

2013 Anwatin Ski and Bike Team Evaluation Report

The Loppet Foundation

September 6, 2013



Presentation of the Evaluation Findings
Anwatin Ski Team - Year Two
September 6, 2013

The Loppet Foundation's Anwatin Ski and Bike Team

The Loppet Foundation is a 501c(3) non-profit organization whose mission is to promote and support cross-country skiing in the Minneapolis area - especially among inner-city youth. One way the organization fulfills its mission is by sponsoring middle school ski and bike programs. The Loppet Foundation provides the framework for year-round ski and bike teams with the goal of changing the trajectory of lives by instilling passion for lifelong outdoor activities. The Foundation provides coaches/mentors, equipment, uniforms, and transportation for year-round bike and ski teams.

Snapshot of Anwatin Middle School Ski Team Program

The Anwatin Ski Team is a program designed to engage Anwatin Middle School youth in year round outdoor activity. Team members train together with a coach three times a week over the course of the year through Anwatin's Community Education afterschool programming. In the fall, the afterschool program includes a try out period of dry land training, trail running and roller skiing. The team is selected in November. In winter, team members hit the ski trails to train and race. After ski season, participants move on to mountain biking and trail running. In addition to weekly training, team members participate in a number of competitive races, including the Junior Loppet Ski race, the Tri-Loppet urban triathlon and Trail-Loppet, a trail running race. Youth also participate in weekend trips and Loppet Adventure summer camps.

The goal of the program is to sustain year round participation in endurance sports and to support development of passion for healthy, outdoor activities.

Purpose of the Evaluation

The purpose of the evaluation is to measure the extent to which goals of the program are met. The evaluation is designed to inform and provide evidence to Loppet Foundation staff and stakeholders about progress made in the Anwatin Ski Team including participants' ski skills, attitudes toward the activities, and behavior within and beyond the program. The evaluation includes periodic monitoring and assessment of the program, using both quantitative and qualitative methodology. The evaluation was planned by the evaluator and Loppet Foundation staff, and created to measure the goals of the program within the limits of resources available. Each year, the evaluator met with the Loppet Foundation staff to discuss results and refine the evaluation.

Methodology used:**❖ Ski Team Fall Assessment, November, 2012**

All team members were asked to fill out a mid year season assessment. Ten youth completed the assessment.

❖ Ski Team End of Season Assessment, Spring, 2013

A girls' only focus group was conducted on December 16, 2013, in place of the team workout. Six girls participated in the focus group discussion.

❖ Team Focus Group - Girls and Boys, March 21, 2013

A focus group with boys and girls was conducted on April 24, 2013 at Anwatin Middle School, in place of the team work-out. Eight youth participated in the focus group discussion.

❖ Team Focus Group - Girls and Boys, August, 2013

A focus group with boys and girls was conducted in August, 2013 after a mountain bike race. Seven youth participated in the focus group discussion.

Fall Survey – Total number of surveys: 10 (9 males, 1 female)

Themes:

- Focus of the returning athletes were listed as: wanting to become a better skier, having more endurance to keep up a pace, working hard, pushing themselves, skiing faster
- Focus of the new athletes were listed as: doing their best, getting better at skiing, getting stronger, improving technique, practicing for races, losing weight

End of Season Survey – Total number of surveys: 12 (8 males, 4 females)

Athletes were asked to rate the activities by level of challenge, with a likert scale of 1-5: 1-not challenging, 2- somewhat challenging, 3- challenging, 4- very challenging and 5- extremely challenging.

- Dryland Training – 66% rated dryland training as challenging to extremely challenging
- Ski practice – 50% rated ski practice as challenging, 25% rated it as very challenging to extremely challenging
- Ski racing – 100% rated ski racing as challenging to extremely challenging; 33% in each category of challenging, very challenging and extremely challenging

Athletes were asked to rate the activities by how enjoyable or fun the activities were with a scale from 1-5, with 1- not fun, 2- somewhat fun, 3- fun, 4- very fun, and 5- extremely fun.

- Dryland Training – 75% rated dryland training as fun to extremely fun
- Ski practice – 91% rated ski practice as fun, very fun or extremely fun (the “very fun” category had 58%)
- Ski racing – 100% rated the ski racing as fun, very fun or extremely fun (the “very fun” category had 50%)
- Trips – 91% rated the trips as very fun to extremely fun (83% in the “extremely fun” category)

Themes: Three themes emerged about the best thing about being on the Anwatin Ski Team

1. Social reasons

2. Trips

3. Learning something new

When asked what was the most difficult thing about being on the ski team, two themes emerged:

1. The racing was challenging for some team members.
2. Coming to practice and training was challenging for some members.

