



25-26 WESTERN REGION U16 RE-CAP

5.27.26

Greetings Western Region. Once again thank you for your confidence in me with helping in planning and leading this group of U16's in Western Region Projects and Championship events. Here is a summary from my point of view on the 25-26 season.

This season was like none I have seen in the past in the Western Region. A very unpredictable dry warm climate brought uncertainty throughout most of the Western Region effecting daily, weekly and monthly planning for most clubs. I commend all of our Western Region Programs & Divisional Managers and Western Region Director along with Ali Holum our National Development Manager for your leadership through this season long challenge and also to the clubs that were leaned on heavily for picking up events and or provide training for clubs that were really hit hard.

25-26 WESTERN REGION PROJECT REPORTING & THOUGHTS FOR 26-27

- We have had good success prior to Thanksgiving at Sun Valley. Sun Valley has proven to provide a venue with all man -made snow and consistent depth on all training venues. 2 2.5 hr. blocks and ample free skiing. Meal plans and off-hill amenities are fantastic. **Project cancelled due to lack of snow this year.**
- Since 2016 we have had a National opportunity to bring our U16's to Copper for a 5 day SG project. This project as of 2025 has been taken off our planning due to World Cup activity on the venue. Moving forward the need for this type of project is paramount in developing speed skills for our younger athletes. Western Region will be reaching out to Western Venues to continue to provide this exposure for the 26-27 season looking at early Dec dates.
- Western Region (RPS) Regional Performance Series. This event is critical for 2 reasons. **1)** Bringing Western Region athletes together in early January for head-to-head competition against their peers and see the pace. **2)** Current selections for NPS in late Jan. Weather was very challenging this year at JHMR.
- Later Jan NPS @ Burke Mtn. has been a project going on now for 7 years. West has invested time into this project with more of a long game approach. Early



season National peer group head-to-head training & racing has been the focus with the goal of gaining experience on Eastern snow which has been challenging but very

beneficial. We have focused primarily on 2nd year U16 athletes but have taken 1st

years at times depending on the individual. This project has never had the top priority focus on FESA Games or on Alpe Cimbra which are 2 European projects that have selected through the NPS. This year Nate Brown from Rowmark qualified for FESA Games, congratulations to Nate & Rowmark. Staffing for the NPS is important to have from clubs of attending athletes. For the past 2 years Western Region has partnered with Sunday River for technical training prior to competitions. This has been a huge benefit to our athletes and staff by getting the motion started in a relaxed training environment.

- Early Feb. Soldier Mtn. Western Region U16 Speed project. Will Brandenburg said it best “*A in-season reset from racing and banging gates, focusing on a training environment with speed elements.*” This project in the past has been well received; 50-60 athletes are invited. This project will stay with-in our planning for the future. When calendaring for 26-27 season please keep this project in mind and the development in speed training for our U16 athletes. **This year this was cancelled due to lack of snow.**
- This year I did 2 Divisional visits. Northern Division during their speed week and the Laura Flood in Sun Valley. Next year I will coordinate with PNSA & Far West. The importance to see as many athletes and coaches either training or in competition outside of a Western Regional project is the focus.
- Western Region Championships held at Palisades Tahoe provided sunshine, hard snow with the ability to use 3 venues with the technical events run at the same time on 2 different venues. Finally the stars lined up for this event based on how our season lead into mid-March. Fair conditions for all. Looking ahead to any venue hosting this event or hosting an event with speed involved it is up to all of us to make sure that these young athletes are communicated to on the warm-up protocol and it is in a controlled environment!



