

SPEED COMMITTEE REPORT

Executive Summary:

- The PARA Directors approved \$6,500 to support speed education for PARA athletes and created a new Speed Committee to review funding requests and recommend them to the Executive Committee for Approval.
- Matt Superczynski of the Liberty Mountain Race Team organized an outstanding speed camp for U16 and older athletes at Okemo which was staffed by a combination of 6 World Cup/Olympic Coaches and PARA club coaches.
 - The camp consisted of three days of training followed by a scored Super-G race.
 - 83 PARA athletes participated along with 13 coaches from PARA clubs
 - The camp provided outstanding speed training for the athletes, as well as a unique and very valuable educational opportunity for the participating coaches.
- For the 2023-24 season, Matt Superczynski has submitted a \$5,000 matching grant application to the Killington World Cup Foundation.
- The Committee recommends the following for the coming season:
 - Provide \$5,000 to support the American Downhill camp at Okemo
 - Give priority registration for that camp to the top U16s
 - Require clubs sending athletes to provide or arrange for a coach to help support their athletes (e.g. max 6:1 ratio)
 - Foster age-appropriate speed training at venues in PARA starting at the U12 level
 - Provide \$5,000 to support up to PARA clubs to hold U12 focused camps this season (open to U14s too and held in-state)
 - Provide \$300 each for homologation inspections for up to three venues
 - Also consider additional funding to add a U14 component at the end of the Okemo American Downhill camp
 - Total 2023-24 budget request: \$10,900 to support a total two out of state camps and one to three in-state camps.

Background:

At the Spring 2022 Meeting, the Directors approved a new budget item to promote speed education for PARA athletes. The Directors approved funding for two tracks of education:

1. A U16 focused speed camp to be held on age-appropriate terrain (possibly at an out of state venue), and
 2. A second more introductory track for U16 and younger athletes which envisioned up to
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three 'flight-camps' hosted by one or more PARA clubs within the state.

An overall budget of \$6,500 was approved with \$3,500 for the U16 and older camp, and \$3,000 for several introductory level camps to be held at venues within the state (with \$1,000 for each club-hosted camp). Both tracks were to be open to participants from all PARA clubs.

The Directors also approved a new Speed Committee to review funding proposals and make recommendations to the Executive Committee for Funding. PARA Board Members appointed to the Committee were: Ben Shirk (SRRC), Erik Backlund (JFRT), and Kurt Zwally (Independent) who was to serve as the Chair. With Erik's move to NYSEF, the Executive Committee appointed Matt Dembinski (JFRT) to fill the open seat.

2023 Funding Request Received:

In the fall of 2022, Matt Superczynski of LMRT (aka Matt Super) submitted a proposal to the Committee requesting PARA to provide \$5,000 for a multi-day speed at Okemo camp staffed by a combination of World Cup Coaches affiliated with the American Downhiller group plus coaches from PARA clubs that opt to send athletes. The camp consisted of three days of training followed by two scored SG races. The proposal indicated the camp would be funded by a combination of entry fees, the \$5,000 requested from PARA, and grant applications to be submitted to other organizations, such as the Killington World Cup Foundation, etc..

The Speed Committee reviewed the proposal and having received no other funding requests for the 202-23 season, the Committee advanced the proposal to the Executive Committee with a recommendation for approval. The Executive Committee voted unanimously to approve the \$5,000 for the Okemo camp on 10/10/2022.

As the season drew closer, it became clear that deadlines for the Killington World Cup Foundation and other grant providers had already passed. A second funding request was presented to the Committee for PARA to support PARA Clubs that send coaches to the camp. Specifically, PARA funding was requested to provide a fixed \$1,000 or \$500 stipend per coach to support up to 16 club coaches (with the amount depending on the coach's experience level).

Part of the rationale for providing the additional funding to support coaches was that the camp itself would provide a unique Coaches Education opportunity. The opportunity for PARA club coaches to observe and coach alongside World Cup/Olympic Speed Coaches would help improve the skills of the participating PARA coaches.

The Speed Committee reviewed the request and advanced the proposal to the Executive Committee with a recommendation for approval. The Executive Committee voted on 12/22/2022 to approve the proposal on a one-time basis, and directed the Speed Committee to

develop criteria for selecting coaches for either the \$500 or \$1,000 stipend (paid to their club). In the end, clubs sent 14 coaches and PARA provided \$9,500 in stipends to clubs.

Speed Camp Results:

Overall the camp was a very successful and the Speed Committee is grateful for Matt Super's initiative and vision, and all the hard work he put into making the camp happen. The Committee also thanks all of the PARA coaches that took off work to help staff the event and gain valuable experience. Matt's detailed summary of the camp itself is attached to this report.

