



# EXCELLENCE

An Elite Performance Conference for USSA Clubs   

## 2014 USSA Club Excellence Conference May 14, 2014

### Freestyle S.W.O.T. Analysis

*Evaluating national athletic success from grassroots development to transitioning into elite competitions and the national team.*

The group present thought it important to differentiate between: 1) development leading to elite level and, 2) elite to U.S. team participation. Further, we thought it important to break the umbrella into the five categories: 1) Slope style, B) Aerials, C) Moguls, D) Half pipe, E) Skier cross.

#### Strengths

- Freestyle is very visible and through TV coverage it provides a wonderful marketing opportunity
- The sport has gone main stream and is the “hot new sport”
- Kids want to participate and be involved in the sport, high cool factor
- Freestyle is considered relaxed and fun, especially when compared with Nordic and Alpine
- Freestyle offers a very different culture than Alpine allows athletes to express their free spirit and creative outlook
- Due to the many disciplines freestyle offers access to many options. This versus limited focus as is the case with alpine ski racing
- Freestyles skiers and boarders can “play” in a mounting playground, it's easy for them to try all available options
- Opportunity to learn basic skiing skills at ages 9 to 10
- Many current coaches were previously athletes
- Freestyle requires less equipment than Nordic or Alpine, reduced cost for athletes
- Collegiality, community
- Training occurs across many age groups, provides mentoring opportunities
- USASA-inviting participants from two events to their national championships

#### Weaknesses

- Skill development lacking
- No training modules
- Hard to find coaches, officials, and judges
- Hard to retain coaches
- High number of athlete injuries

- USSA split freestyle and free ski programs
- US ASA is competition to USSA in terms of events. Forces athletes and coaches to make a decision on attending USASA or USSA events, leads to breaking teams into groups attending one or the other competition and goes against the long-term athletic development (LTAD) structure.
- USASA vs. USSA - the two groups don't often work together and teams which compete in both have to pay both membership dues.
- High cost to compete, train, or equipment, travel, and team expenses
- Both USASA and USSA coaches education and training are weak, needs improvement
- USSA events are more expensive than USASA, competitor fees for USASA are approximately \$35 versus USSA are \$50, leads to greater participation in USASA events.

## Opportunities

- Lots of "outside the box" opportunities
- If the schedule allowed an athlete could participate in more than one event during a day/weekend at the same resort, easier for team logistics and coaching
- Fresh talent is easy to locate in the terrain parks
- Sponsors like the visual aspect of these sports
- Very enthusiastic momentum - World domination for USA, 13 medals at the recent Olympics
- All medalists started at clubs
- Freestyle is very spectator friendly
- Recruitment
- Reducing cost for officials opens the door for increased numbers of, and more qualified officials
- Offering more regional, distance-learning or web-based official training may increase number of officials
- All Rocky Mountain slope style and half pipe events are organized by USASA, not USSA, could USSA enter that region?
- Generate additional revenues by increasing the number of participants
- USASA could be used as a recruitment tool if USASA and USSA were officially tied together

## Threats

- Injury
- Large number of disciplines, if participation is reduced some may go away

- Specializing in one discipline at an early age
- Ski areas wanting to allocate resources and hill space
- Freestyle perceived as loosey-goosey, not well coordinated
- Ski areas need to build parks to a defined specification, focusing on safety and community use
- Conflict for hill space (general public versus competition)
- Big liability
- Slope style overshadows moguls
- Judges pay money to work at races (net - when taking into consideration training, travel and other expenses offsetting their daily compensation)
- Head tax and sanction fees reduce the ability for clubs to host financially viable events
- USASA can send snowboarding athletes to the US team without participating in USSA feeder programs
- USSA governance needs to shift their thought process