

Motivation

"If you're going to repair a motorcycle, an adequate supply of gumption is the first and most important tool. If you haven't got that you might as well gather up all the other tools and put them away, because they won't do you any good.

Gumption is the psychic gasoline that keeps the whole thing going. If you haven't got it there's no way the motorcycle can possibly be fixed. But if you have got it and know how to keep it there's absolutely no way in this whole world that motorcycle can keep from getting fixed. It's bound to happen. Therefore the thing that must be monitored at all times and preserved before anything else is the gumption."

Robert Pirsig – Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance

Motivation

A specific strategy

1. Goals:

Long-term goals – Destination: this is where we are going.

Short-term goals – black and white, achievable goals that support the long term goal.

2. Feeling:

Engage the emotions – emotions drive motivation, use all tools available.

Enable Flow.

3. Culture:

Environment – team, path, and situations conducive to the achievement of short and long term goals.

Shape the people – this is who we are, how we train, how we race and how we act as a team.

Mind Set

Habits – behavior is contagious, align the behavior-norm with the goal.

1. Goals:

Emotion drives motivation. Long-term goals give us an image of ourselves at the destination. Short-term goals give us benchmarks to mark progress by and gain confidence. For goals to be effective they must be clear, specific, measurable, have a time-line and they must raise the hair on the back of your neck. Finally, write them down.

Athlete goal setting:

(Attach goal setting document by Andy Newell)

2. Feeling

Goals give us our destination and our motivation: See the Olympic podium, picture yourself on its highest step. That is a goal. That gives goose bumps. That enlivens motivation. But the Olympic podium is not something you can set on at the end of the week. That is where short term goals come in: picture yourself bounding up iron-lung hill 4 times in level 4. That is a short term goal and being able to accomplish that will yield confidence and renewed motivation. Yet there is another step: picture yourself bounding but let's imitate the cadence and power of Simi Hamilton. See yourself bounding like Simi's skis, be Simi Hamilton. Touch the ground and fly.

Use video of ski races, running, cycling, swimming races. Use the most inspiring events you can find from boxing to battle to movie scenes to speeches by great leaders.

Flow is a natural term for the height of performance or even experience. It is the feeling you have doing anything right at the edge of your abilities where utter focus and attention are demanded and with that focus you can answer the demand. You are completely engaged and it is a joyful sensation. Though it is a natural term it is also a term coined by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi in his book "Flow, The Psychology of optimal experience". In it Csikszentmihalyi writes:

"... a sense that one's skills are adequate to cope with the challenges at hand, in a goal-directed, rule bound action system that provides clear clues as to how well one is performing. Concentration is so intense that there is no attention left over to think about anything irrelevant, or to worry about problems. Self-consciousness disappears, and the sense of time becomes distorted. An activity that produces such experiences is so gratifying that people are willing to do it for its own sake, with little concern for what they will get out of it, even when it is difficult, or dangerous."

Flow is the feeling we love about sport. Love and enjoyment is motivation enough for most things. Flow can be found by letting go of comparison and judgment. Let yourself find the answers by working free from doubt. Confidence is vital to flow and while sometimes coaches must critique and interject thoughts and corrections, sometimes the athlete should train and perform free from outside attention. This leads to the most important aspect of Flow practice and is actually a guiding principle of training. The workout or activity must balance the challenge and your current skills. In this way, workouts, both to continue eliciting physiological adaptations and they continue to challenge you, keep your attention, keep you motivated and elicit flow experiences, must progress along with your skills and fitness. What was fun, challenging and motivating last year or even last week may not be any more. This is a guiding light for goal setting too. Short term goals must be a challenge but also attainable through the appropriate level of work over the short term.

Related to Flow is the idea of working on strengths. Building on strengths is an oft over looked path to improvement. One way to address this both athletically and program wise is to consider the things you do well. Duplicate those things you do well. Do workouts aimed at building on your strengths. This enables you to build on the assets that will help you gain time and win ski races whereas working on weaknesses will only help you keep from losing time in ski races. Strength-building workouts build

confidence and confidence cannot be underestimated in creating and maintaining motivation. Strength building workouts are also easy-to-find-flow workouts.

