

Dear Team Afton Community,

I hope your summer is going as well as it can be during these times. If you have ever listened to one of my orientation meetings, you will know the refrain to: “what’s the most important word?” followed by the 2<sup>nd</sup> most important word, etc... We teach our ski racers about safety and respect. This is a time when those two words mean more than ever — safety in everything we do and respect for ourselves and others guides us.

I have just returned from summer skiing on Mt. Hood, and I’m pleased to report that ski racing continues. We trained alongside other teams (including the U.S. Ski Team) and we took many steps to limit risks of spreading Covid-19. Some of our adjustments always included wearing face coverings (except in the course,) physical distancing in the parking lot and lift lines – and of course indoors, running training in new shifts to avoid overcrowding, and using Zoom meetings to replace many in person meetings. It worked well. So far, everyone has been healthy.



It is not going to be the same this year, but Team Afton is moving forward. Ski racing is all about adaptability. Ski racing will be a healthy opportunity for our

children that is as safe as it can be, as long as we are adaptable and remain committed to safety and respect.

I serve on several boards involving ski racing across the country. Both within USS&S / Region 1 (our governing organizations for racing) and within Team Afton, we are working diligently to develop plans and policies that will keep kids, parents, and coaches as safe as possible.

Some potential changes have been tried in other sports and could make sense for us:

- Face coverings are essential – and will be required both on the hill and off. Skiing lends itself to accomplishing this – we wear them all the time already!
- Potentially adding training sessions and changing up race weekends to limit the number of kids on the hill
- Limiting spectators
- Promoting changing outside or in the car vs. indoors (let's hope for a mild winter!)

No policies have been set yet – and many will remain fluid as we adapt to the changing circumstances. We will consider these options and others so we can put in place the best guidelines possible as the season approaches. We are in close coordination with U.S. Skiing and we are monitoring County, State and National Health Departments for Guidance.

Here is what you can do to get your kids ready for a great season:

**Stay active.** Get on the bike, get out running, and just get outside. We will be continuing to share fitness options to help this along. U12 and under should be active daily and engaged in activities including organized exercise 1-3 times per week. U14s should be active in activities daily plus engaged in organized workouts 3-5 times per week. U16s and above should consider a structured exercise program that includes weight training from August onward. Contact me if you need help or guidance here. We will be offering a structured program starting soon – involving the Training Haus as well as special ZOOM workouts. Stay tuned – stay active.

**Be prepared.** Start thinking ahead about equipment needs and early season training options now. I am available to meet via Zoom/Facetime/Phone in August to help you plan ahead for the season. With the pandemic, there could potentially be shortages with equipment coming from Europe and elsewhere – so don't delay! Parents should pay attention to announcements about volunteer training. This will be a great way to make sure parents do their part to keep everything moving this winter, and we need more Team Afton parents trained on volunteer positions.

**Be Safe.** Together, we will get through this – and we will be able to function as a ski team and have a ski season if we are all on-board with following safety guidelines. The CEO of Aspen, Mike Kaplan, recently wrote an article that speaks well to the responsibility we all share as skiers. You know the signs on all the lift towers: *Be Aware – Ski with Care!* The same can be applied to how we respond to the pandemic – do right for yourself, do right for others – it all adds up to watching out for each other so we get to do the things we all want to do. There's some other tidbits in the read that are spot on for our sport [Read the article](#)

**Civility & decency.** In the age of technology, especially with the rise of the internet, we receive information at a clip unlike any time before in history, creating a faster paced world in which seemingly anything is possible and it should be available right now. In part from this, an “in-your-face” entitlement for many has become the norm and has eradicated the sense of politeness. With the unrest felt around the world, in our nation, and locally, that tension has only gotten worse. For the sake of our children, Team Afton will give it's best efforts and good faith to deliver a program that is a refuge from a society that seems at times at its breaking point. In turn, we have an expectation that everyone involved with Team Afton will also exercise civility and decency as a matter of fact. Together we can deliver a space that is grounded on enthusiasm for skiing and the freedom that comes with the wind in your face and the sensation of sliding on snow-covered slopes that we all embrace. It's for the kids. It's for all of us.

**Stay optimistic.** Our kids are watching us. We can be realistic with them and acknowledge the troubles we all are facing while also sharing our optimism that we can all adapt together. It is common for our Team Afton athletes to cheer for each other in the start and say, “You got this!” Well... make sure your

children know that “We got this!” As coaches and parents, we are not going to let our kids down. This is precious time for them, and we are going to do our best to make it safe and fun.

Reach out to me with your questions, concerns, or feedback or just to schedule a 1:1 planning session with your athlete(s) and me which you are welcome to attend. If there is a lot of demand, we might change these to small group sessions, but reach out and we will get it scheduled.

So, it’s mid-August. The lakes are still warm, the humidity is still making this Midwest summer a sticky mess, school is about to start – looking quite different than it usually does. Soon enough, the weather will turn. The brisk fall air invigorates us to what’s coming – WINTER! Registration will open very soon. We have some incentives to register early, and if you have any questions about the season – like about how’s this going to work, or how’s that going to shake out – don’t hesitate to reach out. If we don’t have an answer right now, we should have an idea pretty soon.

Until then, be safe. Respect each other, and respect yourself.

My best in skiing,  
TonyO