

## Making Goals a Reality: Identifying Markers for Success

Goal-setting is at the heart of the coach/athlete relationship. The expectations the process creates in both parties constitute an informal contract. The terms of that contract take form in athlete's training program and in the coach's part in implementing it. The inventories of social and cultural markers below are designed to give young athletes an idea of what life is like for those who have achieved the goals to which they aspire.

### Overview

Goal-setting behaviors tend to follow three paths:

- Those athletes who are reluctant to set goals, either from fear of commitment or from fear of failure
- Those athletes who set unrealistically high goals
- Those athletes who set realistic goals that they have a 50/50 chance or better of attaining

Approach athletes who are reluctant to stake out goals with the idea that goals can be viewed as nothing more than "options." Training appropriately, learning technique, adjusting lifestyle effectively, doesn't mean that an athlete has to invest him or herself into achieving a goal- but it does leave the option of success on a high level open to the athlete. Seeing goals not as threats, but as options, as opportunities in the waiting, can side-step fear of commitment, fear of failure.

Athletes who set their sights extraordinarily high need help to base their dreams in practical considerations. Imagining is easy. Talking is easy. Doing is hard. Use the markers below to provide insight to your skiers who have set lofty goals. NEVER discourage an athlete from dreaming— but help them to see clearly the many small steps they will need to take over a long period of time to achieve their dreams

The list of markers that follows is neither complete nor completely accurate. It is meant to be a "best guess" approximation of what life looks like on a certain level of achievement. It is grounded in my many years of working with and talking to athletes on all the levels listed below.

### Making use of the Markers

You can hand the Markers out with goal-setting sheets—or you may want to have your athletes fill out their goalsheets and turn them into you. The next day you can return their sheets along with the Markers and have them decide if they want to make any changes.

#### I. Identify what you want from Cross-Country skiing:

- be a better skier, be more fit, enjoy being outside with friends
- top ten high school/prep school league races
- top ten high school/prep school division state meet
- top ten in state meet of champions
- top 30 in New England (ranking via JO Qualifiers or New England J-2's or EHSC)
- make New England JO Team
- make High School all-American
- make World Junior team
- ski in college
- make NCAA All-American
- make US Ski Team
- make World University Team
- ski in World Cup
- win Olympic medal

## II. Know How To Get There (wherever “There” is for you)

“Getting there” involves varying degrees of mastery of the following:

- developing physical skills (conditioning/technique/strength)
- developing mental skills (discipline, strategy, concentration, good work habits, knowledge of training principles etc)
- developing ski waxing and ski preparation skills

## III. Know What “There” Means

### 1) be a better skier, be more fit, enjoy being outside with friends

- come to practice and participate fully. See skiing as something fun, a liberating activity that could in time be a sport for you.

### 2) top ten in most high school/prep school league races

- good athletic talent can take you there; so can training hard in-season and listening to your coach. You may want to go to a summer or winter holiday ski camp  
- hard work; extra skiing and determination on your part will make up for average talent

### 3) top ten high school/prep school division state meet

- talent and/or hard work  
- year-round fitness from doing other sports but probably no organized ski-training program necessary in the off-season  
- some understanding of technique and desire  
- you may just ski in practice but you may use your daily workouts to build form or ski within an organized training program that builds strength, speed, endurance  
- you ski some on weekends outside of your high school program  
- you have awareness of mental skills but probably don't work on them in an organized way

### 4) top ten in state

- talent and/or hard work  
- you are training most of year now with some ski specific training. eg, roller skis; specific strength; when you do fitness work, you're doing it with skiing in mind  
- you have been coached on technique  
- you are almost certainly a member of a club with a good coach or have one of the top high school programs in your state or attend NENSA Dryland camps regularly  
- you work hard all winter  
- you ski in some or all of the NENSA Eastern Cups  
- you are able to think about things to work on in practice  
- you may keep training log, probably work on visualization and have sound race strategies; you know that mental skills are part of success  
- you know that good nutrition may not make you a champion but that bad nutrition can certainly prevent you from being one  
- You have skied in the New England J-2 or Eastern High School Championships and are a NENSA member

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5) top 25 in New England for age group (ranked via J-2's or EHSC or JO qualifiers)

- talent AND Hard work
- you train most of year now just for skiing with concentrated ski specific training. eg, roller skis; specific strength; you try to go to at least one summer camp each summer
- you have good technique and work on making it better
- you are getting stronger
- you are almost certainly a member of a club with a good coach
- you work hard all winter
- skiing is your primary sport
- you are a regular on the NENSA circuit
- you work on technique and weaknesses in practice
- you almost certainly keep training log; have total hours in mind for year, for week

