

“U12 and U10” 101

2017.2018 Edition

“U10/12” is an alpine ski racing program within the Okemo Competition Center for children age 7 – 11 years. U10/12, which is the next step up from the entry level racing program known as Hopefuls, provides a further introduction to ski racing and involves intermountain competition. All athletes in U10/12s have either been recommended for the program by their Hopefuls coach or passed a screening.

This group is comprised of two distinct age groups - U12 (10 and 11 year olds) and U10 (7, 8, and 9 year olds). The U10s and the U12s race in different race series. At Okemo we train organizationally with U12 and U10s combined, but will utilize age based training groups to provide training appropriate for each athlete’s age class and skill level. New ski racing parents may find themselves a bit overwhelmed with all sorts of new vocabulary, protocol, and procedures. Therefore, this document will seek to explain some of what a new ski racing parent can expect to encounter, as well as highlight some specifics of the U12 and U10 age groups, ***including quite a few updates for 2017-18.***

Vocabulary Lesson:

What in the world is USSA, VARA, MVC, a U12, OMARA, etc??

USSA – *USSA, The United States Ski and Snowboard Association, has actually re-branded themselves as US Ski & Snowboard...a new acronym is yet to come. For now you will likely hear USSA a lot still (and I will continue to use it until we have a new acronym).* USSA is the governing body of ski racing in the United States. USSA also oversees cross country, disabled alpine and cross country, freestyle, ski jumping and nordic combined, and snowboarding. USSA develops rules and regulations for ski racing, sanctions events, provides education for coaches, and supports coaches and athletes. **Your child must become a member of USSA as a Competitor U10 or Competitor U12 (depending on their age group) in the Eastern Division with Okemo Mountain Ski Club as their club in order to participate in U12 or U10 races. Only choose Okemo Mountain School as your club affiliation if your child is actually attending OMS. DO NOT choose “General Member” – this membership type is not valid for competition.** This can be done at www.ussa.org by clicking on the “My USSA” box at the top of the page and following the instructions that follow.

VARA – The Vermont Alpine Racing Association (VARA) is the governing body of ski racing within the state of Vermont. VARA develops rules and procedures specific to competitions within Vermont. They also provide support to coaches and athletes by providing opportunities for coach education and awarding scholarships to athletes. **Your child must become a member of VARA in the appropriate age division with Okemo as their club – not OMS (unless they are enrolled at OMS) or OMARA.** This can be done online at www.vara.org by choosing the new or returning member link under the “Membership Lists and Services” heading on the homepage.

MVC – The Mid-Vermont Council oversees U14/12/10 competition in the Mid-Vermont region, which includes Okemo, Killington, Pico, Suicide Six, Ascutney (currently closed), Quechee, and Middlebury. These are the other mountains to which U12 and U10 racers will travel to for races and against whom they will compete during the regular season. There is no membership to this organization, but each race program does pay a per athlete assessment to the Council.

FIS – The International Ski Federation (**Federation Internationale De Ski**) is the international governing body of skiing (Alpine, Nordic, and Freestyle) and snowboarding competition (Alpine and Freestyle). Alpine ski racing athletes are not eligible to compete in FIS races until they are U19s.

OMARA – The Okemo Mountain Alpine Racing Association is a booster club to support the Okemo Competition Program and Okemo Mountain School. They help buy equipment such as special training tools, cover coaches’ education

expenses, and provide athlete scholarships. **All athletes in the Okemo Competition Program must become members.** As an added perk, local ski shops provide a 20% discount to OMARA members.

OMS – Okemo Mountain School (OMS) is a ski and snowboard academy in Ludlow that provides athletes with intense mid-week training, while still allowing them to pursue a rigorous academic curriculum. OMS is a separate entity from the Okemo Competition Program, but all OMS athletes join the Okemo Competition Program athletes on the weekend. OMS provides many winter and summer camps in which all Okemo athletes are invited to participate as appropriate for their age and ability. OMS coaches all work with the Competition Center programs.