What would athletes do differently if they had to do the season over?

- Try harder (50%) "I would try harder to do my best, like doing V1 up a hill instead of herringbone," and "I would push myself harder."
- Go to more practices (16%)
- Other comments: "Eat better," and "have more races so I could get on the podium."

Focus Group Discussions, March 21 and August, 2013

What it takes to be an Anwatin Ski Team member?

- Perseverance, dedication, and a good attitude

What are the benefits of being on the ski team?

- Getting exercise
- Having fun
- Meeting people
- Trying something new
- Personal discipline

From first year skiers: First year skiers talked about the challenges both in terms of endurance and technique.

- "You get to learn how to feel pain."
- "The first year of skiing, you go up and down the hill, it is hard to not fall because it is slippery and you have to get used to falling down and learn how to get back up."

When asked about racing, first year skiers talked about a variety of emotions from feeling really nervous and scared to feeling happy when the race is over.

- "Well it was the first year in being in a race, when you first start, your heart is beating hard, you get confused because you don't know where the path goes. It is hard."

- “It is hard because all of the people. I guess it is scary at first. Then, when you go, your heart goes racing and you feel sad when they pass you. But when you finish, you feel happy.”
- “I am scared when I first start out, and then I got passed, and then I just slowed down and I just say, I am going to do this and not care.”

From returning skiers: The returning skiers expressed feelings of satisfaction from working harder on specific techniques and on endurance.

- “One thing, going on a team trip, working on those hard hills, you had to do a certain technique to go up that hard hill and that helped us.”
- “I remember one day at practice, the coach told me that one way to ski faster was to dance up the hill; that really helped me to get up the hill.”
- “I used to hate roller skiing, but this year I got better so I like it, especially skate skiing.”
- “I think the more I got out and skied and worked myself, I got used to skiing more, then I could ski for long distances and not get so tired, got my body in the mood.”

First year and returning skiers:

Anwatin ski team members compared themselves to some of the youth in the Fast Kids program. They acknowledged because they worked harder, they had a better experience when competing against Fast Kids at races.

- “During the summer I did a lot of Piot training, last season, I was really slow and didn’t have the technique as much, (it) helped me get faster and get ready for races, and got me able to beat kids who beat me last year.”
- “When I was skiing for awhile, people who don’t go to Anwatin, like the Fast Kids, I think my last race, a skate race, I passed someone. I didn’t know who it was, but I think it was a Fast Kid, and I thought, “Wow,” I just passed a Fast Kid. And I even fell a couple of times.”

Athletes talked about knowing their body and what they needed to eat and drink in order to feel good, especially during a race. They discussed what they ate for breakfast on a race day, and also how some didn’t eat at all prior to a race because they had a nervous feeling.

When asked what it was like to do a sport that required them to be outside in winter, the responses were largely positive. Athletes talked about feeling “more alive” and about the benefits of breathing fresh air. Athletes talked about how to dress appropriately for the weather. One athlete said that being outside made him more aware of litter.

- “(You have) more space, you go around and do stuff, (it’s) better than being indoors, enclosed.”
- “I think it builds character, outside, on a super windy lake when it is 2 degrees, you get to feel what it is like outside, it is cold all over, but you keep going.”
- “Fresh air, indoors you have artificial air, nasty, but it is harder because it is cold.”
- “At the beginning of the year, I dressed too warm, if I dressed lighter I could go faster.”

Trips

Athletes really enjoyed the trips and wished they were longer and more frequent. They liked having new experiences that the trips presented. They liked the social aspects to the trips and also having the opportunity to ski in a new environment.

- “I think being out there was really awesome, it is almost like it went too fast, I wish we could do it over.”
- “It felt like we came, we stayed a day, and then left. It felt like one big day.”

Ideas for next year

Athletes mentioned several things when asked what could be different next year:

- ❖ “I think once a month, do something fun. I was getting kind of tired, I was busy and had lots of stuff to do, I got a little bored with it.”
- ❖ “...more one on one training for some kids who didn’t have technique down.”
- ❖ “I like idea of one on one training because some kids were not as comfortable on skis, they came once every 2 weeks, and when they did come they were not able to keep up with the group.”
- ❖ “...more opportunities for different things to do, different activities along with skiing.”
- ❖ “I think we should get jackets with our name on it.”