**J-2's will average training 325 – 400 hours per year**

**J-1's will average 375 – 450 hours per year**

- you probably work on visualization and have sound race strategies
- you probably are pretty disciplined, juggling job, school, and training. You are seen by peers and adults as a “motivated kid.” Friends and family wonder how you can do all you do at school, home, work, and in athletics. You’ve been in the newspaper. You’ve begun to travel around New England in winter
- you know that good nutrition may not make you a champion but that bad nutrition can certainly prevent you from being one.
- you probably work in flexibility as part of training program.
- you probably have World Cup videos at home and you actually watch them to learn things
- you are learning how to test wax and wax skis for most occasions
- you go most Eastern Cup JO races
- you ski in many NENSA races each year. You know lots of NENSA skiers

6) make New England JO Team

- you have good talent and know how to focus it through hard work
- you're training all of the year now in an organized, supervised program with concentrated ski specific training. eg, roller skis; specific strength; you always go to summer camps
- you have very good technique but still aren't satisfied
- you work on strength in an organized way and want to get stronger and stronger
- you are a member of a club with a good coach; you may have more than one coach
- you work hard all winter
- you are a NENSA skier and know many other NENSA skiers; many of your friends are skiers
- you almost always use practices to work on areas where you need to improve
- you keep a training log; have total hours in mind for year and plan on annual increase

**J-2's will average training 325 – 400 hours per year**

**J-1's will average 375 – 450 hours per year**

- you can test wax and wax skis for most occasions
- you work on visualization, attention control, have sound race strategies, know how to develop good course strategies
- you have developed discipline and structure; have begun to be able to coach yourself
- you are recognized locally and statewide (and regionwide within the ski community) as a talented nordic athlete; you've traveled everywhere and maybe taken a NENSA trip to Europe
- you select colleges by their ski potential as well as their academic potential
- you may take a year between high school and college to work on skiing.
- you have traveled extensively and love the “skiing life.” Other kids look up to you

7) make High School all-American (finished within 10% of the winning time in a national championship race at JO's)

- you have solid talent and excellent work habits
- you train all of the year now in an organized, supervised program with concentrated ski specific training. eg, roller skis; specific strength; you always go to summer camps
- you have strong technique and are always working to improve it
- you work on strength in an organized way as part of a program geared to constant improvement

- you are a member of a very good club with a very good coach(es)
- you work hard all winter
- you are a NENSA skier and have many friends who are as well.
- you practice continually on areas where you need to improve
- you keep a training log; have total hours in mind for year and plan on annual increase

**J-2's will average training 325 – 400 hours per year**

**J-1's will average 375 – 450 hours per year**

**YOU WILL EXCEED THESE TRAINING AVERAGES—BUT HAVE TAKEN YEARS BUILDING UP LITTLE BY LITTLE TO DO SO**

- you probably have been overseas and competed there at some point in time
- you can test wax and wax skis for most occasions, even races
- you work regularly on visualization, attention control, and develop sound race strategies
- you are highly self-motivated, keep a clear head, and organize life around training for skiing and skiing; are pretty good at coaching yourself
- you are recognized locally and statewide and regionwide within the ski community as a talented nordic athlete; you've traveled everywhere and maybe taken a NENSA trip to Europe; other kids look up to you.
- you select colleges by their ski potential as well as their academic potential
- you may take a year between high school and college to work on skiing. You may go abroad to study and train for skiing
- doing well in the US is no longer good enough for you.

#### 8) make World Junior team

- you have excellent talent and great work habits
- you train all of the year now in an organized, supervised program with concentrated ski specific training. eg, roller skis; specific strength; your life is built around the sport of cross-country skiing
- you have excellent technique but never stop working to improve it
- you work on strength in an organized way as part of a program geared to constant improvement
- you are a member of an excellent year-round club with an excellent coach(es)
- work hard all winter
- you practice continually on areas where you need to improve
- you keep training log and have been for years; have total hours in mind for year and plans on annual increase

**J-2's will average training 325 – 400 hours per year**

**J-1's will average 375 – 450 hours per year**

**YOU WILL EXCEED THESE TRAINING AVERAGES—BUT HAVE TAKEN YEARS BUILDING UP LITTLE BY LITTLE TO DO SO**

- you can test wax and are a good waxer
- you work on visualization, attention control, has sound race strategies
- you are highly self-motivated, keep a clear head, and organizes life around training for skiing and skiing
- you still have a coach(es) but is capable of coaching him/her self
- you select colleges by their ski potential as well as their academic potential
- you may take a year between high school and college to work on skiing. You may go abroad to study and train for skiing
- you are famous, relatively speaking
- you are building your life around a ski career
- you love the life of travel, feel at home in foreign lands, have skiing friends all over the country and all over the world.

**“To dream anything you want to dream-- that is the beauty of the human mind. To do anything that you want to do-- that is the strength of the human will. To trust yourself to test your limits-- that is the courage to succeed.”**

**Bernard Edmonds**

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