Age Classes – The age classes for junior ski racing in USSA sanctioned events are determined by a competitor's age on December 31st of the current competition season and are as follows (these age classes were new in 2012-2013):

U21: 19/20 years old

U19: 16/17/18 years old

U16: 14/15 years old

U14: 12/13 years old

U12: 10/11 years old

U10: 7/8/9 years old

More on being a U12 or U10 racer:

In order to become a U12 or a U10 racer an athlete must be 7-11 years old and either first participate in Hopefuls and be recommended by a coach to join U12/10s or pass a screening process. All U12 and U10s must join USSA, VARA, and OMARA as outlined above. The focus in U12/10s is on fundamentals and making athletes strong skiers, which in turn will make them strong ski racers. Training therefore involves much freeskiing and drill work, as miles under their feet is the best way to improve their skiing ability. As the athletes are ready for it, training will also include gate training. Training will be differentiated somewhat based on an athlete's age group and ability level.

Daily Schedule:

U12/10s train on Saturdays and Sundays from the beginning of December through mid/late March. U12/10s meet at 8:30 am at the top of the AB Quads and ski until 10:30 am at which point they are released from wherever they happen to be (parents should make a meeting place with their child for lunch). U12/10s reconvene at 12 pm at the top of the AB Quad and ski until 2 pm at which point the children are again released from wherever they happen to be. The time schedule may change from time to time but will be communicated ahead of time to parents via email/blog post.

There will be mid-week training during winter break from December 26 – 31st. The Okemo End of the Year Open Race will be held on December 30th. This is only open to U12s and only appropriate for U12s who raced as U10s or U12s last year. U10s and U12s who are not racing will have training that day. There is also mid-week training during President's week in February – exact days TBD.

More Training and Equipment Info:

U12/10s are split into permanent morning training groups by January. These groups are based on what skills the athletes are working on, as well as their age class, and are always associated with one lead coach. A second coach will join each group. As there is a wide range of skill level and ability in these age groups, training focus will differ for different groups many days to meet the athletes' needs. In the afternoon, the children are often allowed to pick their own groups to allow them a chance to ski with friends or we are all together as a group on Wardance; therefore, friend requests for morning groups will not be accepted.

The U10s race and train GS, panel SL, and stubby Slalom, which uses only short, soft gates and requires no special armor. U10s can have one pair of skis for both events. For all first year U10s, we recommend one pair of junior slalom skis. For many second year U10s this may also be an appropriate choice. Once turn shape mechanics and fundamentals are more developed for a racer, we often recommend two pairs of skis – one junior GS and one junior SL for each discipline the children race.

The U12s race and train GS, panel SL, stubby SL, and, **new for 2017-18**, full gate SL. U12s will race full gate SL only at the U12 Festival, but will be exposed to it in training as the season progresses. Though U12s can use one pair of SL skis for both events, but we do recommend a pair of junior GS and junior SL skis for U12s – especially for any U12 racer who has one year of U12 or U10 experience. **New for 2017-18, U12s should purchase SL armor for training full gates (a chin guard, pole guards, and shin guards).** These can be purchased at any local shop. Make sure the chin guard is compatible with your child's helmet. There will also be a SG camp in the schedule for **second year U12s (11 years old) only.** However, this will NOT require an additional pair of skis, as all U12s must use their regular GS skis at the SG camp. SL skis are not allowed in the SG camp.

Most U12/10s race in GS suits, but one is not required. If they are going to wear a GS suit, they will need full side zip pants in order to be able to take them off with their boots on at a race. Please remember to remove full side zip pants - unzip UP!

U12/10s must wear full shell helmets – no soft ears. The helmet should not have a visor on it. Chin guards should be removed for free skiing or GS training.

Make sure your child's skis are well tuned. You can get a season tune package from a local shop or learn to do it yourself!

For all U12s and U10s, please consult a coach and/or a local shop in buying your child's equipment.

Basic Race Info and Schedule:

Races begin for U12/10s in January and continue through mid-March. They can happen on either Saturdays or Sundays. The schedule for each age group appears below.

New for 2017-18: All race registrations and payments will be done online and must be complete 24 hours before the race – even for MVC races. In the past, coach's lists were sent for entries and payment was accepted day of the race with an optional online payment portal at some mountains. THIS YEAR ALL RACES WILL USE ONLY ONLINE REGISTRATION. If you do not register and pre-pay online, your child will not be entered in the race.

