

Proposal for SG to be added to the U19/U21 Calendar

### **Proposal**

I would like to propose adding a SG race to the U18/U21 calendar. Blue already holds a 3 day event, which would allow us to race SG on Friday as they do for the U16 series.

### **Background**

I am proposing the addition of SG to the U18/21 series. Our athletes put in a lot of work and effort each year and as they grow most look forward to the speed event at u16 and the ability to start training it at u14. Last season it showed how excited our athletes were to get back into speed. The camp sold out within an hour or two. We had a ton more wanting to go. I know Blue also ran a camp as well. The athletes went to these camps and came back more excited than ever to race and I watch a few athletes completely transform their skill set after building the confidence from those camps. I am a huge believer in sports don't just teach you how to play a game. If you allow it you will also learn how to be successful and a leader in life. When the confidence in these athletes grow to new heights allow these kids to understand that sometimes you need to take chances to succeed. They also get to learn what it is like working outside your comfort zone. Most of us would not be where we are at today without these life lessons. I take risks all the time to better myself.

I have heard from a few coaches questioning if the cost is worth it. A few question the need to purchase another pair of skis. At the camp last season, we were able to find either cheap skis or rental SG skis for every athlete that asked. I believe if we would have a second race in PA then that would also make more used and rental equipment more available. For the kids that purchased, they would be able to use them more than one year, making it more reasonable to compete. If we also show how we can grow athletically and mentally from these events, it will show these events have more value then just another race.

I also believe we can put these races on in a safe manner. Yes skiing can be dangerous and yes SG has risks. By taking that risk away, what does it say to our athletes? I have worked with more kids that have torn their ACLs in soccer than skiing. I also have more concussions with athletes in soccer but we don't have anyone saying that we should stop playing soccer. No instead we work to make it safer where we can. This should be the mentality for skiing as well. This can be done in a safe manner. If we all work together, I am sure we can make speed events benefit everyone.

These SG events are remembered long after the event is over. Whether they win or crash, these athletes will learn more about themselves in those moments on the course than most will learn in a lifetime. Lets help these kids grow into outstanding leaders that are willing to take risk in the face of adversity, instead of cowering.

As for the Safety of the event. I also believe we can empower the speed committee or we could design a safety committee to over see all events. With most races being filmed by someone, we could review any crashes to see if their was anything we could do to make the sport as safe as possible among other things.

I am also attaching an email from Jonathan Altman. As you will see, He did not believe in U19 speed until this past season.

I agree wholeheartedly with your sentiments, but slide want to amplify some things.

I have done a complete 180 on SG for u18/u21 in PARA after having the privilege of being allowed to shadow coach at the American Downhiller PARA SG camp at Okemo, for the reasons you call out below. Besides helping the athletes with their other disciplines, I was overwhelmed with how much all the kids, but especially the u18s, enjoyed the opportunity to train and race speed for 4 days. Prior to camp, I subscribed to the idea that the u18s still in PARA were largely ski racing for fun, and that not providing SG opportunities to them was just fine, because they weren't on a trajectory where it mattered, and there was enough risk in SG to outweigh the benefit. I was wrong. With the across-the-disciplines improvements I saw, and especially after watching u18s desperate to continue even after crashing, there is immense value for our u18+ athletes to have the experience and I want to see it provided to them going forward, safely (more on that later).

I hope we can expand our access down in u14 as well. For u14 and u16, we still have a tier of athletes that are capable of heading up north to academies, and are still actively recruited. Remember that the first athlete who missed the cutoff for NCAA national championships this year was a PARA skier, and we had 3 PARA ladies racing top level NCAA carnival and succeeding. It will also still help our younger athletes' skills and personal development across all the disciplines.

Even for those athletes not targeting or projecting to higher levels of competition, the progression in their skiing and life skills from SG participation is amazing, and we need to figure out how to continue to encourage and expand that.

And finally, on safety, I agree we can do speed safely and I walked away from the American Downhiller sessions with so much more knowledge about how to do that at our level from athlete training to venue and course preparation and set. It was valuable to see how the u16 Finals crew at Attitash in March followed exactly the process I would have envisioned post PARA camp. So it is also important that we continue to cycle coaches through any future projects with AD or figure out how to get more engaged outside our own camps, and then continue to bring that expertise to bear on our own speed camps and races.

I think that hits all the notes I wanted to cover, and thank you for surfacing this, Ben.

