



Alpine Ski Race Training

*-instilling values necessary
in both **SKIING**
and **LIFE!***



My Dream for You is This ...

Credit: Tracy White (author)

It started as a little seed in my brain, and it started to grow. It was planted there by Molly Whiting last February when I had a brief conversation with her at Hickory one race Sunday. I complimented her on her new speed suit and asked where she got it. She told me she got it at Copper Mountain Fall Ski Camp in Colorado.

"Fall Ski Camp? Who coaches Fall Ski Camp?" I asked. She told me that she always went with a coach from Manistee's fall camp. I was intrigued. Molly didn't CUSSA train with this coach from Manistee, but she always attended his camp and was thinking of switching to him for training the next year.

"Why?" I asked.

She said she liked his coaching style and that his group was smaller and more personalized. "Besides," she added, "all of his athletes qualified for Junior Olympics!" Yes, I was definitely intrigued. The seed was planted.

Over the summer the seed started to grow bit by bit. Should we/could we make the commitment for you to ski in the CUSSA program? Financially it would be very expensive; the time commitment would be bigger than we were used to. Scheduling with your Daddy Sissy could be the hold-up ... there were some hurdles to overcome.

I was wondering how to find this coach Molly had talked about when Daddy mentioned an email he got about Fall Camp at Copper Mountain!

"Where is that email?" I asked.

He said, "I deleted it."

"Can you get it back?" I wondered.

He was able to and printed off a brochure, schedule, and fee commitment. Sure enough this was the same coach Molly had talked about. I read the brochure several times and the seedling grew more and more until I called Coach Dan Janowiak and asked if he would meet you.

You and Dad and I met Dan in August and we knew instantly that we had found the right person to be your coach, and the right place for you to be. The question was - is this where you wanted to be? There were going to be sacrifices and leaving club skiing and old ski friends behind. You didn't know if you could do that. But Dan had looked at your ski results online and he looked at you, and he knew that he was just what you needed! He promised he would learn all about you and your skiing and that he would help get you to the next level. If Junior Olympics was your dream, he would help you get there. He sent us home full of hope and a brochure about ski camp that was very expensive.

By now that seedling in my mind was a full grown tree and one day in September when Nana and Papa were here for a visit, I dropped a little seedling in Papa's head. I told him about this new coach and our commitment to help make Junior Olympics a reality if you wanted it. The next week letter came in the mail from Nana and Papa. Inside was a check for the exact amount of ski camp! Wow, the seedling in Papa's head was growing too and he said, "If Madison is going to try to get to Junior Olympics I want to be part of it!" Next I had to make the call to your other Dad to see if he would give you some of his parenting time at Thanksgiving so you could attend camp. In addition I had to let him know about your quest to get to JO's and get his

concession on parenting time or his participation so you could go the races. In the end he agreed, and you were going to camp!

This was the way it began ... but all of it hinged on you. Sure, the idea was Mom's ... but what you did with it would be determined by you. I know I made you cross train - running cross country at the same time you were playing travel soccer. There were tears, tired nights, and minor injuries and insecurities to overcome, but you did it. You made Dad and I proud with your hard work. Your body was getting in shape, your legs and lungs were getting strong, and you were preparing yourself (whether you knew it or not) to be on snow in the Rockies on November 20, 2009. Well, on the morning of the 20th of November, I sent you off on a plane with your best buddy Lili and your new coach to Colorado. Lili's mom and I stood with tears in our eyes as our little girls, our young ladies embarked on a new stage in their lives. You were going to spend a week amongst some world-class athletes, skiing your hearts out at ski camp, learning to listen, learning to tune, breathing in the Ice cold mountain air, and spreading your wings. You were going to be physically sore, you were going to be tired, and you might *not* like it...

What happened in Colorado to you, Madison, was nothing short of amazing. You, and Lili, and Carlee (3 attention-starved twelve year olds), were welcomed into the NASA CUSSA group with open arms. You were a shot in the arm for these wonderful high school girls and boys. You bonded instantly, started calling coaches Uncle, and made your mark on this ski group. Yes, it's true, you were tired and sore, but you were also very happy! You didn't just like ski camp- you loved it!

The season started with barely any snow and no local training. Dad stood at the bottom of Nubs Nob and watched as you took your first run. it wasn't too pretty he said, it was slower than you wanted you said, the course was difficult, and there was the fall....that first week, the second week, the third week, and the fourth week. Four falls in four weeks. But your spirits remained high and each week you got back on your skis and took another run. But my spirits were getting low. I needed some re-assurance that this was the right path we were taking. The day you took your 4th fall, I got the call from Uncle Bruce and your Daddy Sissy. They both reported the same thing. You had fallen on your first run and that your attitude had slipped and you didn't want to take your second run. I dropped what I was doing and got in my car thinking maybe I'd make it there before your second run, but I didn't. The phone rang about a 1/2 hour before I got to you and the news was all good. Once again, you got back on your game, put your head where it needed to be and took your second run laying down the fastest time for a J4 that day, and I was overjoyed for you! What you had been through the last 5 weeks and how you recovered from it has been a test of your TRUE character, and Madison, your character ROCKS! You have persevered against adversity and that takes strength, you have pushed yourself extremely hard and that takes guts, and you have not given in to self-pity and that takes character.

