

# CCO OCup Review

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## Introduction

Cross-Country Ontario (CCO), through its High Performance Committee (HPC), is responsible for ensuring that Ontario able-bodied and Para-nordic athletes have access to a series of high calibre races comprising Ontario Cup (OCup) race series.

In turn, the HPC is responsible for establishing the criteria for acceptance onto the Ontario Ski team. A major component of the objective criteria are the points awarded via how athletes place in the the OCup race series. In addition, the CCO provides a technical package that a host club must adhere to ensure that the race organization and delivery of are of the highest quality.

The HPC created a sub-committee with a mandate to review all aspects of the existing OCup race series and provide an initial set of recommendations to the HPC, CCO Board and the broader Ontario XC skiing community. The goal is to recommend improvements to the OCup series looking out over the next five years.

The discussions included, but were not limited to, the following:

- determine if the scheduling and number of events included in the OCup race series is appropriate for our athletes and member clubs. Where *appropriateness* was considered for many aspects including:
  - appropriate for their athletic development (as specified in CCC's LTAD);
  - appropriate and fair for all the member clubs;
  - fair and equitable for athletes from across the entire province.
- ensuring the quality of the *delivery* of an OCup event for the athlete was of the highest calibre. We need to ensure that our athletes are provided with well-run events with courses that are appropriate to their needs as defined by the LTAD. The race officiating must also be the best it can to ensure fairness and exposing the athlete to what they can expect at higher tier races.
- distribution and formats of the OCup race series across the four districts of the CCC.

This document provides a draft set of recommendations with some of the rationale for each.

In addition, the members of the sub-committee gathered insights, feedback and recommendations from a number of sources:

- input directly from interested coaches, club administrators, athletes and parents of athletes;
- the HPC Committee;
- CCO Board and the four Ontario District board of directors;

This document does **not** represent the end of the process. Recommendations will be discussed as an

agenda item for the 2011 CCO AGM. This document provides background to all participants of the CCO AGM, and it is expected that each district will ensure that a representative is ready and able to present that districts point of view for these discussions. Where possible, recommendations are to be updated and agreed upon at the conclusion of the AGM. Recommendations and further discussion areas will likely be identified and worked on subsequent to the AGM.

## **Objectives of the OCup Race Series**

### **Principal Goal**

It is important to establish the primary goal of the OCup race series. All recommendations must be able to trace back to this goal and determine if the recommendation provides some value to that goal. The sub-committee established that the principal goal of the OCup Race Series must be *athlete-centric*:

A means to objectively identify high performing athletes (both able-bodied and Para-Nordic) from Training to Train to Learning to Compete Long-Term Athlete Development (LTAD) categories inclusive.

The race series establishes a set of checkpoints that can be used to objectively measure each athlete against their peers. As the athlete matures, the OCup race series should prepare them for their eventual selection into an National Development Centre (NDC), and/or the National Ski Team (NST) for participation at national and international events.

### **Secondary Goals**

The OCup race series provides similar benefits to the younger and older race categories, but the focus of the OCup race series should be on the developing athletes in the TTT and LTC LTAD categories. As well, the OCup race series is beneficial to club and coach development.

The recommendations should, where possible, address the following:

- be consistent with, and advance the adoption of the LTAD.
- advance the development of club and district competency in area of race event planning and organization, officials skill development.
- provide a race environment that enables the application of training skills and the development of Ontario Coaches.

The purpose of this document is to provide a set of recommendations while providing feedback opportunities CCO Board, CCO District Chairs, clubs, officials and athletes.

The first milestone in this process is to review and approve all or part of these recommendations at the 2011 CCO AGM for implementation of all or part of these recommendations in the 2011/2012 racing season. Implementation of the remaining recommendations for the 2012/2013 racing season. This will include a review of input received based on feedback from the 2011/12 racing season.

# Recommendations

This section provides the initial set of recommendations proposed by the HPC sub-committee for discussion at the 2011 AGM. Each section also provides some background information on the perceived where the current OCup series meets the primary goal and where improvements are required.

The committee's discussions generally separated in two broad categories:

- *Quality* of the OCup series;
- *Quantity* of the OCup series.

The recommendations follow this categorization. Of course, the discussions and recommendations from one category can have an affect on recommendations from another category e.g., absolute adherence to the OCup technical package ("quality") can impact the number of sites capable of hosting an event ("quantity").

The committee believes that the recommendations presented strike a fair balance between these sometimes competing objectives. Your input is necessary.

## **Quality**

It is important that the *delivery* of each OCup is to the highest possible standard -- ideally measured against adherence to the comprehensive OCup Technical Package. The intent is to ensure that our athletes are exposed to progressively higher standard races in order to prepare them for national and international success.

