



Pennsylvania (PARA) Alpine Officials 2015-2016 Report

April 24, 2016

Submitted by Rob Lipton, Alpine Officials Chair

Ski Racing Season Highlights:

This ski season was one for the record books. It was the latest start to the Ski Season in PA for at least 25 to 30 years. As good as the Ski season was last year (14-15), this year was just the opposite. Needless to say, there were many changes to the race schedule with several races were cancelled.

When the weather cooperated (this didn't occur a whole lot this season), races were held as calendared, but there were many more races that were moved to allow the ROC's enough time to make snow so that their race could be held. Although races were scheduled at the end of December 2015, the first ski race was not held until 1/16/2016. The ROC and mountain crew who held that first race performed the herculean task to get the hill ready with a minimal amount of favorable weather conditions. It is a testament to our PARA clubs that the race venues were as well prepared as they were given the extremely adverse weather conditions. I can attest personally to extraordinary preparation required to prepare the Blue Mountain race venue (razors edge) where Matty DePaulo and race crew (known as the dark side) spread one ton of urea to make the race hill ready for our GS & SG events this season

Once again USSA announced Ski equipment specifications and then changed them several times before the race season began, leading to a bit of ambiguity on exactly what was legal and what was not. Other changes in the ACR included the adoption of new helmet that specified exactly what type of helmets are allowed to be worn by a competitors (14 yrs. and older). These helmets are required to display a FIS sticker indicating compliance with the new standards.

A new Pennsylvania state law requiring several child abuse background checks added to the complexity of race programs hiring and retaining coaches. In order to comply with the law PARA also required designated ski coaches, selected to attend post-season events, to attain and submit these clearances to the PARA president.

In addition to learning and using a new timing and calculation software (Vola) required by USSA for all alpine ski races (see report below) a new vendor was required for competitors to register for ski races. [Admin SkiRacing](#) was recommended by PARA and most ROC's used their service. The transition went relatively smoothly; with only a few problems reported.

However, the unfortunate timing of having the Race administrator learn a new system, competitors learning to use the new registration system, timing crews and RAs learning a new timing software



program and finally mother nature not cooperating; causing the Chief of race, Chief of course, mountain crew, etc. to work extra hard to prepare the hill; made for the most difficult ski racing season in by 30 years of Alpine ski coaching and officiating.

Vola Software Report:

This year we were presented with a new Timing program (Vola). The announcement and the implementation time-line facing the ROCs in PARA was less than ideal. Vola became a topic of much discussion, angst, interpretation, and irritation by the ROCs around the state. I attributed this to the fear of the unknown, and the short-time-frame before the software would be needed to time races.

When attending the FIS TD October update in Denver, I found out that it would be my responsibility to calm the fears, mitigate the effects and provide training and support for this new timing software. As you can imagine, I couldn't wait to start (lol)

Upon returning home, I began to plan an implementation strategy to train and provide information dissemination of this new software package. In consultation with the PARA executive committee, I recommended a Vola "Guru" be designated to train and support out RA and Timing Alpine officials in PA.

We chose a senior T&C/RA AO (Joe Bender) to lead this initiative. We financially supported his attendance at the first Vola training in the east run by a Vola employee. After that training, we set up a train-trainer sessions (led by Joe PARA Vola trainer) in the 4 different regions in our state. We also created a Vola "dropbox" folder with timely information and invited all those responsible for the T&C/RA functions in PARA. Our PARA Vola trainer also sent out numerous timely emails about Vola to the same audience.

In addition to the scheduled trainings, we also provided additional trainings by him at his home mountain. He was available via phone for any/all questions throughout the season. "It rang a lot"! He also attended several early/first races to help the ROC with the timing and the RA function. Having this dedicated PARA support person for the Vola software implementation greatly helped the situation and mitigated the problems associated with implementing this new software. Joe's dedication and exemplary performance "going above and beyond" from what was required was critical to its success.