"In Basketball – as in life – true joy comes from being fully present in each and every moment, not just when things are going our way. Of course, it is no accident that things are more likely to go your way when you stop worrying about whether you're going to win or lose and focus your full attention on what's happening right this moment."

Phil Jackson, Sacred Hoops

3. Culture

"Who am I?"

"What is this situation?"

"How does someone like me act in this situation?"

Culture enables motivation and achievement by creating and enforcing norms that direct daily behavior toward the goal. Here is an example. When an individual or a group start toward a goal they are no longer tethered to the start and they are not at the destination. What is often forgotten is that while the arrow is not at the target, it's not at the bow either. You are en route. Failure is a result of trying to do something challenging, but it is not the end result until you stop trying. You are en route until you stop trying or get there. This is the process. Dream, try, fail, learn, try again and step-by-step move toward the goal. Culture determines how failure en route is perceived and how that perception effects action.

According to the *identity model of decision making* discussed in the book "Switch" our perception of the kind of person we see ourselves as determines how we respond to certain situations.

What kind of team are you on?

As a member of your team how do you prepare? How do you race? How do you respond to disappointment, success, challenge?

Our identity is something we create every day. We were not born skiers. We became skiers and though the process of being coached, experiencing team, observing our teammates and role models we define what it means to be a skier, what it means to be a skier on a specific team, on a specific path to specific goals. Our identities help direct our actions and they can be a great source of pride, inner-strength and therefore motivation.

A huge contributor to our identity is mindset. According to Carol Dweck in her book "Mindset" you can either see every failure or struggle as evidence of a personal identity made up of fixed qualities and shortcomings or you can see struggle and setback as opportunities to grow, learn and improve. This is a mind blowing concept in its simplicity and truth. We are not a collection of fixed traits but regardless of where we are in the process or how good we are at something we are always capable of improvement, of growing, and learning. Teaching this growth mindset is paramount to coaching and in creating an environment where struggle and setback is part of the process not just of sport but of life.

To teach this mindset, emphasize effort rather than outcome as the true test and praise work, improvement and process over outcome, skill or talent. Think of Mindset literally. As a set in volleyball puts you in position to spike and score, mindset puts you in position to learn, grow, to become and accomplish something great.

This is not a new idea:

"Men often become what they believe themselves to be. If I believe I cannot do something, it makes me incapable of doing it. But when I believe I can, then I acquire the ability to do it even if I didn't have it in the beginning."

Mahatma Gandhi

Again goals play a huge role in team environment and in your inner monologue or self-talk (your personal environment). Clear goals, a clear path, clear expectations and a timeline all contribute to the environment of the team and how the above questions are answered.

As an athlete you must be involved in the goal setting and planning process. You, your coach, your parents all must have their goals and values aligned. This does take guidance from you so that you, your teammates and coach can hone in on commonalities rather than differences. We are often taught to celebrate diversity, but we should also work to uncover and especially in this case rally around our similarities.

Speaking of similarities behavior and specifically habits are contagious.

Create specific habits through simple, specific actions. Example: Goal, recover faster after training. Means to accomplish that goal: Drink a chocolate milk after every practice. Furthermore trigger the drinking of milk after training by tying it to a specific situation: every time you get back in the van or back to the parking lot to end practice it is milk time. Trigger the habit by tying it to a specific time and place.

Another example, perhaps you struggle to fill in your training logs. Bring your logs (you likely have your computer/itouch/ipod with you in the van after school anyway) to practice and fill it in on the way home or while you drink your chocolate milk.

Use what makes sense to you, what fits you as an athlete, what makes sense in the context of you at this time. There are no rules, only strategies. Create your own, try, fail, learn and try again. Just like always! Remember, as athlete you are in control of your career, your goals and your actions. You are your boss and are responsible for your actions and what results from your actions.

Finally, do not be afraid. Aim high and go for it!

"Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things that you didn't do than by the ones you did do. So throw off the bowlines. Sail away from the safe harbor. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover."

Mark Twain

"It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood, who strives valiantly; who errs and comes short again and again; because there is not effort without error and shortcomings; but who does actually strive to do the deed; who knows the great enthusiasm, the great devotion, who spends himself in a worthy cause, who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement and who at the worst, if he fails, at least he fails while daring greatly. So that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who know neither victory nor defeat."

