parents – without them no sport, with them maybe more difficult!  
But they must be involved and given responsibility

No relevant correlation between training volume and performance ability (even in top performers, volume only counts for max 9% in performance level). Less = more!  
Quality is all-important.

### Long-Term Development

*There are no youth world champions.* Lots of events (Pinocchio, Slovenia, Scara, Topolino, etc), but the winners are not, and should not ever be considered, world champions. The earliest point where this becomes realistic is at age 18/19 – at Junior World Championships level.

### Youth Programme stages:

- Fundamental – age 7-10/11
- Development – age 11-15
- Contact – age 16 up to top level

Important to go through these in order, it will take 1-2 years to catch up at junior level if the fundamental stage has been missed.

### Physical

With today's aggressive ski materials a proper technique can only be achieved on the basis of good physical qualification.

Free-skiing is crucial to development, but it is difficult to get parents to understand this.

#### Internal

Skis

- Radius
- Length
- Height of bindings

#### External

Technical skills

Psychological factors

Fitness

Snow conditions/terrain

Must encourage carving. Little kids carve naturally on simple slopes, but do not have the strength to maintain the carve on varied/steeper terrain. Must train/compete on appropriate slopes.

### Children's SuperG skis:

**Cost vs. security, especially in relation to new rules for SuperG skis. *Security has to be the most important factor.* The new regulations re minimum length and radius of curvature are based on the findings of a large Austrian study; the minimum limits have been set because anything less was shown by the study to be dangerous.**

## **Coordinative Physical Conditioning**

Aims - to develop improved motor ability, hence economy of movement and metabolism.

### **Fundamental methods**

- Variation in exercises
- Duplicate movements made in skiing in training, so that for example the knee is used to make the angles required by aggressive skis on the mountain. This is very important for injury protection.
- Avoid intensive training during development, this may cause joint damage
- Train core strength as well as legs

### **Strength**

- Skiing is increasingly a 'strength' sport – because of the aggressive equipment. Need to concentrate on explosive strength as well as endurance – and total body.
- Must not only concentrate on agonist muscles, should also work on antagonists (e.g. quads vs. hamstrings).

### **Endurance**

- Must start by developing a good running technique – will damage joints if technique is not balanced etc.
- Must concentrate on general endurance before anything that is sport-specific.

### **Mobility**

- Mobility of joints
- Mobility of muscles – shortened muscles lead to imbalance and even inflammation
- Muscles should be stretched and joints mobilised before and after training. This helps to avoid apophyseal injuries (Osgood Schlatter's Disease, etc).

A coach is only professional if he works on training that is appropriate for kids, but is not if, for example, he puts them through 2,500 gates in a season.

## **Marcel Looze – NED – Lowland Youth Programme**

A dream set-up:

16,000,000 population

1,200,000 participate in snow sports

Federation has 137,500 members, 60 clubs, 6 indoor snow slopes

The Federation is supported by 5,000,000€ from the government; 1,000,000€ goes into the sport.

45 paid staff, 30 full-time.

Aims – to stimulate snow sport activities in a responsible and enjoyable way.

### **Service Department**

- Travel insurance
- Information (newsletters etc)
- Discounts for members

### **Sports Department** – covers recreational and elite skiing

Aims to work actively with schools, school champs etc. Events can be arranged cheaply at the indoor slopes.

### **Races are**

- Regional
- Schools
- Kids' Cups, national and international
- National Championships (in the mountains)

They run single run races, with no disqualification for the second run; because of the travelling they feel it is not fair to exclude kids from the second part of the competition.

### **Development Programme**

- Athlete centred, coach steered, results orientated
- Cooperation (schools, colleges etc)
- Aim to produce competitions and training as close to home as possible
- Quality control of programmes

Coach education is run in cooperation with alpine nations (e.g. alpine coaches work with Austrian coach programmes).

The Fed aims to top off the club programmes, and work to develop them.  
Active scouting for coaching talent

They have started to run '**Talent Games**' – a combination of alpine, snowboard, freestyle, jump and biathlon (this with roller blades in a park). Big interest, rapidly increasing participation!

These are run indoors, with 3 activities on 3 slopes – obstacle course, slalom, moguls – for example.

### **Dare to Dream**

Multidisciplinary events, innovative programmes and competitions.

- Good leadership
- Money
- Fun!

## **Harald Schönhaar, Chairman FIS Committee for Youth & Children 'Daring to Dream'**

Watch kids – they ski over all terrain, jumps, bumps, trees etc. If given a free reign, they naturally incorporate all the FIS disciplines. So, for the future, how about developing competitions that include a variety of FIS Disciplines?

Changed format = increased interest.

He outlined and detailed timings of programmes for events that included combinations of Alpine/Snowboard, Alpine/Freestyle, Alpine/Nordic, and even a 2-day Super-Event to include

- Snowboard – half pipe
- Jumping
- Moguls – freestyle, one jump
- Alpine GS 20-25 gates
- X-country 2km

It would be ideal to run this type of event at an indoor slope, where equipment can be got from the rental department, and kids just need to turn up with warm clothes.

Events of this nature have already been held very successfully in Austria, where there is great interest in developing them – note also the 'Talent Games' in Holland.

Rankings in each event determine the winner, as in decathlon. Some discussion over working out a system of handicap in the last event to ensure that the outcome could be determined by the result 'on the finishing line'.

Huge interest here from Holland, and they plan to set up an event, maybe in May alongside the FIS Calendar conference. International teams to be invited.

In answer to queries about regulations/safety, the recent statement of Gian Franco Kasper, President of the FIS, was quoted – 'Do not over-regulate your activities, especially for children'.