Now it was time for Mom to get a pep talk from Coach Dan. He was kind enough to hold a parent meeting to bring us up to speed on you as athletes, your training, and what the next two months were going to be like. Then I got what I needed - some one on one coaching for Mom. I needed to hear that you were doing OK and that these falls were hard to accept, but that he wasn't worried about them, even if I was. That is exactly what he said. He also told me that you were one of the best J4 skiers he had and that you were doing just fine. He had faith in you, and knew he could help you correct what was making you fall. He really seemed to enjoy coaching you, and was as impressed as I was with what you have done after you have fallen each time. You've come back, corrected your mistake(s), and smoked a red hot run. He assured me it would all come together and I trusted him completely.

I have spent the better part of the last two days trying to put together your trip to the Junior Olympics. You haven't even made it yet, and I am getting lodging and flight information. They say we have to be optimistic or we may not have a place to stay. So I am calling and emailing everyone trying to find a place where the whole J4 team can stay in Winter Park in mid-March. The thing is ... that I will not be there with you. I will once again let you go (this time with your dad) and wait for the calls to hear how you did and drive you nuts squeezing every last detail out of you so I can experience it, too.

This seed that was planted in my head and in my heart a year ago has produced a small little bud that is you, Madison. And you have become a wonderful, beautiful, exquisite blossom, so unique and so special. Go for your dream, Madison. Make it happen!

I love you,
Mom

P.S. I wrote this letter to you about 5 weeks ago. Five weeks before going to Marquette, MI to try to qualify for the Junior Olympics, and you did it, Madison! You made it and I am proud! While in Marquette I wrote about your day's events each night as a diary of your quest. Here are my writings:

Marquette, MI
Madison Ostergren Qualifies For Junior Olympics
February 18-20, 2010

Day 1: Here is day one's report from Marquette Michigan. For the better part of 5 days Bill and I are part of Team Madison as she races in the CUSSA Rocky Central Region Junior Olympic Qualifier's.

BIG G: The Big G races were today. 3 stand-alone (non-combined) races with very long skis and much greater speed than our girls are used to. Madison and fellow NASA teammates have never raced in a Big G (a smaller version of the downhill). They all watched Lindsey Vonn win the Gold last night in the Downhill in Vancouver and were really excited to try this new race. The parents on the other hand were a nervous wreck. The girls had had the skis on before, but had never raced through gates or had to execute turns at such high speeds! I had helped put the running order together the night before and found out that Madison was (by random selection) running dead last out of about 60 girls in her category. That meant, possible ruts in the

snow, a chopped up course, icy spots, and a very long time to wait at the top of the mountain in the cold. It also meant that she would go first for the second race. Bill and I chose not to tell her about her placement and let her coach handle it instead.



Run 1 - Before the racers start there are typically 2-3 forerunners who run the course. The first forerunner fell and it became obvious that this person was really injured. It took about 20 minutes to get the forerunner up - and they were eventually carried off by snowmobile in the sled. Oh, boy....what a way to start! Fortunately, Madison and her other teammates handled race one very well. Madison ran 16th out of 58 racers with what Bill and I thought was a really nice run. But, Madison was not satisfied with her timing, was scared to death of the skis (which we

borrowed), and wanted to take the next run on her shorter GS skis where she had more control. She had about 30 minutes of tears and just releasing the disappointment and anxiety, she just knew she had more in her and was frustrated that she didn't get to prove it on run one. I watched from afar as her coach listened and listened - I am pretty sure he got some words in too because he worked with her for a long time but the tears didn't seem to stop. Lots of listening on Mom's part, but she had me in tears at one point, too.

Run 2 - I am a wreck at this point. I approach the coach and ask what he thinks about Madison changing out of the long skis into the shorter GS skis. He calmly tells me that putting Madison on the 155 skis would be a disservice to her Race 2. The course was different and if she wanted any chance at all she needed the longer skis. This calms me down and I get the video camera ready for race 2. She is the first racer out of the gates. This was a completely different run, I was behind the camera and didn't get to see the race as well as I would have liked (I am not sure the video camera got any of it), but I could tell from what I did see she had started to find her groove. For those who have watched Madi race, she can work the skis like crazy and she was doing just that especially in the bottom part of the run. She reached her arms out 10 miles in front of her as she crossed the finish to stop the clock and I knew from the time that was announced that she had taken a great run! There were a bunch of much bigger girls from Minnesota and Wisconsin that just have the weight it takes to dominate this type of race, but Madi held her own and finished 8th! She was all smiles now and started figuring out what she needed to do to get in the top 10 for the final run of the day.