- US U16 National Championships Grand Targhee WY. Originally Snowking WY. Huge thank you to all involved to make this event scheduled at Snowking then moved to Targhee happen! Logistics were very challenging with our drive times but the Targhee venue proved to be a great site for this championship event. Racing surface was very good except for the last say of slalom. Adding the Team Alpine Combined went over well running SG followed by a shorter slalom the same day was exciting also scheduling single day GS champs was awesome and made for SQ single gender went very smooth and we need to continue this format. **Noteable Women SG:** Taryn Moe JHSC, 5th, Ivy Wilson TPT, 7th. **Notable Men SG:** Cree Gilmour Rowmark ,3rd, Ceder Knight SB, 5th, Vonn Kunigenas SB, 9th. **Notable Women GS:** Canyon Osborne CMAC, 2nd, Taryn Moe JHSC 4th, Ivy Wilson TPT 5th. **Notable Men GS:** Cree Gilmour Rowmark 2nd, Nate Brown Rowmark 4th, Dominic Ditullio BSSEF 8th. **Notable Women SL:** Sydney Daly PCSS 7th, Harper Pelland CMAC 10th. **Notable Men SL:** Nate Brown Rowmark 1st, Cree Gilmour Rowmark 4th, Dominic Ditullo BSSEF 5th. **Women SQ Overall:** Sydney Daly PCSS 6th, Canyon Osborn 8th. **Men SQ Overall:** Cree Gilmour Rowmark 2nd, Nate Brown Rowmark 2nd, Dominic Ditullio 3rd, Tree Petett CMAC 5th, Ceder Knight SB 7th.
- U16 Whistler Cup. This is a National project which I have led this project in the past. USA did not field a quota this year. Calendaring is to tight from U16 US Championships to participate at Whistler Cup.
- U14 Speed Project Tahoe / Palisades: Mid – Late April. Invaluable project for Athletes & Coaches that can attend. Please 5 divisions when calendaring try to make this work. **This year we had to cancel lack of snow.**

2026 SUMMER / FALL / IN SEASON 26-27

A continuing goal of the Western Region is to provide opportunities for the (RTG) Regional Training group and WR club staff that are not in competition with their already in place club plans. This winter I spent time speaking with Western Region U16 Staff's regarding spring, summer & fall plans and when & where the Western Region can complement their clubs programing. From the feedback I got many clubs have already set plans domestically and overseas. Some clubs are looking at spring only & focusing on conditioning & other sports through the summer and getting back on snow in the fall. U16 / U14 Western Region Programming for 26 - 27 will consist of:



- Mt. Hood Or. June 26th – July 1st. 5 days on snow. Slalom project. Eligible Athletes: U16 RTG, 2013 U14 8 W – 8 M athletes. U16 goals include various SL environment Tech/ Tact focus adding timing for individual comparison when making changes. U14 goals include crossover with U16's, integration into the Western Region and on snow focus of Tech / Tact implementation. U16 & U14 staffs will be selected. Look for a prelim announcement to go out early in May.
- Vall'e Nevado Sept – Oct FIS – U16 GS/SG Focus. U16 goals include crossover with FIS athletes, Southern Hemisphere exposure, culture & teambuilding with on snow focus GS/SG Tech & Tact with timing for individual run to run feedback & future comparisons. U16 group size is up to 3 W & 3M. Stay tuned for further information.
- Sun Valley SL / GS Project. Nov 22nd – Nov 26th. Integrate Western staff & athletes and continue to grow Western Region team culture. Review past summer's training with athletes as we move into fall. On-snow focus will encompass GS/SL tactical and technical skills. Utilize timing for individual comparison when making changes, add head-to-head comparison at end of project. Off-hill activities will include supervised study halls, dry-land activities, video review and ski prep.
- Western Region GS/SG Project Early Dec. Site tba.
- NPS Project January, site tba.
- Soldier Mtn Speed Project Dates tba (Generally early Feb). Project summary for Soldier Mtn: The goal of this camp is to change the tempo for our athletes that have been in a more SL-GS mode and add Speed Elements and SG. Working on speed elements will spark another level of confidence in their ability to blend skills together in technical disciplines. It's a perfect opportunity to change up a normal training plan with some Speed focus. Soldier Mtn. is only open for this project, closed to public.
- U14 Speed Project Tahoe / Palisades: Mid – Late April.
- U16 SG / GS Project. Tahoe-Palisades, Mammoth or Bend: May Tbd.



