



IS MY CHILD READY FOR PARA?

Ages – U10 (age 9 as of 12/31/23) and first-year U12 (age 10 as of 12/31/23) athletes are permitted to participate in the “Ski With PARA Day” evaluation if they have completed at least one year of Mountaineer training and have the recommendation of their Mountaineer coach, based on the athletes’ skiing skills and level of maturity. No child age 8 or younger as of 12/31/23 is permitted to train with BMR PARA athletes.

ALL CURRENT Mountaineer athletes with a birth year of 2012 or earlier **MUST** participate in the “Ski With PARA Day” evaluation. The Blue Mountain Junior Competition Programs are intended for young athletes who aspire to compete in Alpine racing, Ski Cross, Snowboard Cross, or Moguls competition. Any athlete over age 10 must join PARA or Cross and travel to all qualifying races. **NO ATHLETE** with a birth year of 2012 or earlier will be permitted to join the Mountaineer program.

Skiing Ability – PARA athletes must be able to ski every trail on Blue Mountain with confidence in a parallel athletic stance, demonstrating high-level carving skills. Athletes **MUST** be able to manage themselves and their equipment without the assistance of their parents. However, skiing skills are not the only important factor in assessing an athlete’s readiness for PARA.

Commitment - Is your child having fun training with BMR each weekend? Will he or she be excited about getting up early each weekend and giving up other activities (sleepovers, other sports or social activities) to make the time commitment required in PARA?

Emotional Preparedness - Is your child emotionally ready for the competitive aspect of racing in PARA? In most cases, the first year in PARA is about “learning the ropes” that go along with consistent training and competitive races. Most first-year PARA athletes are competing against experienced racers and are therefore better skiers. Not every child wins a medal on race day. Is your child able to manage expectations and understand that their first-year success will most likely not be measured by winning races, but by learning and improving over the course of the season?

Maturity Level - Is your child mature and self-motivated enough to follow instructions without constant supervision? At the start of the season, coaches will meet the athletes on the snow near the lodge and ski together as a group. However, once we begin training in gates on Razor’s Edge, athletes will need to get to Razor’s Edge on their own while coaches set up courses and netting. They need to know which discipline (slalom or GS) we are training that day so they have the appropriate equipment. They will take several warm-up runs on Razor’s Edge while courses are set, and then meet coaches at the start of the course. They will ride the chairlift with their fellow athletes, without a coach’s supervision. Warm-up breaks will be shorter and many days athletes will break on their own, when they are cold or hungry. Athletes should carry snacks and/or money for breaks at the Valley Lodge.

Now, ask yourself if YOU (the parent) are ready for your child to join PARA:

Training - BMR PARA training is every Saturday and Sunday from 8am to 1pm, from the beginning of December through the end of February. Training is more intense than Mountaineers and an athlete’s training time on the snow is much more critical to his or her improvement and ability to keep up with his/her group. If your child is unable to attend training every weekend from the start of the season, PARA is not for you.

There are holiday camp programs (between Christmas and New Year's) and mid-week extended training (U12 and older), which are not required, but highly recommended.

****NOTE for Holiday Camps: BMR Skills Camp** is open to all Mountaineers and PARA Racers. **BMR Sunday River Competition Camp** is open only to PARA racers age U14 and older, who have participated in the BMR program for at least one season and are recommended by their coaches.

Races – PARA athletes travel to away races and compete in ALL qualifying races. NO TRAINING takes place for athletes who do not compete on race days, as all age-group coaches travel to races to coach participating athletes. PARA athletes compete in four “qualifier” races during the season. One race is at Blue Mountain, and the other three may be hosted by Camelback, Elk Mountain, Jack Frost, Big Boulder or Montage (subject to PARA scheduling). Race days are full days and sometimes require an overnight stay. Athletes who qualify for the “Derby” (state championships) are invited to participate in the weekend event at the end of the season. Locations differ for age groups.

USSA Membership and Races – All PARA athletes must join USSA [U.S. Ski and Snowboard Association] and PARA PRIOR to the start of the training season. No PARA athletes are permitted to train with BMR until they have joined USSA and PARA.

Financial Commitment – In addition to joining USSA and PARA, there is a registration fee and lift ticket required for each race. Most PARA athletes wear speed suits and at some point will require special equipment (helmets with hard ears, pole, chin and shin guards, Slalom and Giant Slalom skis). Equipment must be well-maintained and regularly tuned to ensure the athlete's best performance in training and races.

Volunteer Commitment – Parents are required to volunteer their time for the success of BMR, especially on race days. We need gate judges and parents to assist coaches at the start to help the athletes get ready for their race runs and run coats to the finish line, both at Blue Mountain races AND away races.

Additional Information and Resources:

Blue Mountain Race Team: <https://www.bluemtraceteam.org/>

Pennsylvania Alpine Racing Association: <https://paracing.org/>

U.S. Ski & Snowboard Association: <https://my.usskiandsnowboard.org/>