Another mitigating factor was the help received from the USSA national & eastern personnel dedicated to the Vola software implementation. They helped to smooth out some of the logistics and other issues such as procuring the Timing Keys and escalating missing critical functionality from the software to the Vola developers. They were accessible by phone and were a good resource for helping with software questions/issues.

Not every race ran perfectly and some ROCs still complained and requested that changes be made to the software. I did receive email requesting that Split Second software be used for timing instead of Vola (these



requests were not granted). We continued to find anomalies in the software and sent requests to fix them. Vola appeared to be responsive and continued to update the software fixing most of the “most” critical problems that were needed to successfully time the race...

Personal Perspective:

Like most AO chairs, I had some trepidations when finding out that we would be using new timing software (Vola) for this ski season. My early impressions of Vola were that there would be a significant learning curve/cliff for most of our AO's T&C/RA folks before they would be able to master this software. However, I believed that it could be successfully implemented. Perhaps, because of my background in computing; I thought to myself that it could be used as long as the basic “timing functionality” was usable and it was! I found it quite easy to operate and thus... all the rest of the functionality needed for timing the race can be learned with some practice.

Our home mountain T&C crew Frank and Kevin directed by Pete Sheetz (Mugsy) who spent many hours on the system and successfully timed approximately a dozen races throughout the season. As the crew became more familiar with the RA functionality we discovered that it was easier to produce the required documents than the previous software. The general consensus by our Timing Crew was that Vola was better (more versatile) and easier to use than the previous software timing program.

We were able to get the hardware to communicate with the program with a minimum of effort including our score board, which was an issue for many ROCs. I believe that some of the problems associated with Vola were actually operating system incompatibilities and hardware interface issues (serial to USB) that were attributed to the Vola software program. We eliminated these potential pitfalls by using operating system software and hardware that was compatible. Fred Patton, did provide some guidance with the hardware with the Vola software. In turn our timing crew provided Fred with some hardware solutions (work arounds), discovered by us, when working with Vola software.

Vola's poorly worded and incomplete documentation aside and the awkward labeling of the computer program interface; but once you got a little practice with it, the Vola timing function (itself) was rather intuitive. Again, after using the RA functionality a bit; that too became a time saver and my favorite part of Vola... You know how much TDs love to do paperwork!!!

Bottom-line, once the program functionality was updated for those requirements unique to USSA ski racing, and with some practice and exploration of the programs capabilities, Vola was an acceptable program for Timing a ski race.



Alpine Officials by the Numbers:

During the 2015-16 season, there were 328 Alpine Officials in PARA. This is an **addition of 9 Alpine Officials** in PARA from the 2014-15 year.

At least 193 had attained at least one AO certification; up from 165 in 2014-15. 16 alpine officials have all nine specialty certifications. There are 18 certified Technical Delegates in PARA. Of the 18 certified Technical Delegates, 8 TD's *a reduction of 5 over last year* handled PARA's race calendar.

There are 149 (+3) alpine officials with a **competition official** certification, 116 (no change) alpine officials with a **referee certification**, 129 (+9) alpine officials with a **jury advisor** certification, 43 (-10) alpine officials with a **chief of course** certification, 37 (no change) alpine officials with a **chief of race** certification, 33 (-3) alpine officials with a **data management** certification, 33 (-3) alpine officials with a **race administrator** certification and 41 (+7) alpine officials with a **timing and calculation** certification.

We have a dedicated alpine official community in Pennsylvania, and I am very proud and honored to represent them. Thank you for everything you do for alpine ski racing ... without you, there would be no ski racing in PARA.

Educational Opportunities:

PARA provided three general Alpine Officials workshops, geographically dispersed throughout the state*. They were held at Camelback (East, North East) Seven Springs (Western), and at Ski Roundtop (Central). There were a total of 114 participants who attended these three Alpine Official workshops. These three AO workshops held throughout the state were facilitated by myself. There was a continued emphasis on the USSA 2015-16 Alpine Officials Fall Update document. Other current and relevant information on the upcoming USSA ski racing season were also covered in these sessions. Alpine Official Exams were offered to those who requested them. There were a number of Vola Timing Software workshops *also provided throughout the state*. For more detail on this critical training initiative see the Vola software report found elsewhere in this report.