It is also reasonable to expect that coaches will gain experience from participating, and that our officials will also be challenged as the logistics for race administration increases substantially from running local races, to provincial, nationals and then international level races. This is reflected in details and recommendations of the OCup Technical Package.

## **OCup Technical Package**

The CCO provides a comprehensive OCup Technical Package (OntarioCupTechnicalPackage2010-11\_Final.pdf -- 16 November 2010 [http://xco.org/coaching/document/OntarioCupTechnicalPackage2010-11\\_Final.pdf](http://xco.org/coaching/document/OntarioCupTechnicalPackage2010-11_Final.pdf)) that clearly defines the requirements to host an OCup race event. These requirements include what is required from the trails, facilities, volunteers, and officials. It establishes the expectations for how to organize and run a successful, high calibre event.

At the same time, the CCO must provide guidance to all clubs interested in hosting an OCup to ensure that race is successful. The OCup Technical package provides a means for Ontario officials, race administrators, coaches and athletes to work together to find a recipe for a successful race.

As part of the discussions, the sub-committee asked the member clubs to participate in a survey to

catalog the *existing* facilities that the member clubs have with respect to hosting an OCup style event. Many clubs participated in this survey and the results will be summarized and presented at the 2011 CCO AGM.

In addition to providing an inventory of available facilities the survey also provides the benefits of:

- highlighting to the clubs what exactly is needed for adherence to the technical package including what they would be responsible for providing;
- a baseline from which our officials can assist clubs in identifying what changes are required to ensure compliance.

A balance must be struck so that clubs that can provide a compliant race event are given opportunities and guidance on how to achieve compliance. This guidance should come from the officials and other experienced race organizers to assist interested clubs.

### **Recommendations**

**Quality-#1:** Stricter adherence to the Ontario Technical Package. Ontario clubs selected to host OCup events would identify areas where they are currently compliant or not as per the Technical Package. Working with CCO Officials and experienced race organizers provide a plan on how to achieve compliance prior to the event.

#### *Justification:*

The goal of this recommendation (along with Quality-#2) is to ensure that the race is a well-organized, successful event for everyone. The technical package provides reasonable and realistic expectations on what a host club must do to increase the probability of running a successful, less stressful event for all concerned. Therefore, it is in everyone's best interests to work together to find solutions to any issues, and share experiences.

**Quality-#2:** Create a program and budget to allow qualified Officials and experienced race organizers to share, educate and advise any member club in how they can move toward adherence to the Technical Package, and generally how to run a successful event.

#### *Justification:*

- full compliance to the OCup technical package can seem daunting for some clubs. This recommendation provides the means to assist the club to show how compliance is possible.
- It is in our athlete's best interests to increase the number of sites capable of providing high quality event sites throughout the province. Interested clubs need to be supported in developing their capacity to hold such events. By providing officials to help in course selection and updates required, and experienced race organizers helping with guidance in how to run an event this can improve a club's ability to hold an event.
- Tap into the existing knowledge of how to run a successful race. Several of the larger clubs will have, or could have material they could share e.g., templates on how to run an event. Some of it is possibly generic enough to be helpful to other clubs. But there needs to be some means of collecting and collating it.

**Quality-#3:** Create a program and budget to promote the technical capabilities and experience of Officials within the province.

#### *Justification:*

- while the OCups are currently not strictly limited by the number TDs available within some districts, there are a limited number of officials. Increasing the numbers would *make it easier*

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- to host an OCup event.
- Trained officials can also help with the guidance offered as part of the recommendation.

## **Quantity**

### **OCup Schedule**

This section discusses:

- history of OCup Scheduling (fairness across all districts on an annual basis);
- justification for reviewing the number of OCups per year.

The number of OCups and the scheduling must also consider the criteria used in selecting the Ontario Ski Team and Ontario Junior Development Team -- to ensure that we are fairly and objectively measuring our athletes performance.

### **Recommendations**

**Quantity-#1:** Continue to run a total of four OCup races; equally distributed across the four districts.

*Justification:*

- Four is a reasonable balance of providing enough race opportunities for athletes, while limiting the costs associated with travel.
- The OST/OJDT criteria allow for high performing athlete to attend a subset of all four races and still be adequately and objectively assessed.
- Reducing the number would make the objective measures found in the criteria difficult to justify; while increasing the number would be an unnecessary financial burden, and likely difficult to schedule in an already crowded schedule.
- Still provides an opportunity for older skiers to go to other high level races.

### **Strong Racing Programs & Local Race Series**

While the intent of this document is to discuss the OCup Race series, it cannot be discussed without providing some guidance on helping to establish a strong racing program within the member clubs and/or promoting a local race series. The OCup series should be a goal for every Junior and Juvenile, however, an active local race series ensures that these skiers are adequately prepared for these high calibre events through participation in a set of preparatory races. A vibrant set of racing programs within a district ensures participation at local and OCup races.