Theodore Roosevelt

Summary:

- Use long term goals to point to a motivating destination
- Use clear, achievable short term goals to build confidence and motivation
- Engage the emotions
- Create flow workouts
- Define your identity and align that identity with actions that lead to your goals
- Learn a growth mindset
- Align your habits toward the goal with simple, easily triggered actions
- Keep it simple and specific, whatever it is
- Be in charge of yourself

Resources:

Switch: How to change things when change is hard by Chip and Dan Heath

The Happiness Hypothesis by Jonathan Haidt

Flow: the psychology of optimal Experience by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi

Mindset: the new psychology of success by Carol Dweck

Cornerstones of Coaching by Jon J. Hammermeister

Sacred Hoops by Phil Jackson

GOAL SETTING, Level 100

By Andy Newell, U.S. Ski Team Member and
Stratton Mountain School Graduate

Some athletes spend a lot of time meticulously planning ahead, while others just let things happen as they fly by the seat of their pants. No matter which approach you have as your day-to-day routine, people have aspirations. It is human nature. It might be a thought of what you want to accomplish in your lifetime. Or, something you would like to get done this week. It might be an idea of something you would like to tackle today, or even in the morning. People who can recognize these ideas and aspirations and then transform them into simple goals are those who tend to be the most successful.

Why I Set Goals for Skiing

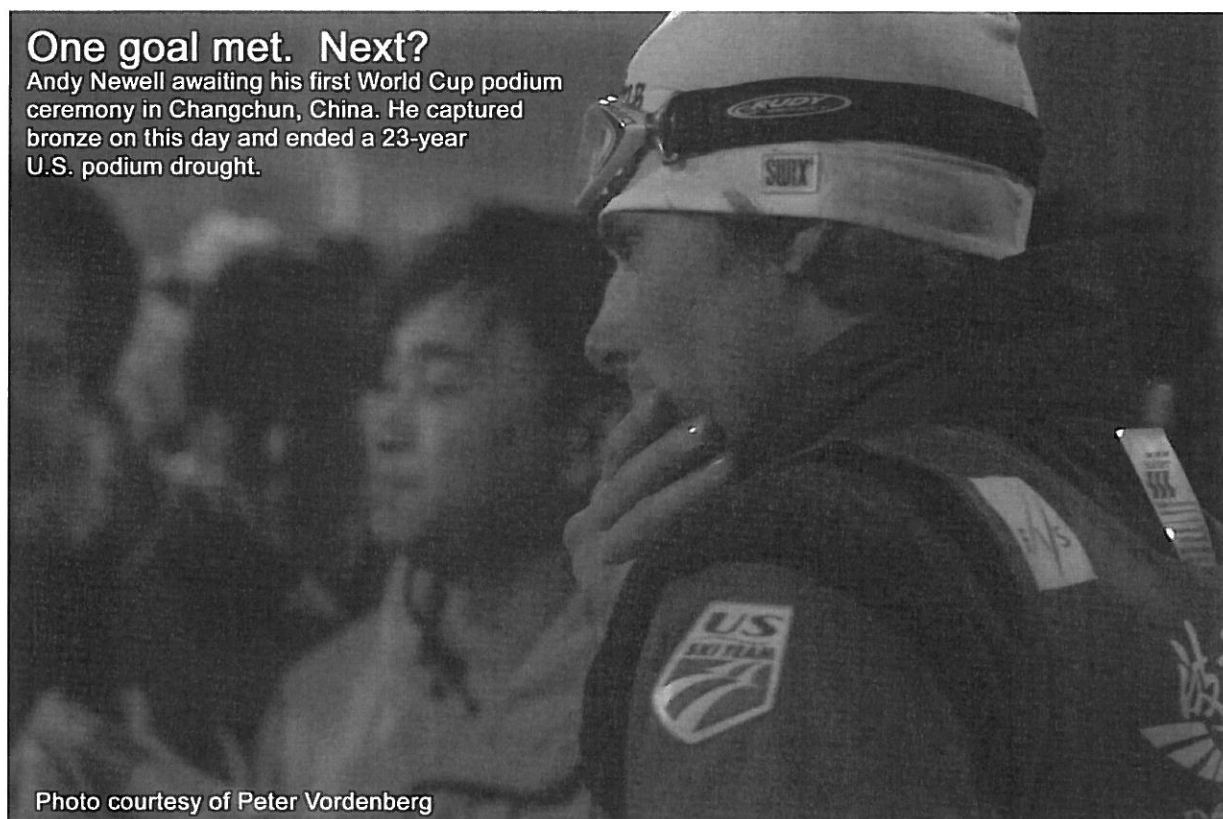
There are a number of reasons why it's important to set goals for cross country skiing. One of the most important reasons pertains to specific goals and how they keep an athlete motivated and on track throughout the training process. To make it to the top of our sport it takes many, many years. We also have a long off-season away from competitive on-snow racing, which can make it difficult for athletes to gauge their progress against other skiers and keep interest in their skiing ambitions. Setting training goals for hours, technique, strength, testing, etc. can provide an athlete positive feedback throughout the off-season. This can provide the athlete with a sense of accomplishment while they're away from snow and racing. As athletes, we thrive on reaching such positive benchmarks and maintain motivation when we know we're heading in the right direction.