The Committee also very much appreciates Matt Super's willing to organize the camp again this coming season, and that he has applied for grant funding from outside of PARA. Matt has applied for a \$5,000 matching grant from the Killington World Cup Foundation.

Feedback and suggestions for improving the camp shared with the Committee Chair, include:

- The registration limit was reached very quickly.
- Camp registration opening date(s) should be publicized further in advance to give more time for programs to educate their athletes about the opportunity.
- Priority registration should be given to PARA's top athletes.
- PARA should also offer speed training for U14s and U12s.

For the coming season, the Matt Super is interested in adding a U14 Cohort after the U16-focused camp, and he is requesting only \$5,000 from PARA to cover the cost of both camps.

Recommendations for 2023-24 and beyond:

The Speed Committee recommends PARA continue to support the American Downhill camp with several improvements, while also providing in-state speed training opportunities starting at the U12 level.

PARA should start developing speed skills at the U12 level for a variety of reasons. It is widely recognized that exposing athletes to speed skills helps improve their technical event skills. Second, the post-season events organized by USSS include SG starting at the U14 level and continuing through those for U18s/21 athletes. Therefore, PARA should help our athletes gain the skills to safely compete in these events. Like many other aspects of ski racing, speed skills are best fostered through semi-regular training opportunities over several years where the next experience is layered on top of the previous one. Finally, effective and safe speed training is REALLY fun.

The Committee recommendations PARA budget \$5,000 to support the American Downhiller project with the following improvements:

1. Approve Matt Super's proposal to add a U14 camp immediately following the U16-U21 camp.
2. Require camp organizers offer priority registration for each camp for members of the prior year's U16 and U14 State Teams.
3. Continue to allow the U19s to participate in the U16 focused camp, and allow them to register through the general/open registration period.
4. Require camp organizers to publish in advance the date and time that general registration and priority registration will open so these dates can be published on the PARA website under a new main menu-bar heading called "Speed Camps."
5. Allow camp organizers to set a minimum number of athletes, and allow camp organizers to open the camp to athletes from outside of PARA should the total number of registrations not hit that minimum number by two weeks before the event.

The Committee also recommends PARA budget \$5,900 to start fostering speed skills at the U12 level this coming season. These funds would be used to:

1. Provide \$5,000 to support PARA clubs who would be willing to host a 2-3 day speed skills camps on U12 appropriate terrain at venues in the state.
 - a. These camps should consist of min of 1 day of skills plus either a U12/U14 SG or a fast GS (depending on current homologation status).
 - b. Camps should be open to U12 and U14 athletes who qualified for Derbies the previous year.
 - c. Camp registrations should be structured to give priority registration U12 and U14 athletes who qualified for State Teams the previous year.
 - d. The Speed Committee should review bids from PARA clubs, and make funding recommendations to the Executive Committee for approval on a rolling, first-come, first-served basis starting in late Summer.
 - e. It is recognized that coaches from clubs outside the host organization may be needed to properly staff these camps and provide a safe and effective training environment. Host clubs should be permitted to either use PARA funds to provide stipends help cover the lodging or other costs of 'outside' coaches, or require clubs sending athletes to arrange for coaching coverage for their athletes. Any such provisions regarding outside coaches should be addressed in bids/funding requests submitted to the Speed Committee.
2. Provide \$300 each to a max of three PARA clubs to support U14 and under SG homologations inspection at their venues.

The Kelly Brush Foundation offers grants for race venue safety improvements, and PARA

seed funding for homologation inspections would help Clubs identify whether or not any venue improvements would be needed to offer a SG race experience as part of the U12/U14 speed camps in future years.

In sum, the last year PARA took an important step forward in providing valuable and rewarding speed skills education for our athletes. The Speed Committee would like to thank:

- Matt Super for his vision, initiative, and hard work organizing and implementing the Okemo American Downhill project
- The Executive Committee for their oversight and guidance,
- All of the PARA coaches who took off work to help make the Okemo project happen, and
- Everyone who provided valuable feedback and suggestions for improving future PARA-sponsored speed projects.

Any Directors that have other ideas for how PARA can help develop our athletes' speed skills are welcome to contact any member of the Speed Committee.

Sincerely,

Kurt Zwally, Speed Committee Chair (Independent)
Ben Shirk, Speed Committee Member (SRRC)
Matt Dembinski, Speed Committee Member (JFRT)

American Downhill Camp Wrap Up Report by Matt Super to be attached after the meeting.