It should be noted, that the term 'local', can mean city-wide or across a small geographic area. It need not be across the entire district. Even informal race events with clubs within the same city provide value to the athletes, coaches and race organizers. As well, the Ontario Midget Championships provide another opportunity for clubs to mature their race organizations.

As the promotion and support for creating and enhancing racing programs is already an element of the Ontario Head Coach role, there are no recommendations from this committee.

### **Recommendations**

**Quantity-#2: Promote the running of a local race series.**

*Justification:*

- increased race opportunities -- even informal ones -- allow athletes, coaches, organizers and

- officials to improve their capabilities and confidence;
- an active local race scene provides incremental improvements for clubs that have plans to host an OCup in the future.

### ***Determining Format and Scheduling of OCup***

In the past determining the format and scheduling of the OCup races has been a slightly onerous and drawn out effort. It would be beneficial to establish a CCO driven committee responsible for establishing this information as soon as possible. The committee's goal is to get all the stakeholders involved and reach consensus very early in the season. As well, this would provide a mechanism for all hosting clubs to share information. The early the schedule can be established, the easier it is for athletes, coaches, officials and parents to make decisions about the coming racing season and alter training plans accordingly.

### ***Recommendations***

**Quantity-#3:** Create an OCup Scheduling Sub-Committee to establish the formats and timing of the OCups. Committee comprised of HPC District Reps and ONE member from organizing committee of each selected Host Club and the assigned TD.

#### *Justification:*

- athletes/coaches/parents need the OCup Race series firmed up as soon as possible.
- establish consensus on formats, and distances as early as possible.
- ensure that changes agreed to are shared in a timely manner.
- provide a central body to coordinate with CCC, as required.

## Other Discussion Points

This section provides placeholder

### Funding Recommendations

Some of the recommendations will require some level of funding. The sub-committee feels that it's best to have this kind of discussion at the AGM.

The simplest recommendation to create funds for the recommendations is to charge a modest surcharge to the racer either per race, or per day. Other innovative recommendations would be most welcome to be discussed.

All of this keeping in mind the increasing costs of race fees.

### High Performance Race Events Outside of the OCup Series

The OCup Race series provides our Ontario athletes access to a reasonable number of high performance races with substantive competition. However, other events can provide similar levels of competition e.g., NORAM races in Ontario, WJT, etc. These events are sometimes accommodated within the OCup schedule, and sometimes not. The sub-committee had no specific recommendations on how, or even *if* we should accommodate these other events within the context of the scheduling and format of the OCup Race Series. However, we felt it would be a worthwhile discussion to have at the AGM to see if there is a consensus to an approach (or separate approaches) on this topic.

Other questions to consider:

- When the WJr/U23 Trails comes to Ontario, it will always be a huge draw for Ontario skiers as others across the country. Should we always try to include this race in the OCup?
- This type of race is admittedly focused on a target group that is a little older than the average OCup athlete. Is it a problem to combine these two groups of athletes into the one race (further complicating the race organization)?
- If we do combine these events with OCups, how might this affect race rotation through the Districts?
- If we try to separate them, have we made the Ontario race calendar too busy?

## OCup Series Review -- Summary

This brief provides a high level summary of the recommendations to be discussed at the 2011 CCO AGM. The full document with supporting text can be found [here](#).

Principal Goal: The sub-committee established that the principal goal of the OCup Race Series must be *athlete-centric*:

**A means to objectively identify high performing athletes (both able-bodied and Para-Nordic) from Training to Train to Learning to Compete Long-Term Athlete Development (LTAD) categories inclusive.**

### Draft Recommendations for Discussion at AGM

#### Quality

Quality-#1: Stricter adherence to the Ontario Technical Package. Ontario clubs selected to host OCup events would identify areas where they are currently compliant or not as per the Technical Package. Working with CCO Officials and experienced race organizers provide a plan on how to achieve compliance prior to the event.

Quality-#2: Create a program and budget to allow qualified Officials and experienced race organizers to share, educate and advise any member club in how they can move toward adherence to the Technical Package, and generally how to run a successful event.

Quality-#3: Create a program and budget to promote the technical capabilities and experience of Officials within the province.

#### Quantity

Quantity-#1: Continue to run a total of four OCup races; equally distributed across the four districts.

Quantity-#2: Promote the running of a local race series.

Quantity-#3: Create an OCup Planning Committee to establish the formats and timing of the OCups. Committee comprised of HPC District Reps and ONE member from organizing committee of each selected Host Club and assigned TD.