

## Tips and Tales

January 7, 2019

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I wanted this edition to focus on racing and its place in our club, as we have our first club-sponsored race for BKL this Saturday at the Bogburn. (Some of the 7th and 8th graders in the Weekend Program have already raced in races appropriate for older kids.)

### 1. Mission and Objectives

Mission:

*Ford Sayre's Bill Koch League ("BKL") Nordic Program seeks to develop in all participants a life-long passion for cross-country skiing. It introduces participants to the fun and excitement of skiing fast and supports its young athletes who desire to pursue ski racing in local and regional competitions. The Program teaches ski skills and training methods based on the USSA Long-Term Development model.*

This mission very intentionally welcomes skiers who will never race, and it very intentionally welcomes skiers who will become passionate about racing. It can be a complicated path to navigate, and the pendulum can swing along the spectrum, but if we are doing our work successfully then we will navigate it. And like with anything that is outside a child's comfort zone, those first races can sometimes take some encouragement for a kid (and his/her family) to try.

Speaking of which....

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### 2. Ashley's Message to Families from last year

I think Ashley put it perfectly in her message to the 4th grade families last year, so I copy it here:  
*"As coaches, x-racers and life-long skiers, we are proponents of racing. Joining in a race allows a skier to put to use all of the skills s/he has been learning in practice. We often notice that races can be the moment when kids make a significant jump to another level of skill and understanding; it's not a conscious one, but we can see it in how they ski. At the Festivent, you could see the kids' skiing progress from the beginning to the end of the race. Truly.*

*But racing can be scary for kids (and for adults, too, for that matter!). Ford Sayre's philosophy focuses on participation, personal improvement and the process of racing rather than the outcomes of a race. We do not talk about what place a child finishes or who they beat. Rather, we ask them one or two questions such as, "How did you feel out there on the trail?" "Was it fun?" "Was it tiring?" "What was the most exciting part of the race?" "What went well?" "Is there anything you would do differently next time?" - and not all of these and not all at once!:) Kids can love racing even if they aren't placing well in terms of finishing times or compared to other kids. It's all about the message we send as they head into it and the temperament of the child involved. But please never force or bribe*

*you child to race. We are confident that this isn't the way to encourage a racer. If your child seems interested but isn't ready to jump in, bring them to WATCH the race and cheer for other kids. That has proved to be a good lead in in our experience. You can then all ski as a family after the race. The beauty of this sport is that it can be a family sport."*

Well said, coach/director/mom/adult-onset-racer!

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### **3. Jessie's Message**

Gold Medalist Jessie Diggins has a superb blog, which I recommend to all if you need a break from other stuff you are doing. I don't read it as much as I would like, but a recent entry about the post-Olympics pressure is fascinating, and her following quotes about racing and objectives are right on the mark. The link is here, and the two most relevant quotes are posted below.

[https://blogs.fasterskier.com/jessiediggins/?post\\_id=39838](https://blogs.fasterskier.com/jessiediggins/?post_id=39838)

*"This, by the way, is exactly why I always tell parents who ask how to best support their young racers to never ask their kids about the result after a race. Instead, I think it's important to ask how the kid felt about the race, if they had fun, and if they were happy with it. The worst thing you can do to another racer is to tell them what they're feeling and assume without asking that you know how they should feel and react. The right to be proud of a race effort isn't reserved only for the winner."*

*"Whether or not I'm going to be the first one across the finish line is out of my control. I can't control the weather, the course, wax, skis or my competitors. The only thing I have direct control of is my own effort and how much of myself I choose to give at any given moment."*

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OK, that's plenty for this week. Please encourage your skiers to experiment with going fast, to get excited about racing in general, and to specifically consider attending the Bogburn this Saturday! And, through it all, we hope you have a blast with them and each other.

Cheers, and thanks as always for all you do,  
Jay