High School Ski Racing Guide

2026–2027 Season

Welcome to the 2026–2027 ski racing season! Whether you're a new racer or returning for another year, being prepared is an important part of having a successful season.

This guide covers everything you'll need to know, from essential ski equipment and clothing to team expectations, important dates, preseason training, and where to find great deals on gear. Ski racing can be an expensive sport, but **you don't need the newest or most expensive equipment to be successful!** If you're looking to start shopping, be sure to check out **Section 4: Where to Buy Ski Gear** for recommendations and money-saving tips.

Important: Before making any major purchases, especially skis, boots, or helmets, please check with Coach Kiernan or Coach Soto. We're happy to help you find equipment that fits your needs and budget!

Also, if you havent already, please make sure to fill out this interest form if you're interested in joining this 2026-2027 season! PCTVS Downhill Ski Racing Interest Form

1. Essential Ski Equipment

Item	What to look for
Race Helmet	For Giant Slalom (GS), a hard-ear helmet certified to FIS RH 2013 standards is required beginning this season. A properly fitted helmet is essential. POC, HEAD, SHRED, and Sweet Protection are popular options. ** MUST BE HARD SHELL. No soft ears, or you're not allowed to get on the race course! **
Slalom Face Protection	- NJISRA requires appropriate face protection for slalom racing, either a helmet-mounted chin guard or an internal mouthguard. For PCTVS, we require racers to have a compatible chin guard. This must be removed when racing Giant Slalom (GS). Make sure your helmet supports a chin guard before purchasing one.
Skis	- Choose skis designed for carving and racing on groomed trails. - New racers can often start with an appropriate frontside carving or race-inspired ski. - More advanced racers may benefit from separate SL and GS skis. (but not required)

	** Avoid powder skis and twin tips for racing. Ask a coach about length and type before buying.**
Ski Boots	**GET PROFESSIONALLY FITTED.** Boot fit is one of the most important parts of your setup. A higher flex number means a stiffer boot, but 100+ flex is not appropriate for everyone. Choose boots based on your weight, strength, ability, and foot shape. ** You do not always have to *buy* race boots as a first time racer. Renting for the season is always a great option until you find the boot that works for you! **
Poles	Select the proper length for your height and skiing style. Leki and Swix are popular brands. Poles must have baskets; metal baskets are prohibited in NJISRA competition.
Goggles	**We race and practice at night!** Clear lenses are my recommendation. Look for high visible-light transmission (VLT), ideally around 80–100% for night conditions. Some high-VLT yellow lenses work well, too. Make sure they fit your helmet.

2. Clothing and Staying Warm

Coach's Tip: *Always bring an extra layer. Conditions can change quickly, and standing around between race runs can get very cold.*

Item	What to look for
Base Layers	Wear a moisture-wicking thermal top and bottom made from merino wool or synthetic material. Avoid cotton, which holds moisture and can make you colder.
Mid Layers	A fleece, synthetic insulated jacket, or lightweight puffer works well. Dress in layers so you can adjust based on the weather.
Ski Jacket	Your jacket should protect against wind, snow, and cold temperatures. An insulated jacket works well, but a waterproof shell with warm layers underneath is also a good option. Some team jackets are only shells!

Ski Pants	Waterproof, wind-resistant pants that allow you to move comfortably. Insulated pants are helpful for particularly cold evenings.
Gloves/Mittens	Choose warm, water-resistant gloves or mittens. Mittens tend to be warmer, while gloves can provide better dexterity. **Bring an extra pair!**
Ski Socks	Wear one pair of well-fitting ski socks made from merino wool or synthetic material. Avoid cotton and overly thick socks, which can restrict circulation inside tight ski boots. Darn Tough and Hot Chillys are popular brands.
Neck Warmer/Balaclava	Helps protect your face and neck from wind and freezing temperatures. Thin materials generally fit better under helmets.

3. Racing Protection and Optional Equipment

Item	What to look for
Shin Guards	Recommended for racers learning to block slalom gates. POC, Leki, and Rossignol are popular options.
Pole Guards	Attach to compatible poles and help protect your hands during slalom gate contact. **** REQUIRED FOR SLALOM IN BEGINNING OF SEASON ****
Forearm Guards	Useful for more advanced racers making contact with GS gates.
Race Suit	Optional for most beginning high school racers. Race suits reduce drag but are not necessary to get started. We also have PCTVS Race Suits that are periodically rotated for racers to wear.
Gear Bag	A dedicated bag makes transporting boots, helmets, gloves, and other equipment much easier. It does not need to be expensive.
Hand/Toe Warmers	Lifesavers on cold nights! Disposable warmers can be especially helpful while waiting between runs.

Other Essentials	Water bottle, snacks, spare dry socks, lip balm, sunscreen, and an extra neck warmer.

