

INHIBITORY FACTORS IN ALPINE SKIING TRAINING

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Summary

Over fifteen years of experience in work with trainees, conducting training in ski school, allowed us to gain clear perspective about the attitude of trainees on first steps in taking up skiing. It was surprising that a significant number of trainees of different age and gender gave up or had intention to give up further training due to factors we are going to present in this paper. In course of training the aforementioned trainees, instructors mainly focused on the sequence of training exercises, demonstration and explanation of specific exercises and skiing techniques but they marginalized certain details which turned out to be essential for the trainees to continue with their training. This demonstrates that skiing training is very complex area and that the instructors ought to listen to and observe the requirements and shape of trainees in addition to the methodic principles of training and skiing expertise. We have detected following inhibitory factors in training: comfort, fear, too high expectations of the instructors and communication. Elimination of these factors would make ski training more suitable for many trainees and a number of trainees who lose motivation and willingness would be reduced. The fact is that sometimes details can be crucial for making changes in positive direction in ski training which is the reason why the instructors must be fully dedicated to the training and educated to notice and eliminate current unwanted factors influencing the trainees.

Key words: alpine skiing, ski training, ski training principles

INTRODUCTION

Industrialisation and urbanisation allowed for variety of advantages for living, but on the other hand they also created many disadvantages and raised issues, primarily in form of reduction of physical activity and various forms of pollution which have negative impact to human health and environment. Such changes caused by development of technology influenced development of further need for sport and recreation aimed at recovery and health prevention.

Active rest allows for recovery from stressful work and provides feeling of satisfaction, and Bartoluci (2004) states that winter sports and recreational tourism in winter resorts is becoming the first choice of people searching for combination of pleasure and usefulness.

Such standpoint is exactly the reason behind increased number of tourists on the mountains in the last couple of years, searching for opportunity to spend their vacation skiing. Mountain stay in combination with practicing skiing activities has gained popularity due to its positive impact to organism development, mainly the development of locomotive, cardio-vascular and respiratory system as well as increase in cognitive abilities and socialisation.

Bearing in mind all the advantages of skiing and the surrounding (over 1000m altitude, landscape covered with snow), it is logical that alpine skiing is becoming even more present, popular and interesting activity to the population in general, especially among the youth.

Most people visit the mountain with two aims: to have some rest from the everyday activities in the beautiful mountain surrounding and to enjoy

skiing or learn how to ski. It is certain that every person can learn how to ski to certain level of proficiency which would allow them to move independently across the slopes. The level of acquiring skiing techniques of any individual are dependent of many factors such as: gender, age, physical abilities, talent, motivation, conditions (quality of the ski-slopes and vertical transportation), quality of the equipment and maybe the most important one – level of competence and quality of training provided by the skiing instructor.

Role that the skiing instructor plays is great; one has to transfer all the love for skiing to people who are struggling to learn elements of skiing and to make great skiing enthusiast who will continue to visit the mountain and ski in the years to come and continue to conquer even the most difficult ski slopes out of beginners who are at the mountain for the first time taking up skiing for the first time.

In order for the instructor to fulfill the expectations of the trainees and respond to all the requirements of the ski training, it is necessary that one is guided by principles and listening to needs and abilities of the trainees. Only by adjusting the training system to fit the needs of every trainee individually in line with their competences and current shape can guarantee successful learning and development of yet another mountain lover.

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factors we are going to present in this paper. In course of training the aforementioned trainees, instructors mainly focused on the sequence of training exercises, demonstration and explanation of specific exercises and skiing techniques but they marginalized certain details which turned out to be essential for the trainees to continue with their training. This demonstrates that skiing training is very complex area and that the instructors ought to listen to and observe the requirements and shape of trainees in addition to the methodic principles of training and skiing expertise. In other words, instructor needs to possess the ability to anticipate and react to all the disturbing factors in order to provide for quality training conditions which would result in successful training of the ski school trainees.

ERRORS AND CORRECTIONS DURING FIRST SKIING LESSONS

The first impression of any beginner is the key moment in training. Majority of trainees are facing the training conditions for the first time: high altitude, low temperatures, a lot of equipment which is not easy to carry and use; a lot of snow, ski grip and new face – the instructor. For all the aforementioned, the skiing instructor has to have tactful approach and creativity in order to turn all those new and stressful situations into a nice story and positive energy.

