



A Guide to Ski Racing for new Club members

Most people who join our club do so because they enjoy skiing, have been on a ski trip with school or as a family, have made good progress when away and want to continue to improve. That was certainly the case for most of us who are now established members of the club!

Once you have joined, a whole new world, that you were probably completely unaware of will open up in front of you – that is the world of British Artificial Slope Ski Racing. In order to help you understand and navigate this new sport that you or your child/children have taken up, we have prepared a short guide to Artificial Slope racing in the UK. It is important to note that many of the UK's top ski racers started their ski racing career on the artificial slope circuit before progressing to snow racing – Team GB Olympian Dave Ryding, started racing at Pendle Ski Club, and continues to train there when he is at home.

Artificial slopes include dry slopes like we have at Pembrey, and Indoor Snow domes like Chill Factore in Manchester.

Even if you decide that you do not want to be a ski racer – the skills and drills that are taught by our instructors at training every week will make a huge improvement to you skiing, thus ensuring that on your next ski holiday you will be skiing harder, faster and longer!!

Alpine Ski racing is broken down into 4 disciplines – Slalom, Giant Slalom (GS), Super G and Downhill. Because of the short length of artificial slopes, it is only possible to race slalom. The course lay outs and rules used for racing slalom on a dry slope are exactly the same as those on snow.

A slalom ski race involves correctly navigating your way, as fast as possible around a series of alternating red and blue poles – referred to as 'gates'. Depending on the level of the competition, different combinations and lay outs of gates are used to make the courses more technically demanding. You will learn about these various lay outs in training.

The artificial slope race season runs from March to October in the UK.

As you progress as a ski racer you will need to think about purchasing your own skis and boots, and you will become aware that our more experienced racers spend a lot of time tuning their skis. This involves sharpening the ski edges to give maximum grip when making the turns around the gates at high speed. Racing skis and boots are also much stiffer than hired or leisure equipment, allowing the skier to ski more aggressively and transmit the power of their legs through the boots and skis more effectively. Once you are ready to start thinking about

purchasing your own equipment, out coaches or older ski racers / experienced parents will be happy to offer you advice. For younger skiers it is often possible to pick up second-hand equipment from other members. Equipment will often be offered on our closed Facebook group – West Wales Ski Club Members, and there are several other outlets that we can let you know about.

Once you have mastered some of the basics of ski racing you will want to enter some races. For many skiers their first taste of ski racing is at a schools' race

Once you have decided that ski racing is definitely for you, then you will need to register as a racer with Snow Sport Wales (if you are Welsh). Schools races and Gloucester summer Race League, do not require you to be registered. You can participate in up to 3 national races annually as a non-registered racer (on payment of a day registration fee), after this you will need to become registered.

The list below outlines the format of the various races on the circuit:

Gloucester Summer Race League - *this is usually the first event that many of our members take part in. The league is run by Gloucester ski centre, and is designed as entry level racing for unregistered racers or developing registered racers, as (low seed point) elite racers are restricted in participation (more about seed points later!). Seed points are not allocated at the Summer Race League. The league is a series of six monthly races from May to October. The courses that are set are relatively simple, but getting gradually more difficult each month. A slalom course is set out in the morning and racers get to ski the course during open practice before having two timed runs, the fastest of which counts. In the afternoon, there is a dual slalom event, where each racer takes part in three head to head races against the three racers with the closest time to theirs in the morning event. Great fun and a great way of getting to know other club members.*

Excel Races - *these are a relatively new addition to the ski racing circuit. Again aimed at novice racers. Racers with seed points below 40 aren't allowed to compete. The events consist of three timed runs down the SAME COURSE. Courses are relatively straightforward. Main difference to Summer Race League is that racers CANNOT ski the course before the race. On arrival at the event racers get a set time of open practice to warm up, the course is then set and racers get a set time to do COURSE INSPECTION - this is done in snowplough, and they have to stop between gates. Any racer deemed to be "skiing the course" may be disqualified from the race. In an Excel event the FASTEST of the three runs is used to prepare the results.*

Club Nationals - these races are put on by clubs at their home slopes (usually). Courses will generally be slightly more difficult than Excel races. the usual format for a Club National is that following open practice, course setting and course inspection as above, racers will have two runs down the same course in the morning, the fastest time of which will be carried forward (it doesn't matter if racers miss gates or get disqualified in one of these runs). They then race the same course in the afternoon. The fastest time from the morning is added to the time from the afternoon, and the combined times are used to determine results. (If racers ski out in the afternoon run then they won't have a combined time).

GBR series - this is a series of 5-6 races at various venues, which vary year on year. The races attract the best racers in the UK, and points for each race carry forward to give GBR champions each year. These slalom courses are technically more difficult than those set in Club Nationals. In these races one course is set in the morning, racers get to inspect the course then race it. A different course is then set, which the racers inspect and race. The results of these are a COMBINED TIME of run 1 and run 2 (i.e. if the racer skis out or gets disqualified in Run 1 it's game over!!? Frustrating if you've driven all the way to Norwich or Sunderland for a race!!)

National Championships - at the end of the summer there are a series of 4 National Championships - the Welsh at Pontypool, The All England, The Scottish Outdoor at Hillend, and the best of them all the Irish Ski Championships at Kiltiernan near Dublin. Format of these races is the same as GBR races. It is worth all our racers taking part in the Welsh Championships as prizes are given to the fastest Welsh registered racers.

FINALLY, A WORD ABOUT REGISTRATION AND SEED POINTS!

Non registered racers can compete in Excel races and Club Nationals on payment of a day registration fee.

However once racers have caught the bug they should register as a racer with their Home Nation Governing Body - Snow Sport Wales in our case.

All Welsh registered racers are allocated a number which begins with 4 e.g. 41719. English registration numbers begin with 1 or 2.

To register with Snowsport Cymru/Wales, it is easiest to phone or email their office in Cardiff and speak to Admin.

Seed points aren't allocated until racers are in the under 14 age category, so if your child is 11 or younger you do not need to know any of the following yet!!

Once registered, racers are initially allocated 999.99 seed points. At all races from Excel level upwards registered racers are aiming to lower their seed points.

This is how seed points for each race are calculated if you are interested - and is the reason why you see racers punching numbers in to their mobile phones at the end of races!!

Race points = competitor's time divided by winner's time, minus 1, multiply by 720!!

Each race has a 'penalty' to reflect the standard of racers taking part (another complicated formula)

So after each race the racer adds their race points and the penalty to give their points for the race.

Seed point listings are published 5 times per year. A racers points for each listing are determined by averaging their two best sets of points achieved since the last list- with some 'tweaks' (must be at two different venues)

Seed points for racing on artificial dry slope, indoor snow dome and snow are all different. And on snow each discipline has a separate seed pointing system!

Information about forthcoming races , results, seed points etc are all published on the website: <https://gbski.com>

I hope that helps as I know from our experience that starting to take your children to ski races is quite a daunting experience!! But please talk to any of the parents that are at training on a Monday night. We've all been there and are happy to share our experience and knowledge.

Welcome to our club!!!