

Dear Vermont Alpine Racing Association Members:

While your thoughts may be firmly anchored on the summer ahead we are about to open membership for the 2013/14 ski season and I'd like to take a moment to explain some of the changes you will see next year.

Last season was a banner year for Vermont athletes led by Burke Mountain Academy standout Michaela Shiffrin. In just her second full season of World Cup competition she collected the World Championship slalom gold, four World Cup slalom wins and clinched the World Cup title to become the first U.S. slalom World Cup champion since Tamara McKinney in 1983-4. Michaela was joined on the world stage by Ryan Cochran-Siegle from Mount Mansfield Ski Club and Cochran's who followed success at the Junior World Championships in 2012, with points scoring finishes at several World Cup events and by Robby Kelley from UVM and Cochran's who scored in his debut World Cup season.

At the development level our athletes dominated the U16 Eastern Championships and selections to the national U16 project in Park City and at U18 our athletes took more than 50% of available spots from the East to U18 Nationals. The season culminated with an announcement that fourteen of fifty-three nominations to the US Ski team had gone to Vermont trained athletes confirming that our clubs and academies continue to provide outstanding opportunities for athletes to excel in their chosen sport.

During the year ongoing negotiations with USSA over funding and staffing support for the East provided some welcome improvements and promises of additional resources. However, in spite of these overtures we remain convinced that the best way to bring about constructive change at the grass-roots development level in Vermont, and to ensure ongoing success for Vermont athletes, is to be actively engaged in ensuring that our youth and clubs have the support they need. Accordingly, and as previously reported, the annual meeting approved a motion to add a second staff member to our organization in the form of a youth development coordinator.

Following open applications and interviews last month, Alex Krebs was appointed to the new role of Vermont Youth Development Coordinator. Alex is recognized for doing an outstanding job at the eastern level and we now look forward to being able to provide a wide range of services to clubs and athletes including program visits, club coach education, athlete development, and project/camp coordination; all focused around an ethos of taking the very best ideas from national, regional and individual programs and sharing them across the state.

Funding for this new position will be provided by an increase in VARA dues of approximately \$25 per person. At the same time we have adopted a new on-line payment system with Admin Sports that should make VARA registration easier and save you money, as you will no longer be charged a user fee on top of the cost of registration. The new payment system will also be made available to Vermont host sites for race entries.

In taking these actions, we remain committed to providing the best program opportunities and value for all our members. Your board believes that the addition of a Vermont Youth Development Coordinator will bring substantial benefits for all our clubs and members and will further our mission, "To keep ski racing 1st in Vermont, and Vermont ski racers 1st in the world." Your support for our club programs and state organization is highly valued; as always, we appreciate your support and your involvement.

*Respectfully submitted,
Tao Smith - VARA Board President
Killington, VT
06/24/13*