2001 Example

This was a thought process I used as a junior skier during the summer of 2001: *Train hard in August, break 9:30 in the 3,000 meter running test, set a personal best in the Ball Mountain Dam double pole test, and I'll make Junior World Championships.* This was what I thought about every day throughout the summer as a 17 year-old skier. It was an effective way for me to simplify training and stay focused on my goals every session.

Another valuable reason for setting ski-specific goals is how it can affect the way skiers deal with the pressures of big races. It's not a mystery that athletes who use imagery and visualization perform better in clutch situations. The same can be said for those who set challenging short and long-term goals for their skiing careers. It is important for young athletes to know that it's not the end of the world if they do not achieve their specific goals. If there are certain season goals that they do not reach, then simply adjust them and try again next year. It can be a nerve-racking experience for an athlete to go out in the open and say "this is what I want to accomplish." It takes a lot of courage to stand up and say this because there is a chance this athlete may not achieve their goals. The chance for failure is created. But the reality is, if an athlete has taken the time to recognize their goals, when they do make it to their big race day, they will perform better as an athlete that skis with the confidence of preparation.

We see examples of this regularly with junior athletes racing in Junior Nationals, J1 Scandinavian Championships, and World Junior championships. A young skier that has taken the time to write down their goals at the beginning of the year will be much more effective in the big race than a skier who has not. An athlete who has not taken the time to recognize their goals for the season will find themselves unprepared on the start line. The athlete is often in awe of the magnitude of their situation. Yes, a great experience will unfold, but quite possibly without the accompaniment of a strong result. An athlete who has recognized their goals will know that they belong on the start line of this big race. They will have set and achieved specific training and racing goals for their season. They will believe that they belong there. They've had this race in the back of their mind all summer and have visualized themselves racing in it many times. In this way, they've already been to the event many times. What it comes down to is an athlete taking a chance that they can perform well in comparison to an athlete that is well prepared to perform well.



How to Organize Goals for Skiing

There are a number of ways an athlete can organize their goals to get them down on paper. It comes down to personal preference, but there are three general guidelines that I like to follow.

- 1) Goals should be broken into two categories: Short Term - goals for the season or calendar year, and Long Term - goals for their career or lifetime.

2) Goals should be structured as the appropriate checkpoint required to meet the next goals. That is, a career result goal is backed by many smaller result and process-oriented goals. These goals are the progressive steps to the top of the podium.

