

Executive Summary

Changes Implemented This Year

- U16 regional racing
-
-

Challenges & Issues

- HS Championships selection process
- Prioritize postseason events at all age groups
-

Recommended Changes for Next Year

- Return U16 to statewide series
- Evolve to open championships at u12 & u14 levels
- Continue to update technology platform

Board Approvals

Proposed Rules & Procedure Changes

- See U16 recommendation above
-

Budget Requests

- Executive committee ability to be agile with membership fees for 26-27
-

Detailed Report

April 19 2025

In many ways the 2024-25 PARA season carried forward the racing experience that our membership has become accustomed to. Our collection of dedicated clubs and ROCs benefitted from generally stable and cold weather allowing for consistent training opportunities and a minimally impacted race calendar.

Broadly speaking PARA is in a solid position. Our membership levels and finances are strong, and the passion of our clubs to develop strong racers, skiers, and upstanding young people is unquestionable. While those key facets of our organization remain strong we do have questions before us as a governing body. These questions cover both on-snow competition as well as organizational management. I believe these questions can and should be answered by establishing philosophies or visions in each area that serve as guides to make critical decisions.

I will ask each of the respective chairpersons, committee heads, or executive committee members to provide detail, context, and input on the pressing areas under their purview. I will outline below the issues I believe are important to manage for the health of PARA and those issues that have come before me during the season and will require attention moving forward.

Team-Based Events

At this season's FIS World Championships one of the most embraced events, especially by the athletes, was the team based competitions. While our venues are not of the scale to hold these events in the same DH or SG and SL format, our ROCs have the capacity to be creative and devise team based events that engage athletes in a different way and further solidify the collective support for other racers that already exists in PARA.

U12 & U14 Championship Events

U12 & U14 necessitate a development, camaraderie, and participation based model for structuring our competitions. It is my position that PARA's championships at these age levels should be open to all that wish to participate. Such a change would necessitate

2025 President REPORT

changes to the event structure but I firmly believe these changes are manageable and can be tailored to the respective age groups to provide competition structures in line with the tentpoles of these youth age groups mentioned above.

The U12 event may incorporate dual SL and team based events. The U14 event would switch to traditional 2 run ski races that utilizes a combination of the individual run and overall race placement to determine championship standings for postseason events.

U14 Speed Training

PARA has financially supported speed training to varying degrees over the past several seasons. What is the philosophy of PARA regarding the introduction of an enhanced speed training component for our athletes? If the expectation is to build a level of skill, comfort, and development with the higher speeds, the U14 age group needs to be prioritized much more heavily when devising the events we support with PARA funds. Waiting until U16 for the primary allocation of spots to these events creates, in my view, more of a crash course in speed events versus a longitudinal development of skill base.

U16 Racing

The biggest change to PARA's competition structures this past season was at the U16 level with the return to regionally based qualification to a championship weekend. I believe this change was a mistake, and I say that as a board member at the time who voted for the proposal. Below are some of the major reasons why a PARA-wide, season-long series is the best competition structure for U16 racing in PARA.

- A race series will bring the strongest athletes together in a competitive environment more often throughout the season. As the focus shifts to a more competitive priority at the U16 age level athletes need to be pushed as often as possible and regional based racing does not provide those opportunities.
- A U16 series should allow for increased availability for invited U16 athletes to participate in the first two weekends of the PA Cup.
- Regional based racing at this age group has detrimental effects on the competitiveness and depth of the fields.
- Our process for selecting the athletes that will represent PARA at USSS regional events is reduced to a much smaller sample size of racing.

2025 President REPORT

- Determining the number of available spots for athletes to the championship weekend based on geographical proportions to membership rewards club/region size instead of the depth of quality athletes.
- PARA athletes build camaraderie and friendships across clubs and regions earlier in their racing careers. By extension the PA Cup series benefits from the earlier establishment of statewide competition and potential athlete retention.

While each of you will have your reasons and rationale to vote as you feel compelled I am asking you to support the proposal to reestablish the U16 Series.

U18/21 Postseason Racing Priorities

At the time of my writing this report it remains unknown if the U18/21 Eastern Finals will remain scheduled for late March next season. Primarily due to the dates of the event PARA struggled to recruit athletes to attend. In contrast, the Eastern HS Championship event remains popular with our athletes and is held earlier in March. Should the HS Championship event become our primary postseason event for this age group? If PARA continues to prioritize the USSS 18/21 Finals event, we should be proactive and engage with the other primary participating groups (Tri-State, NJ, SARA, and the clubs of Southern and Western NY) to find a host and devise an end of the season event that meets the needs of that class of athlete.

Regardless of the answer to that question a definitive selection mechanism for the HS Championship event needs to be established. This selection process needs to be published prior to the season.

Technology Platform & Social Media

Over the past year the website/technology group has been working to provide recommendations to the executive committee on the best way forward to upgrade our digital platform and email systems. I want to thank them, especially Jonathan Altman and Carrie Scheetz, for that dedication. I believe their recommendations will be very beneficial to PARA going forward. For further information about the upcoming changes

2025 President REPORT

we have asked Jonathan to speak briefly to the recommendations and Carrie will demonstrate the work she has done to this point on our new site.

PARA maintains a sporadic presence on Instagram and has accounts on Facebook and X. I am in favor of a more consistent highlighting of our events and outstanding athlete performances at big events. However, at this time there is no log of who has credentials to these social media accounts and a policy on how those credentials are distributed. Access to the accounts should be distributed among all areas of the organization.

Finances

PARA remains in a very strong financial position, especially in terms of reserve funds. The treasurer will discuss fund balances in detail. Earlier this spring the executive committee confirmed to USSS our membership dues fees for the 2025-26 season. Athlete dues will be reduced to \$20, per a November 2023 board decision, and coach/official dues will remain \$15. The executive committee will be asking for board approval to, in spring 2026, adjust the membership dues within parameters established by the board. This is being requested because of the time of year USSS requires any changes to dues collection for the following season.

With regard to the reserves PARA maintains. For organizations of our size and scope, retaining funds to cover 1 year of expenses in reserve should be our goal. There are various mechanisms to draw down our reserves, new spending programs or reduce revenues to a level necessary to maintain a balanced budget going forward. New spending programs are unlikely to be sustainable so my advocacy would be to look for ways to reduce our 'taxes'.

I want to thank everyone for their hard work and cooperation in making PARA an organization that continues to provide meaningful ski racing experiences for the athletes of Pennsylvania and the surrounding areas.

Respectfully submitted,

Patrick Wende
PARA President