CLOSING COMMENTS

To Bill Gunesch:

First and foremost I want to thank Bill Gunesch for being my mentor, old coach, and mainly for being such a good friend! It goes without saying that Bill is a student of our sport, Bill is a great leader that people follow and believe in and knows the history of the Western Region and US Skiing at all levels. I can only hope Bill that someone with Integrity can give you the honest answers that you are looking for and deserve to know.

Pick...

I would like to thank the Western Regional Staff, Divisional Managers and Western Region officers for their continued support. I would like to thank all of the Program Coaches that participated in WR projects and the athletes all working closely together with a simple focus on progressing into the future.

Thank You

Sincerely:

Jeff Pickering

Western Region Coach

Western Region FIS Coach Report — 2026 Season

This position continues to evolve within the National and Regional structure. This season focused on two priorities: supplemental speed training for higher-level Western Region athletes and structured introduction of speed through GS progression for developing athletes.

Key Outcomes Summary

Expanded speed access across the Western Region through structured training environments and multi-club integration.

Introduced SG and speed progression to U18 and graduating U16 athletes using GS-based development models.

Provided targeted preparation for NorAm, Europa Cup, and World Cup athletes through shared training environments.

Athletes achieved Europa Cup podiums, World Cup participation and scoring, and strong NorAm rankings.

Strengthened regional pipeline through ADH and U18 camps involving multiple clubs and programs.

Integrated training experiences with National and international teams to align performance standards.

Adapted programming to limited early-season Western Region speed access through strategic travel.

Athlete Performance Highlights

Six podium finishes at U18 Championships across Western Region athletes.

Haley Cutler: Europa Cup Downhill podium; World Cup 32nd DH and 38th SG; World Cup points in St. Moritz.

Bobbie Jo Griffin: 7th NorAm DH, 12th NorAm SG.

Julia Cunningham: 6th NorAm DH, 15th NorAm SG; selected to World Junior Championships.

Mattias Wilson: 8th NorAm DH, 31st NorAm SG; selected to World Junior Championships.

Projects Summary

ADH Mammoth: 44 athletes from 14 clubs; DH/SG/GS training and technical presentations.

Wittenberg Indoor SL Camp: Shiffrin training group integration and technical development exposure.

La Parva Chile: Speed training and racing with international teams.

Valle Nevado U18: SG introduction and structured progression for developing athletes.

Copper Mountain speed camps: preparation for WC, EC, NorAm, and forerunning roles.

St. Moritz WC/EC: World Cup scoring and Europa Cup return-to-race management.

Shiffrin Christmas Camp: High-level SL/GS technical exposure.

NorAm prep East: Sugarloaf and Whiteface training and racing block.

U18 Championships Mittersill: 42 athletes, 6 podiums, 8 programs, 10 staff.

NorAm Finals Aspen and US Nationals Vail: high-level competitive support roles.

Challenges and Limitations

Limited early-season speed access in the Western Region required travel to Eastern venues.

Venue constraints due to National and international team scheduling.

Variable athlete access to structured speed programming across clubs.

Weather variability and warm conditions impacted late-season training and racing.

Travel demands created fatigue and logistical challenges.

Group size limitations due to staffing and terrain capacity.

Recommendations for 2027

Increase early-season speed access in the Western Region.

Expand U18 and transition-year speed programming.

Support supplemental high-level athlete programming outside National teams.

Strengthen collaboration with National and international programs.

Increase staffing support during peak projects.

Maintain flexible travel strategy for speed preparation.

Enhance safety and equipment progression for developing athletes.

Overall Season Summary

The 2026 season demonstrated strong athlete progression from U16 development through World Cup participation.

Results included U18 podiums, Europa Cup podium performance, World Cup scoring, NorAm rankings, and WJR selections for Western Region athletes.

Continued investment in speed access, structured progression, and collaboration with National programs remains essential for sustained development.