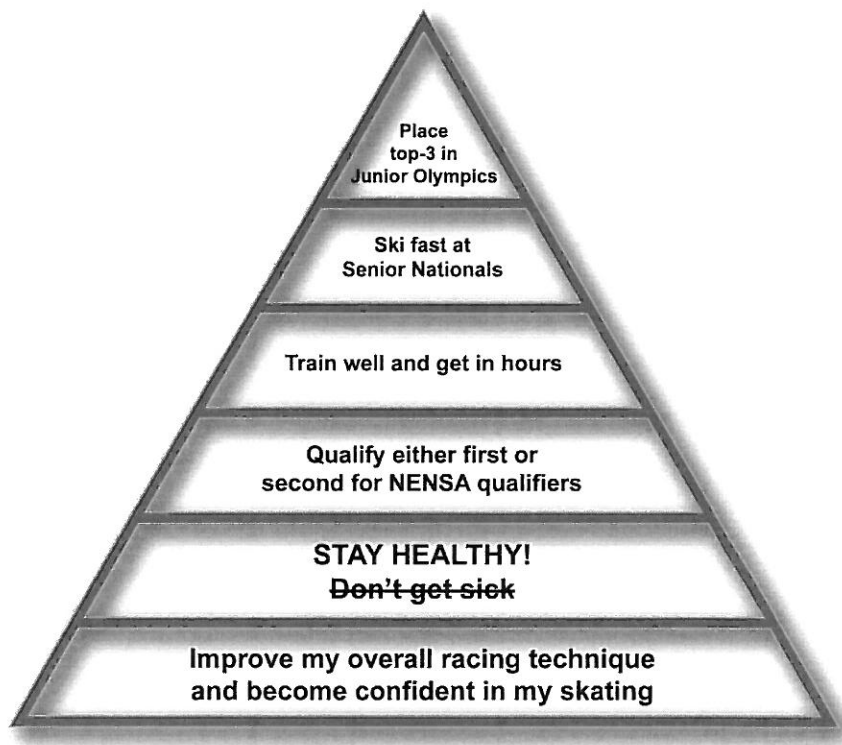
3) There should be a balance between outcome goals (results) and process goals (training, technique, health, etc.)

I use a goal pyramid because it clearly shows me the steps involved in reaching my goals. It is basic enough to glance at every single day to help guide my training. It can be looked at like a ladder - as I accomplish each step of the pyramid, I become much closer to my big goals for the year and a tiny step closer to the big goals of my career.