U10s will receive awards at races based on their best single run (top ten boys and top ten girls). Their running order will be a random draw. The second run will be run in reverse order. All athletes get a second run even if they have fallen or gotten disqualified on their first run. ***New for 2017-18 there will be a third run in which the running order is gender mixed. A small prize will be given to the top three finishers (regardless of gender) of the third run.***

U12s will receive awards based on best combined time (top ten boys and top ten girls). Their running order will be a random draw. The second run will be run in reverse order. All athletes get a second run even if they have fallen or gotten disqualified on their first run. ***Girls typically will run before the boys, except in the second GS (Pico) and second stubby SL race (Suicide Six) – this is new for 2017-18.***

Both U10 and U12s have Skills Days that incorporate a dual panel SL team race. For the U10s the skills portion of the day is not scored, for the U12s it is. Awards will be given for U12s for skills. The dual panel SL race will be run in inter-mountain teams with awards given by team.

U10s will participate in a one day MVC U10 Festival, which will be a fun event, including a dual race, and open to any MVC U10 racer. All MVC U12s are eligible to participate in the MVC U12 Festival. ***This event will be fun and will involve tall gate SL racing – new for 2017-18.***

Following the MVC U12 Festival, there will be 3 post-season events for which U12s can qualify – Piche's, SVC U12 Meisterschaft (formerly known as U12 World Championships), or the VT/NY SL Fundamentals Project. More details on each event will come later in the season. Each qualifying athlete may only compete in one event. **At the U12 level in MVC, we like the focus of the season to be on progression and fundamental skill growth – NOT on qualification. Making any of the "post-season" events is not nearly as important as an athlete having had fun and made personal improvement all season long. Therefore, qualification is not based on typical season standings.** At the last MVC U12 race (not including the Festival) there will be a random drawing to select the number of results that will count towards qualification – either 4 or 5 – out of the 12 results (first run, second run, and combined results) generated by the four MVC U12 races (2 SL/2 GS). The athletes' appropriate number of best results will be totaled. Each athlete's total score will be used to rank them from lowest to highest. Ties will be broken using an internal tie break method and if a tie still exists the external runs will be used. This list will be generated within 2 days of the last race and used to offer slots in the post-season events. Slots are filled by athlete's choice according to ranking (eg the first ranked boy/girl can chose any of the 3 events, but once an event's quota is filled the next athlete can only chose from the 2 remaining events, etc). Selection will proceed down the rankings until all slots are filled. In any year, there will be between 38 and 40 spots for boys and 38 and 40 spots for girls between the 3 events. This process, while a bit complicated, allows for fairness in qualification without having a season focused on standings.

2017 – 2018 Race Schedules (always subject to change!):

U12 2017 – 2018 MVC Race Schedule
Sunday, January 7 –Skills Day/Team Dual Race @ Pico
Saturday, January 20 – Killington GS
Sunday, January 28 – Pico GS
Friday, February 2 – Quechee SL Camp (optional and limited space available)
Sunday, February 4 – Quechee Stubby SL
Sunday, February 11 – Okemo SG Camp (second year U12s only/first years train)
Sunday, February 25 – Suicide Six Stubby SL
Sunday, March 4 – MVC U12 Festival at Okemo “Tall Gate Slalom-palooza”

U10 2017-2018 MVC Race Schedule
Sunday, January 21 – Killington GS
Friday, February 2 – Quechee SL Camp (optional and limited space available)
Saturday, February 10 – Skills Day/Team Dual Race @ Pico
Saturday, February 24 – Pico Dual Stubby SL
Saturday, March 3 – MVC U10 Festival at Quechee

U12 “Post Season” Events
March 16-18 – Piche Cup at Gunstock
March 17-18 – SVC U12 Mesiterschaft at Willard/Magic
March 30- April 1 – VT/NY SL Fundamentals Project at West Mountain

More Questions???

Contact Mariel Meringolo at mmeringolo@okemomountainschool.org!