



It's all about the work:

BRYCE'S HISTORY



Bryce Holt is a freshman at Robbinsdale Cooper High School, an inner-ring suburban school northwest of Theodore Wirth Park, and an enthusiastic alumnus of the Loppet Foundation's Nellie Stone Johnson Ski Team.

For 14-year-old Bryce, the Loppet Lesson is succinct: "You have to work hard; not everything comes easy."

When he participated in Beacons, the Minneapolis Public Schools' after-school program, as a new sixth-grader at Nellie Stone Johnson Middle School, Bryce got to choose three activities. Picking the first two was easy; he was not sure about the third. The description of the cross country ski team caught his eye. He had experience with skiing in elementary school through the Loppet's Minne-Loppet program at Cityview Community School. So, he thought, why not?

As Bryce began developing and improving as a skier, he realized that he really liked this sport. He began showing up more often at ski practice than basketball. Over time, Bryce became a year-round ski team member, participating all three years of middle school. As a result, he says, he has become a better skier, a better team player and, ultimately, a better leader.

Persistence, teamwork and leadership

By actively engaging in three years of Loppet-sponsored activities and adventures, Bryce has distilled some key observations and lessons that will serve him well as a high school student and beyond:

Persistence and achievement: "If you lose a lot, it discourages you and makes you not want to do it anymore. But you have to get over that if you really want to do it because that is how you become better."

Teamwork: "During ski-ball everybody wanted to just hold the ball but we kept losing. We had to learn how to work together if we wanted to start winning the games. The coach was saying it over and over again. We realized if we wanted to win, we had to do something else. We learned how to work as a team."

Hard work and leadership: "The program encourages kids to do stuff, instead of just being lazy and sitting on the couch. It encourages them to be a leader, but also a good follower because you have to be a good follower to become a leader."

Loppet coaches, particularly Jon Miller, made a big impression on Bryce with all that they do for the youth. "They work hard to help you work through stuff," he says.

"If you are having a bad day, they will help you. They won't just give up on you; they keep going. They actually want to be there; it is not that they are there just because they want to get paid."

Friendships that last beyond ski season

In high school, Bryce misses his Nellie Stone Johnson teammates, the coaches and the camaraderie they created as a team. On a recent school holiday, Bryce was able to meet up with the current team and ski the trails at Wirth. His big smile reflected how much he enjoyed reconnecting with Nellie Stone Johnson and skiing with the group.

The Loppet's impact on Bryce goes well beyond learning how to ski, mountain bike, canoe and run. "Before I went on the ski team, I used to do everything by myself, and I used to not help people as much," he notes. "But now I know that people look up to me, and I help people more. I am a leader. Everyone looks up to me, and when they see me, they ask me questions and tell me what is going on. And then I help them when they need help."

Bryce's growth is a testament to the power of giving youth opportunity to build skills and develop as leaders, with the support of caring, attentive adults.



The Loppet Foundation provides opportunities and creates passion for year-round outdoor activities and adventures in the Minneapolis area, especially among inner-city youth.