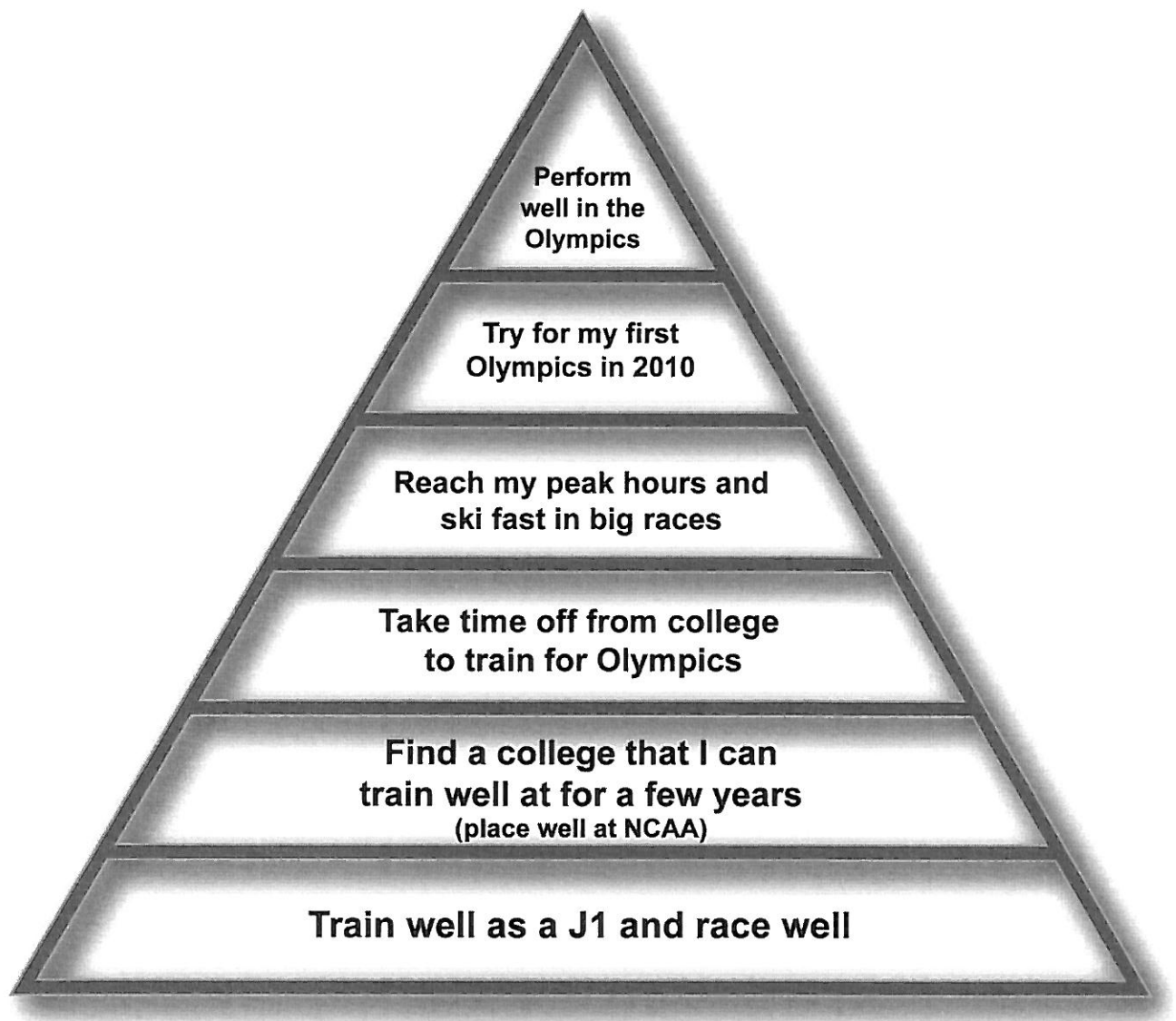
It is a good idea to make two pyramids - one for short-term goals and one for long-term goals. It's easiest to plan out the short-term goals first, and then place the top step of your short-term pyramid as the bottom of your long-term pyramid. Goals placed on the bottom of the pyramid should be more general than the ones toward the top. This should plainly depict the steps it takes to reach the top.

