



Pacific Northwest Ski Association A Division of USSA

Hello PNSA Clubs, Members, and Parents,

The first PNSA race of the season begins this weekend with the Russ Read Evergreen Cup race at Mt Bachelor. This marks the beginning of division wide ability class racing in PNSA. As I'm sure most of you are aware, all USSA scored (non-FIS) Super G, GS, and Slalom races this year will be run as ability class races.

The move to ability class racing this year was prompted in large part by athlete attrition. Like many other sports, alpine ski racing has a significant amount of athlete attrition at the U14 age class. We then continue to lose more athletes at the U16 and U19 age classes. It is our hope that ability class racing will improve athlete retention by recognizing the improvement of a greater number of athletes. Ability Class racing should also accommodate athletes that mature early and concurrently provide a competitive environment for athletes that develop at a later age.

Bill Gunesch, USSA's Western Region Alpine Director, is the primary architect of the current ability class system. To develop this ability class system, Bill spent hundreds of hours and ran several models using athletes from our division.

The most notable difference, outside of awards, in the current ability class system is how the first run start list is created. Athletes will be placed into five categories and then randomly drawn from within those categories. The initial categories list has been created using USSA points. Upcoming category lists, which will coincide with the USSA points lists, will use a combination of USSA points or place points. The ability class document below provides the rules and specifics of Ability Class racing.

There is significant interest in ability class racing within USSA and at the USSA congress last May, USSA agreed to have PNSA run ability class racing division wide. The information and results we acquire throughout this season will be presented at congress next year and used to determine whether or not ability class racing should be adopted throughout the country.

Please take the time to read the following document and become familiar with the specifics of ability class racing. Also keep in mind that because this is a new format we will need to see multiple races to accurately evaluate the benefits of ability class racing.

Thanks and have a great season,

Dan Henry
PNSA Director of Alpine