

PRESIDENTS REPORT

2013/14 season

This was a season marked by change. Age group changes instituted by FIS and USSA previously came fully into effect as was reflected in our decision to change how we determined State Championships. The shuffle of age groups and resulting realignment of Derby locations and groupings caused considerable concern for many of our members. As the season approached, many among us realized that decisions made at last year's Annual Meeting needed to be further refined and amended. The result was a series of conference meetings among major stake holders that resolved most of the issues we considered. Still, as with any new system there were minor issues that surfaced throughout the season. In the end however, our athletes continued to perform at or above expectations and went on to represent us well at post season events.

The group most effected by all of the change were the U-16 athletes. For the first time within PARA, this group of athletes raced for seed points. There was concern that some would be left behind if they did not chase points throughout the season but it seems clear that the best athletes were the ones who performed at the top of the rankings come year end. Next year there will be a strong points base from which to build profiles for all of our U-16's. While controversial, the U-16's also competed with though not against U-18's for final standings. The event was met with mixed reviews even though Elk did an admirable job of managing the event. One of the concerns voiced often was that U-16's should be afforded their own free standing event and not be forced to race with older athletes for championship standings. This will no doubt be a major topic for discussion at this years Annual Meeting.

Also new this year was a Speed Camp held at Blue Mountain. Originally intended for U-16 athletes, the event was eventually opened to U-14's as well. The event was a resounding success and was highly praised by USSA Regional Exec., Eric Harlow who was in attendance. Athletes attending had several attempts at each of the speed element stations laid out on the hill on the first day and then on the second day multiple runs of a full course. Coaching to small groups was provided, by coaches from around the state, with feedback given after each section or run. The response from athletes was exceptional and the results of the training very evident. This was clearly a great first step toward preparing our athletes to compete regionally.

U-14's also received speed training at Seven Springs during the U-14 Derby. The format and coaching was similar to the U-16 camp and was equally successful. Having been the site of past J-3 Derbies Seven Springs was well prepared to stage the event and did its usual outstanding job of hosting and completing 3 runs of both Slalom and giant slalom in addition to the camp.

Ski Roundtop hosted the U-12 Derby utilizing the format previously used for previous J-4/5 Derbies. This included a Skills Quest event on Friday and three runs of both slalom and giant slalom on Saturday and Sunday.

A common theme among all the Derbies was a drive to increase the level of competition for all of our athletes and better prepare them for competition at events outside the state post season. Exposing athletes to points for the first time was unsettling to some but resolved quickly. All in all, 2013/14 was a very successful season with lessons learned that will be used to refine our approach and further improve the experience of our athletes.

On a personal note, it has truly been my honor and privilege to serve PARA as president and work alongside many dedicated and knowledgeable Directors. It is however, time for me to move on and allow new blood to guide PARA in the future. I want to wish everyone with whom I have worked, as well as my successor great success and look forward to watching PARA grow.