It makes me feel confident when looking at the pyramid because in reaching one step I then know that I am prepared to achieve the next; then the next, and so on. The most important part about the pyramids is how easily the athlete can see the path between career, yearly, monthly, daily, and session goals.

Included are copies of two sets of goal pyramids I created. The first two are from when I was heading into my first year as a J1 in 1999. You can see from these that my knowledge of the sport was rather limited but I still knew certain steps were needed to achieve certain goals. For example, I planned out how well I needed to perform in the NENSA qualifiers if I wanted a chance to podium at Junior Nationals. I also knew that I wanted to make World Juniors so learning to race well at Senior Nationals was a priority. You can also see where I wrote "don't get sick" and Sverre Caldwell, my Stratton Mountain School coach, changed it to "stay healthy". Goals in the pyramid should always be written in a positive tone. These two pyramids are probably too simple and there should be more specific process goals involved. Have a look.



Short Term Goals - 1999
Andy Newell, Age 15

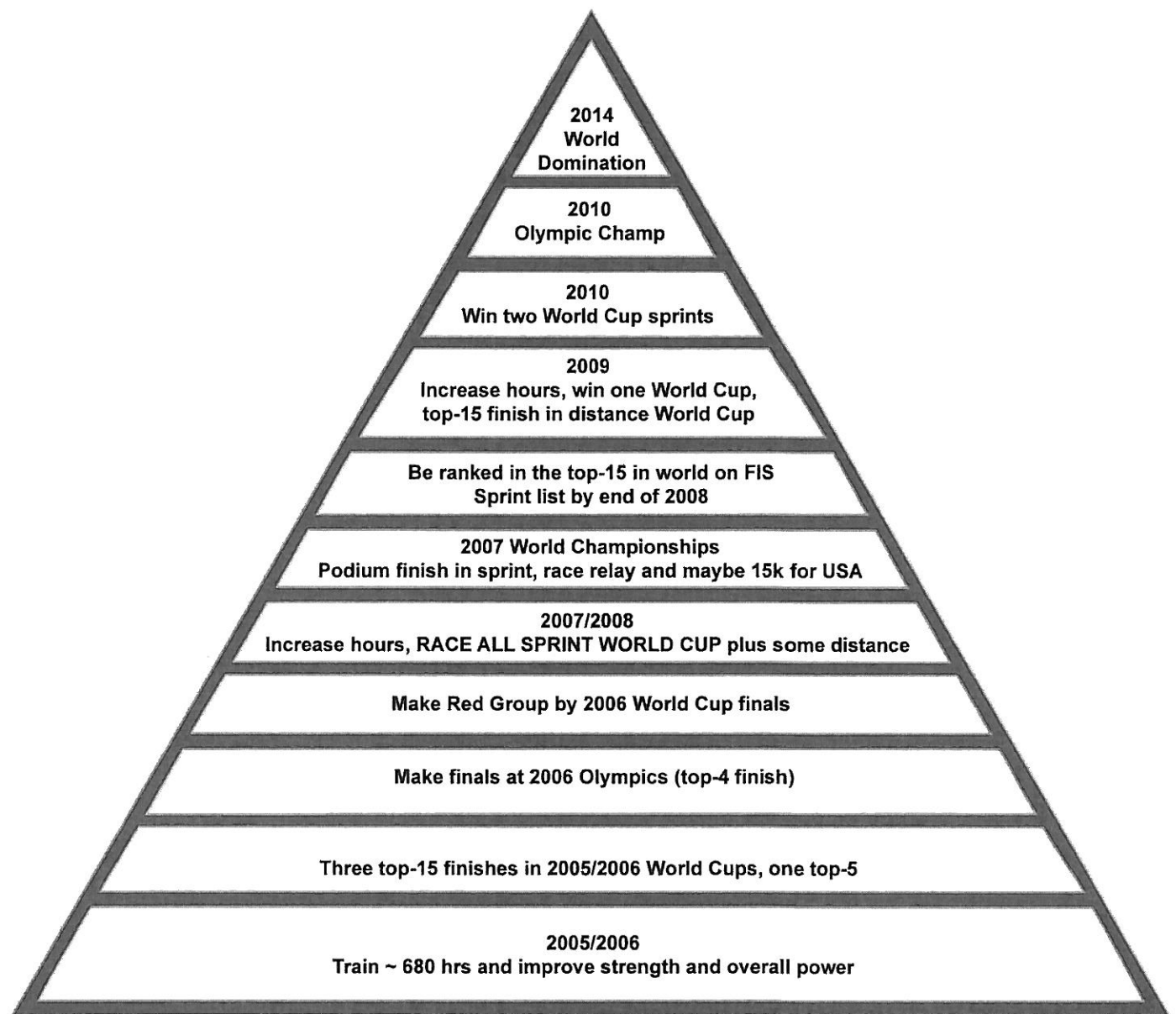


**Long term goals - 1999
Andy Newell, Age 15**

Now look at two more recent goal pyramids I made for the 2005 season leading up to the Olympics. It's interesting to take a look at these and see how goals can change over the years. When I wrote my goal pyramids in 1999 I thought I was going to ski for a college, as compared to 2005 when I was more focused on skiing full-time. It's also interesting to see how much more specific and process-orientated my goal became as I learned more about the sport and the demands of World Cup racing. One thing that stayed consistent over the years, however, was my long-term goals of racing well in the Olympics.



Short term goals - 2006
Andy Newell, Age 21



Long term goals - 2006

Andy Newell, age 21

Editor's Note: Goal setting is appropriate for all stages of the pipeline. As coaches, it is our responsibility to not only help mold great cross country skiers, but to simultaneously teach these athletes how to achieve efficiently, and how to approach their training with John Henry's effort. In this manner, a career of cross country skiing will be its own education.

The following page demonstrates another method by which you and your team can set goals. Regardless of the goal setting method, the process will be invaluable.

Goal Setting Worksheet

Updated the week of: _____

If you view goal setting as a staircase, each individual step should represent a short-term goal. The bottom step can be seen as today and the very top step of the staircase will be some specific point in time in the distant future. To effectively use this worksheet, start at the bottom and identify short-term goals.

Target Date:

Having achieved a series of short-term and intermediate-term goals, the long-term goals will be in sight and will be seen as achievable and realistic.

Long-term

Intermediate goals build upon the short-term goals identified earlier. This is where adjustments can be made in order to help the athlete focus on how they will achieve their long-term goals.

Intermediate goals

The bottom step is today, a starting point from which students may begin to identify a series of short-term goals that will eventually lead to a long-term goal.

Short-term goals