4. Where to Buy Ski Gear

Coach's Tip: *Ski racing can get expensive. Before purchasing anything at full price, compare prices at different retailers and look for prior-season gear, racer discounts, and sales.*

Retailer	Why I recommend it
Marshalls	Sometimes, at your local Marshalls, you can find high-quality base layers, ski jackets, and other winter gear for a fraction of the retail price. For example, I found a $400 Spyder jacket for less than $100! You may have to dig through the racks, but don't underestimate the hidden gems you can find here! — Coach Soto
eBay and Facebook Marketplace	Both are great places to find discounted or secondhand ski equipment, especially skis, poles, race suits, and protective guards. You can often find equipment from racers who have outgrown their gear or upgraded to something new. Just be careful when buying used! Always check the condition, ask for additional pictures, and compare prices. I strongly recommend purchasing helmets new and having any used skis and bindings inspected by a professional ski shop before using them.
Ski Barn **Race Department Page**	The Wayne location has a dedicated race department, professional boot fitting, equipment tuning, racer pricing, and junior race-boot rental options. A great starting point if you need guidance. ** For layers, jackets, etc look in the clearance section! **
Powder7	A good place to look for discounted and used demo skis. Make sure you're choosing the correct type of ski.
Level Nine Sports	Worth checking for clearance equipment and previous-season models.
Evo	Broad selection of ski equipment and apparel. Useful for comparing models and discounts.
Skis.com	Offers ski equipment, apparel, and clearance sales. Compare prices with other retailers before buying.

Money-Saving Tips

- Check last season's models. They can offer excellent value without sacrificing the performance you need.
- Ask about high school racer discounts.
- Consider team gear swaps or buying used skis from experienced racers.
- Be cautious about purchasing used helmets. You may not know their impact history.
- Before purchasing used skis, have a qualified shop confirm that the skis and bindings are safe, serviceable, and compatible with your boots.
- Check return policies, binding installation fees, and shipping costs before placing an order.
- Don't buy equipment just because it's heavily discounted. The wrong equipment isn't a good deal.

5. Before the First Practice

Make sure you have everything ready before our first day on snow.

- ☐ Helmet meets the applicable race certification requirements.
- ☐ Slalom compatible chin guard is ready.
- ☐ Skis are in good condition, with edges and bases checked.
- ☐ Boots fit properly, and bindings have been professionally checked.
- ☐ Goggles have suitable lenses for night skiing.
- ☐ All clothing fits comfortably and keeps you warm and dry.
- ☐ Extra gloves and warm layers are packed.
- ☐ All equipment is labeled with your name.

Final Notes on Gear:

- Everyone has different preferences when it comes to ski gear. What works well for one racer might not work for another, so focus on finding equipment that fits properly, keeps you warm, and allows you to ski confidently.
- **You do not need top-of-the-line equipment to become a good ski racer.** Learning proper technique, showing up consistently, and getting comfortable on your skis are much more important than having the newest gear.
- Please ask questions before making a major purchase. I'd much rather help you find the right equipment than have you spend money on something that won't work for you.
- For official competition equipment requirements, review the NJISRA Alpine Competition Regulations. League requirements may be updated during the season.
- If you have any questions, please reach out to Coach Kiernan.

6. Joining the Team & Expectations

- Every student who wants to participate in the 2026–2027 season must complete the interest form, including returning racers. Students who do not want to join do not need to submit it.
- PCTVS Downhill Ski Racing Interest Form:
- An on-snow assessment/tryout day trip to Belleayre Mountain is planned for mid-December. The exact date has not been announced. Skiers should already know how to ski safely: this is not a learn-to-ski program. Coach Kiernan noted she has not cut anyone in six years, but the assessment is still part of the process.
- Coach Kiernan has pole guards and shin guards available through the team. PCTVS race suits are periodically rotated among racers. Ask before buying shared accessories.
- The season has six expected races: three slalom (SL) and three giant slalom (GS). They are expected January–February 2027; recent races have usually been on Fridays. Races are mandatory. Missing races may result in team removal and no varsity letter. This varsity sport should be a priority.

7. Mountain Creek Passes and Purchasing

DEADLINE: DECEMBER 1, 2026. Every racer must purchase a High School Racing Pass.

Required High School Racing Pass — $229.99. Valid Monday–Friday after 3:00 p.m.
Optional All Access Pass — $339.99. Unlimited access every day at any time. The $110 upgrade from the Racing Pass was offered through October 31, 2026.

Purchase instructions:

1. Visit https://www.mountaincreek.com/ and click Buy Now.
2. Sign in or create an account.
3. Scroll to Group at the bottom and select Groups.
4. Select Redeem Invitation.
5. Enter the school access code and PIN and click Access Group.

- PCTVS access code: PTRACE27
- PIN: 973

Prices and deadlines are from Coach Soto's September 25, 2026 announcement. Confirm any checkout changes directly with Mountain Creek or the coaches.

9. Schedule, Deadlines and Communication

- October 31, 2026: Last day for the announced optional $110 All Access upgrade.
- November 11, 2026, 3:00 p.m.: In-person team meeting in HX.
- Before Thanksgiving (November 26, 2026): Complete and submit your sports physical.
- December 1, 2026: Deadline to purchase the Mountain Creek Racing Pass.
- Mid-December 2026: Belleayre Mountain on-snow assessment, date TBA.
- January–February 2027: Six expected races (three SL and three GS), official dates TBA.

10. Team Contacts & Helpful Links

- Coach Caitlin Kiernan — ckiernan@pcti.tec.nj.us
- Coach Clementine Soto — clementine.soto2763@gmail.com
- Mountain Creek — https://www.mountaincreek.com/
- NJISRA regulations — https://njisra.org/acr.html
- Confirm through Google Classroom: exact Belleayre date and transportation, the official race schedule, how to submit physicals, how team equipment is distributed, and any additional fees.