

2019/20 RACE COMMITTEE REPORT

Race Committee

Scott Thompson, Race Director

Brian Opitz, Head Coach

Juliette Lamb, Race Administrator

STRATEGIC IMPERATIVES

For the 2019/20 season, we had identified a few areas of focus.

1. Focus on technical development for all ages and adjust skiing curriculum based on terrain.

- a. 2019/20 continued its focus on increasing technical skills. For all age groups, less time was spent in long pole environments and more time was spent on the technical aspects of skiing. I.e. pure fundamentals relating to edging, lateral and vertical movements, weighting and unweighting etc. Due to this, we saw direct results in our athlete's ability to perform within various environments both in and out of race courses. We will continue to push this philosophy into the 2020/21 season.
- b. We continued to evolve programming with athletes concentrating their efforts based on certain terrain types. Slalom on shorter vertical slopes such as Glen Eden and G.S. on longer vertical slopes such as MSLM. We incorporated more away days for this to happen. 2 during Christmas Camp, 2 during regular season.

2. Grow the entry level (specifically JDL - U12 and younger) age cohort to ensure long term sustainability within the club.

- a. A solid foundation of Jr. athletes is key to building a successful program! For this to happen, we need to do the following:
 - i. Grow our base of JDL athletes.
 - ii. Transition JDL athletes quicker into the competitive program (By age 12 at the latest)

We began this journey by engaging Koreen Ott (Thanks Koreen!) to build a solid marketing plan to encourage new member sign ups. A strong social media program drove awareness, enquiries and sign ups. We also actively pushed our programming at our ski swap and with our sponsorship partners. We continued by driving awareness and encouraging new member sign-up's in the spring during our "Open House" and at the visitor Center as members of Glen Eden signed up for 2020/21 early bird registrations.

For athletes that were already enrolled in the JDL program, we actively invited them to participate in invitational racers with the goal of educating parents that the transition from JDL to competitive teams was minimal. It also increases athlete engagement in the sport and builds life long friendships for both athletes and parents.

As of today, we are happy to announce that early sign ups have been very strong at the JDL level, more than in the previous few years. Some JDL athletes have also made the transition to competitive programs. We will continue this strategic imperative during the 2020/21 season.

3. Build our coaching pipeline and extend our athletes passion for skiing.

We believe that ski racing is a life long skill and coaching is an evolution of the racer. It is imperative that we effectively transition racers to coaches. It keeps families in the sport and ensures a strong pipeline for MHRC.

It was clear to the board that we needed to make time for our Brian (our head coach) to mentor our athletes and to encourage them to become coaches. This takes planning, communication, and dedicated time allowance to occur properly. Thanks Brian for doing such a great job! Last season we had 8 apprentices and 10 Level 1 coaches. We will continue to execute on this initiative during the 2020/21 season.

4. Increasing diversity in the coaching ranks.

An important element of developing an in-house coaching pipeline is increasing our number of female coaches. A more diverse, gender balanced coaching staff shows a viable avenue beyond racing for our female athletes; last season females accounted for nearly half our athlete population and the coaching staff saw its largest group of 7 female coaches of a total 21 (33.3%) with 2 assigned to our competitive teams. However, breaking into a male dominated environment adds more challenges beyond being a new coach. Providing support and guidance is essential and to that end Ally Dandy was brought on board as our Female Coach Mentor. As a former MHRC athlete and experienced coach she understands the challenges and did a fantastic job providing insight and support to our female coaches. Much thanks and appreciation to Ally.

Clearly more needs to be done and much can be leveraged from the efforts last season. Increasing coach diversity remains a core element of coach development for 2020/21.

5. Continue to nurture the 17/18/19 age cohort to limit early “drops” out of racing from our athletes.

Within all sports, there is a tendency for athletes to drop out as they approach Sr. High School and University. Headwinds such as increased focus on education, social circles becoming more important and burn out from sport are inherent. Skiing can become a release from these every day stresses. As athletes “age out”, it is important for our coaches to become mentors and to encourage the fun side of the sport. At MHRC, we understand that and will adjust our coaching philosophy within the older ages to encourage participation.

6. Continue with SBX (Snowboard) programming.

It was a very challenging year at MHRC regarding our Snowboarding program. In short, we had to cancel the entire program due to a lack of a coach(s). We were not happy about this, snowboarding remains an important aspect of our snowsports program and sits high on our radar. Unfortunately, it looks like a lack of a coach for this upcoming year will continue to be a problem. We are addressing this with G.E.

THE SECRET SAUCE!

It’s important for you to know that something special is going on at Milton Heights Racing Club! We really can’t put a finger on any one item, it’s most likely a combination of strong athletes, great coaching and enthusiastic members and volunteers. The reality is that pound for pound, MHRC produces incredible skiers and amazing results! MHRC consistently wins team point standings to the amazement of surrounding clubs! Congrats to everyone, because all of you make up the secret sauce!

SPECIAL THANK YOU TO OUR TEAM MANAGERS

A big Thank You to our Team Managers for keeping their teams on track!

U10: Lisa Baxter

U12: Christoph Ott

U14: Cyrus Pfuetzner

U16/19: Sherry Westfahl / Lisa Silveira

TNT: Greg Weeks

OTHER HIGHLIGHTS

- Preseason Dryland Training continues to evolve. We saw increased participation at all levels; this helped with early season team bonding. Incorporating High Ropes courses pushed athletes to overcome fears and built mental strength. Indoor skiing allowed athletes to get the early season feel and rhythm on their skis. We encourage our families to ensure there athletes meet minimum fitness testing prior to the ski season and we do see an opportunity to align our physical fitness programming to align with AOA fitness testing protocols. It is clear, physical fitness directly correlates to better skill development and safer skiing in general.
- Pre-season on-snow training was held once again in Mont Tremblant. We expanded the camp offering by including a 3-day option to the 5-day camp. We were encouraged by our highest level of participation ever, a total of **35 Athletes participated!** Great fun was had by all, our first ever team dinner showed us just how exciting it is to be associated with such an amazing club.
- An early jump to the season (in Nov!) allowed for more time on snow at the beginning of the program. We will continue to chase early season snow as more mileage on skis directly correlates to improved skiing.
- We worked hard to increase our relationships with clubs throughout Ontario. This allowed us to incorporate more optional Friday away training days for those who could participate along with team away training at Craigeith, Devil's Glen and MSLM; the freezing rain weekend at the end of January caused us to cancel a training opportunity at Georgian Peaks. We are encouraged by the relationships we have formed within the skiing community and know that it will result in future dividends for our athletes.
- Alpine Ontario - Both Scott and Brian participated in monthly Alpine Ontario (AOA) Club calls. We continue to make connections within AOA and ensure the voice of our club is heard and understood.
- Who's your Steve? Mental preparation is important for athletes and is often overlooked. We will continue to add mental training aspects to our everyday training.