In the following paragraphs will be stated the most frequent factors which disturbed our trainees and resulted in giving up or making them consider giving up skiing lessons after the first and second day of training.

Comfort – primarily regarding the equipment the trainees use. Instructors made an error and failed to provide instructions about the manner of putting on and selection of equipment. Due to lack of information and control of equipment by the instructor trainees had difficulties with heat, excessive perspiration, dehydration, anxiety, inability to perform certain movements, pain and injuries in the area of lower leg and foot, which all resulted in losing the willingness to continue the training and self-confidence.

In case of younger trainees parents make a mistake putting on many unnecessary layers of clothes to children. Such practice is dated far back in the past when clothes made of high quality materials were not in use but it was necessary to put on many layers in order to maintain protection from cold. Many of them also had no insight into physical efforts of trainees in the first days of training. New types of movements where certain groups of muscles which were not as active in the past get activated, walking under rather heavy equipment, constant climbing and coming down, body spasm caused by fear of

falling and lack of confidence in standing on skis result in intense work and engagement of organism and increase of body temperature. In course of first hours of training the trainee is very active regardless of air temperature which is not always extremely low and in majority of cases is just a couple of degrees below zero with frequent sunny periods. For that reason it is not necessary to put on a lot of warm clothes which turned out to be a major issue, especially among younger population of trainees. There is also opposite problem with clothes – insufficiently warm clothes or clothes lacking quality, which results in chilblains caused by extreme cold which are painful and frustrating for beginners.

Bearing in mind that this population of trainees see the instructors and this type of training for the first time, most of them have difficulties to establish open communication and they avoid pointing to problems but they rather cope with the condition by the end of raining and worsen their general state which results in the statement that they no longer wish to ski.

Inadequate equipment also affected the reduced comfort of our trainees. This primarily refers to the inadequate choice of ski boots. Problems occurred due to the use of inadequate used or small boots which made wounds on feet; there was also the issue of incorrect procedure in putting on the boots and placement of clothes inside the boots which caused injuries at lower legs of the trainees by wrinkling or friction of solid parts our older trainees had discomfort caused by hardness of boots. They used the boots with high flex index thinking that "competition-quality" boots would make them ski better.

The second problem was length and quality of skis. Too long skis made it difficult to perform certain movements and movement amplitudes which limited the trainees in their advancement and when comparing themselves to other people (in or outside the group) they lost self-confidence and motivation to continue training.

In order to foresee the problem, the instructor has to instruct the parents and trainees prior to first training classes what to wear. This type of communication has to be performed before every class, each day of training, depending on weather conditions. The instructor also needs to inspect the equipment of the trainees before each class to minimize unwanted situations. It is necessary to neutralize this limiting factor and trainees should feel as comfortable as possible at the ski slope.

Fear – is one of the feelings we have in course of skiing to certain extent. Some fear is even desirable in order to maintain control over skis. However, too much fear is inhibiting factor in skiing. Many trainees come to their first skiing classes with certain amount of prejudice and

inadequately formed perception about learning how to ski. On basis of stories they heard about falling and injuries trainees form the attitude that skiing is something to fear. When asked why they decided not to take up skiing earlier, our middle-aged trainees answered that it was because of fear. We concluded that fear of skiing is similar to fear of visiting the dentist.

Presence of this feeling is manifested by body stiffness, inability to perform relaxed movements, short movement amplitude and each misbalance is the signal to stop the movement followed by the phase of deep breathing and longer period of returning to relaxed position. It is extremely difficult to work with trainees in this state and without maximum effort on behalf of the instructor trainees finish the training after the first classes.

In order to help the trainees to overcome this state it is necessary to talk to them, relax them and make sure they do not get the feeling of losing balance and control of skis in course of training. Instructor should assist and control the beginner until the fear is lost and body is out of spasm. In the moment they gain confidence and obtain safe balance on skis, get the feeling that they control the speed, fear slowly vanishes. However, even in this phase the instructor has to be extremely cautious and assess the adaptation stress syndrome and be careful about putting the complex tasks before the trainee and using more difficult terrain, because trainees could experience panic fear and rejection. The focus should be on adjustment and acquirement of new elements which leads to advancement. Frequent breaks and resting are efficient in work with this structure of trainees because body stiffness is exhausting and energy-consuming. Rigid behavior of the instructors and forcing the trainees to do certain element against their will before they lose the fear is definitely the wrong path.