Again this year USSA and PARA sponsored a full day of continuing education; especially designed for race coaches. This FREE workshop was open to all Club Coaches in PARA. The workshop occurred in, November 2015, from 8:00 AM To 4:30 PM at Ski Roundtop, by Martin Geyer USSA - Eastern Region Alpine Program Director conducted this workshop. There were over 50 Coaches attending from a eleven different programs from SARA, NJSRA and PARA. Those who attended earned a full-day of continuing education coaches' credit.

I continue to host the PARA AO Website <http://scis.nova.edu/~rlipton/para/default.htm>. The Alpine Officials community uses this website to retrieve the most recent versions of all USSA forms and documents and to find out about other pertinent updates, rule changes, clarifications and other timely information useful to our AO community. The revised race schedule for the past year is posted on the first page of the website



Ski Race Statistics:

PARA Calendared Forty (41) U10 – U21, Master, Senior, (Men & Women) Races. 1 Super G camp 2 days. One races was cancelled 1 race was changed to run on the same day as another.

Total of 35 (-5) thirty seven races plus 2 Super G Camp days ... 37 Total Events

Month & Year	Number of Race Days Men and Women events counted as one race
December 2015	0
January 2016	10
February 2016	22 +2 days (SG Camp)
March 2016	3

Scored – Non-Scored Races:

- 10 - Scored
- 22 - Non-scored
- 3 - Both

For the 2015-2016 Ski Season, PARA has 13 Active Technical Delegates who worked at least one race.

1 TDs Officiated 8 races
1 TD Officiated 7 races
3 TDs Officiated 4 race
1 TD Officiated 3 race
2 TDs Officiated 1 race

Note: Three (3) TD’s had injuries that did not allow them to perform all of their scheduled events for the entire season. Special thanks to Gus for helping out!

Upgrades and Promotions:

328 Alpine Officials Registered in PA (increase of 9 over last year)

40 Exams Administered

- 25 Referee (2 USCSA)
- 9 Jury Advisor
- 1 Technical Delegate 3
- 2 Timing and Calculation Exam I
- 2 Chief of Race
- 1 Race Administrator



There are 41 PARA Alpine Officials recommended for promotion to a level 1 or 2 for 2015-2016 year

Classification	Number of Requests
CC : CHIEF OF COURSE	1
CO : COMPETITION OFFICIAL	8
CR : CHIEF OF RACE	2
DM : DATA MANAGEMENT	3
JA : JURY ADVISOR	10
RA : RACE ADMINISTRATOR	3
RF : REFEREE	25
TC : TIMING AND CALCULATIONS	3
TD : TECHNICAL DELEGATE	1
Total	54

Level 3 or 4 PARA AO Upgrades Requested 2015-2016

Classification	Number of Requests
RA : Technical Delegate 3	1

5522503 John Reihner

Expired Updates (2012 or earlier) required 2 downgrades of certifications.

Issues and Concerns - on the Horizon (many of the same issues as previous years)

- TD Recruitment (one new TD for the 2016-17) two more in the Pipeline
- Average Age of TD's in PA 60+
- Continued need to help ROC's implementing Vola Timing Software
- Escalating direct and indirect costs by USSA and PARA being passed on to the ROC for hosting races They include costs to prepare the venue for security of the competitor and appropriateness of the race venue, new equipment for timing, and ever increasing head taxes.
- Continued equipment changes, regulations, procedures and additional responsibilities by the Alpine Officials and ROC... Example homologated GS panels, FIS inscribed helmet requirement.
- Staffing of races with qualified(certified) personnel (becoming a critical issue for some ROC's)

Respectfully Submitted - April 24, 2016

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