Run 3 - By late afternoon, the girls were once again up at the top of Marquette Mountain waiting to take their last run. The sun was in full

force, there were a zillion dads re-tuning skis at the bottom of the hill, changing the "overlay" wax to eek out the most speed possible with the new warmer snow from the sun. Madison was racing 30th right in the middle of the pack and the course was - according to Bill - very Madi friendly. I was afraid of a fall as I knew she would really be pushing herself to stay in the top 10. She must have shot out of the starting gate and by the time we saw her she was a carving machine! About mid-course she got some air by mistake (meaning she got airborne - losing speed and losing her line) but she corrected immediately hit the next turn accelerating and came in with the 3rd fastest time for the day and had people saying, "Who was that little yellow streak!" The parents are exhausted, the kids are in the pool and the pizza delivery guy is going to be my new best friend in about 10 minutes! A very good day ... yes, a very good day after all!

Day 2: Here is day two's report from Marquette MI. The weather was awesome again today! Boy, are we being blessed with sunny days and reasonable temperatures.

Run 1 GS - Today Madison raced 3 GS races. She had another very good day, and was improving with each run. For some reason, Madison was selected to run 1st again for race one. The first run she came in 19th and there weren't any tears today, but she was not satisfied with her performance. She skied right down to her coach who listened to her replay every mistake she made. He quietly looked at the ground. Dan Janowiak - Madi's coach - has a gift when it comes to getting into the heads of his racers. He is a patient listener and got Madi to the place she needed to be for race #2.

Run 2- The second race - Madison was slated to run last and she had a very fast run. About 4 gates before the finish line there was a little knoll. Madison made the turn at that gate a little late and she caught some pretty big air off the knoll and hung on for dear life. She made it through the final 3 gates and finished 10th! When she came through the finish a man we didn't know came up to her and said, "Wow, way to hang on to it!"

Run 3- By the third run, the sun was starting to lower and the parents were very tired. The racers went back up to the top of Marquette Mountain and Madi waited to take her last run. She was the 30th start for this race and had a very nice line all the way down the hill. She had a fast clean run and finished 5th! Two top 10 finishes again today! We just watched Bode Miller take the silver in the Super G and it's time for some steep! We are very proud of Madison, 3 slalom runs tomorrow - the most difficult of all her races. The saying goes: "Anything can happen in Slalom!"

Day 3: I am writing this on Sunday morning as we travel back to Traverse City from Marquette. Yesterday started at 7:30 AM and ended at about 10:00 PM at the auditorium at Marquette High with some very tired racers giddy with relief for having accomplished what they came to do...qualify for the Junior Olympics in Winter Park, CO. Some with medals around their neck, all with t-shirts in hand, and parents standing in line eager to pay the \$80 fee for the coveted Junior Olympic race jacket that would be waiting for each qualifying racer next month in Winter Park.

Run 1: Slalom. This word is synonymous with stress, falling, and pain. There are a few racers that simply love this event (Lili Lockwood - Madi's best friend is one of them) but most recognize and respect the technical aptitude it takes to complete this course, add speed to it and a sprinkle of nerves and those who finish are happy, those who finish well are ecstatic! My personal hopes were for Madison was to finish in the top 20 for this event. The course was very long and had a fall away turn to navigate and Madison was slated to run 21st. The first times came in a little slow. Racers were feeling this course out and skiing a bit safe. By the time Madison ran, the spread between skiers was fairly large - maybe 12 seconds between the front runner and the bottom of the pack. Madi completed the course fairly aggressively without falling - yippee! She got out of shape at the top of the run, but was able to correct her line and keep it moving. She finished 8th and we just couldn't believe it!

Run 2: OK, this description will be very short because we ran out of video tape and were trying to find the camera case for the extra tape and missed the run completely. Madison's time was good, but she seemed a bit disappointed in her performance. She shrugged it off knowing that she was able to toss out a few races and keep her 5 best runs for calculating the overall placement. With that in mind- Madison was technically qualified to go to Junior Olympics at this point which meant she could really push it for race #3.



Run 3: Madison went to the top with one thing in mind - I am going to give it all I have on this run. If I fall, it won't matter. If I don't, I will have a great time. About a 1/3 of the way down the course, I overheard another parent who was watching her race say, "Look at Madi! She is really pushing it!" I was holding my breath – "Don't fall, don't fall, don't fall," I said over and over in my mind. It wasn't until she got past the fall away and the flush that I released my anxiety with a huge yell, "Go MADIIIIIIII!" "Go Babyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyy!" She pushed it all the way through the final gate and came through with a smile on her face! Yes, she was happy and her time reflected her determination. She was only .04 (four hundredths) behind the front runner and she held that position until the last 10 skiers. Madison ended up 4th overall on Run 3 and her coach cheered, "Now that's the way to end the day!"



Yes, I cried and sobbed a little as I hugged her (much to her horror), and her dad had tears in his eyes behind the video camera... it was over and she did well. Madison received a medal for her overall performance in the Super G- Day (on day one) and was the overall finisher for all events. Our little peanut gave the big girls from Buck Hill and other racers from Minnesota and Wisconsin a run for their money to become the 10th fastest Alpine Ski Racer (all events) in the mid-west division. I won't be going to the Junior Olympics with Madison - Bill her personal wax technician extraordinaire is flying out with her the week of March 16-21st. It's probably a good thing, too... Can you imagine how long those emails would be?