Too high expectations of the instructors – are one of the most frequent reasons why our trainees required replacement of the instructor or quit from further training. One should have in mind that the trainees are able to learn skiing technique only step by step. Speed of advancement depends of individual characteristics, primarily motor abilities, morphologic characteristics, cognitive abilities but also their motivation and expectations. Instructor needs to assess abilities of each trainee against all the mentioned factors and determine the rhythm of acquiring new competences and time spent on currently acquired skills. Progress should be at optimal pace; too fast or too slow pace results in loss of interest in learning. In this case it is crucial to keep in mind the age of trainees.

Trainees complained about lack of understanding the instructors had for inability to perform certain exercises or techniques. They expressed their impatience by verbal expressions of disapproval which resulted in loss of motivation of the trainees. The trainees felt lack of competence and felt loss of self-confidence and they were frequently offended by comparisons and statements the instructors made. On the other hand, a number of instructors adjusted the pace of progress and difficulty with their own needs. Work on the training ground required more energy and strength of the instructor due to constant climbing, bending, carrying the equipment, so they opt for vertical transportation and steeper slopes, although the beginners were not adequately trained for such challenge. The instructors had the upper hand because in such circumstances their work was easier and they were going down the slopes easily whereas the trainees experienced trauma, fear of height and steepness of the slope, muscle spasm, exhaustion from numerous falls, discomfort due to inability to control skis, small injuries and it all eventually resulted in quitting.

Communication – is significant factor in skiing training. In majority of cases three forms of communication are used. The first is casual talk between the instructor and trainee, used before, during and after training for the purpose of obtaining necessary information about the trainee. In this manner it is possible to obtain information on interests, motive, habits, physical activities, cognitive level, conative abilities, which all may be very helpful for the training itself. The second form of communication used is explanation of skiing technique elements, manner of their performance, description of exercises, corrections and instructions significant for adopting the skiing technique. The last, but not less important form of communication is analysis of lessons learned. In this part the instructor informs the trainee about the level of success in performance of particular elements. Trainees complained mostly about the final aspect in communication with the instructor, the analysis. A number of instructors lacked tactfulness and empathy for their trainees. Some commented the performance of trainees in cynical manner whereas others tried to be humorous and commented using jokes which would make the group laugh about one trainee's performance of certain element. Small number of instructors even made rude comments due to their own impatience or lack of understanding of the difficulties in the course of training as well as inability to find adequate solutions in form of exercises which would help the trainee overcome the obstacle. Such attitudes had depressing effect to the trainees and some of them wished to quit

the training whereas others asked for another instructor. Difficulties in this form of communication mainly occurred in work with younger trainees.

Older trainees had complaints mainly about the first two forms of communication. Casual talk would turn in to instructor's monologue which often contained difficulties from their life and often referring to dissatisfaction with the organization of ski center. Instructors mainly talked about their discontent and personal issues. Bearing in mind that the trainees are on vacation and trying to get some rest from their own business or other difficulties, this form of communication was rather burdening for them. Instructors were warned about this issue because the trainees asked for substitute instructors. Casual talk has to be mutual pleasure, trainee should be the one suggesting subject of conversation and instructor should use the topic to find out about data relevant to training such as trainee's personal qualities, habits and abilities. The least complaints were about the manner of presenting explanations of the elements and manner of performing exercises. Due to inadequate terminology trainees were confused which led to inability to perform certain elements. Explanations ought to be brief, clear and precise, without unnecessary words and terms.

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CONCLUSION

Primary goal of each instructor should be having satisfied trainee. Mission of each instructor should be transferring positive vibrations to trainees with the aim to make them love mountains and skiing. Only when they achieve such attitude towards skiing will they be certain they made good work and gained new skier. Trainees with this kind of attitude will advance faster in the training system, will have higher achievement motivation and eventually become good skiers.

In order to succeed in this intention, instructors should devote attention, care and understanding to each individual trainee during lessons. Prevention of unwanted situations and good anticipation on behalf of the instructor increases trainee's self-confidence and motivation which results in successful skiing training.

Instructors should not, by any means, reduce the instructions to the level of template activities because one is not drilling robots but humans with various degrees of ability levels, requirements, fears and prejudice. Successful resolution of these issues in the course of first lessons makes foundation for successful performance of activities and reaching the set goals in skiing training.