

Information Sheet 4: Blue Ribbon Races

What is a Blue Ribbon?

The Blue Ribbon is a way for skiers to measure their progress and achievements in slalom racing. It provides a benchmark of each skier's performance and records their Personal Best time (known by all as a PB) for completing the course. Skiers try to improve their PB at each Blue Ribbon race, and those achieving a PB are awarded a medal at the end of the session. It is also a rehearsal for a 'real race', so the format is similar to and ERSA or a Club National

A Blue Ribbon race is normally held on the first Saturday of each month and each skier gets the chance to ski a timed course. There are six runs, three on stubbie (small) poles and three on full size poles. The coaches are on hand during the Blue Ribbon races to give advice and tips to the skiers, and often the coaches themselves participate in the races.

How are the Blue Ribbons run?

The Blue Ribbons are structured as a competition over the year, running from December to November, with prizes awarded at the end of the year based on the best overall performances. To be eligible for a prize, a skier must compete in at least six Blue Ribbons. The course is changed 3 times in December, April and August. The courses are to the standard encountered in a Regional or National Ski Competition.

Registration to enter a Blue Ribbon

All Vikings are eligible and encouraged to take part. Racers must register to race on Spond by 5pm on the Thursday before the race. All members are given a bib number when they race. Bib numbers are allocated in December, based on the previous year's results, and you keep the same bib number for the whole year. If it is your first Blue Ribbon and hence don't have a bib number, you will be allocated one when you register for your first Blue Ribbon. **If you have not registered, you will not be allowed to take part**

What happens on the day?

On the day of the Blue Ribbon, you need to arrive at around 8:15am to be on the slope at 8.30am with your bib and ski gear on to be warmed up for the start at 8:45am. Finish is 10.15am, with presentations at 10:30am. Those who are doing a Blue Ribbon for the first time will be allowed a course inspection with a more experienced racer or coach to help ensure that they understand the course layout.

There are six runs on the day, three through stubbie (short) poles and three through standard poles. It is hoped that all skiers will complete all six runs, and it is necessary to complete and record a time for at least 2 runs in order for a time to count for that month. If a skier does not record 2 times, they will not be eligible for a PB, Skier of the Month or Most Improved award for that month. All runs are timed and if the skier's fastest time is faster than their previous fastest time on the pole type they will race on (and they have recorded times for at least 2 runs) it will record as a PB

Racers go down the course in turns, in bib number order. Although there will be someone at the top of the slope to set you off, all racers are expected to ensure they are at the start gate at the right time for their bib number.

Once all the racing is complete, racers who have achieved a new PB by beating their old PB will be presented with a medal. If it is your first Blue Ribbon you won't get a medal, but your PB will count as the time to beat to win one at the next Blue Ribbon. All the times are recorded and published on the club website, so you can always see them to check your own progress. The Blue Ribbon event not only serves as a measurement of improvement but is an internal competition. Standard age categories are used based on year of birth. There are male and female categories of the following age groups; U10 and U12 with PBs based on stubby times and the rest who race on full poles; U14, U16, O21 and Masters. Points are awarded in each category. First is 50 points, second is 48 points, third 46 points etc. A racer MUST compete in at least six month's races to be a contender for a prize, but the best nine races are taken into account.

The cost is the same as normal training sessions. The Vikings club make no money from these races, and they are organized and run by volunteer parents and committee members. There is monthly draw, the 100 Club, at £2 per entry, where the winning ticket receives £30, there's a box of chocolates as a second prize and the rest of the sum collected helps to fund the medals and prizes.

Blue Ribbon Etiquette

Although the Blue Ribbons are run to be accessible and welcoming to new racers, wherever practical they follow similar rules to the ERSA races, as this helps prepare racers for these competitions. This means that the skier is expected to make their own way to the starting gate and have their skis on as they enter the start gate. Having a parent or helper carry your skis to the start gate increases congestion at the start gate and makes it harder for the officials to manage the race.

Parents' Blue Ribbon Team

Parents run Blue Ribbons and our home races. Please volunteer to help even if that is just gate judging or switching poles for stubbies after run 3. Some jobs require some training which we are very happy to give most just need common sense.

Blue Ribbon Spectators

If you have not been given a job, spectators are very welcome at all Blue Ribbons as it helps to create a race atmosphere. Please feel free to watch the race from the side of the slope or even walk down to the bottom of the slope to see the times on the timing board at the finish line. Although not strictly enforced non-skiers, apart from volunteers, should not be on the ski matting whilst the racing is taking place. However, it is greatly appreciated if the starting area is kept free of spectators as it helps the skiers get to the gate in time and ensures that the Starter has a clear view of the proceedings. This rule is much more strictly enforced at ERSA competitions and so it is good practice to follow it all.

Final Words

The Blue Ribbons are intended to help all skiers make progress whilst being fun and enjoyable. All Vikings are always encouraged to participate in the Blue Ribbons, and the pursuit of a PB should be fun as well as competitive.