



## Welcome to the Giants Ridge D-Team!

This handbook is your go-to reference for everything related to the program. Inside, you'll find answers to many of the common questions about D-Team. We encourage you to take some time to review the information, and if anything is unclear, please don't hesitate to reach out to the D-Team Administrator or speak directly with your coaches. For team updates and communication, we use the **TeamReach app**. Simply download the app to your phone and search for our team name: *Giants Ridge Alpine D-Team*. Once your child is registered, you'll receive an email with the code you'll need to join.

## D-Team Philosophy

The Development Team (D-Team) is built to introduce young athletes to the excitement and joy of skiing through the sport of racing. Our mission is to foster strong skiing fundamentals while ensuring the experience remains fun and rewarding. Our coaches work closely with each athlete to refine technique, build race strategies, and set meaningful long-term goals—helping them grow both as skiers and as individuals.

The **D-Team** is open to skiers ages 6–18 and is designed as an introduction to the more technical aspects of skiing. Please note, *this is not a program for first-time skiers—all participants must already be able to ski independently and ride the Helsinki chairlift on their own*. Our coaches prioritize flexibility and strive to ensure that every racer can build skills in a safe, supportive, and fun environment. We recognize that athletes learn in different ways and at different speeds, and our coaching approach reflects that understanding. At the same time, we ask that all racers commit to practicing regularly, participating in races, listening to their coaches, and putting in the effort to improve each week. Most importantly, we want athletes to enjoy their time on the snow and look forward to coming back every week.

## Giants Ridge D- Team Coaches (Confirmed coaches for 25/26 season)

- Chad Larson
- Andrea Kannas
- Evan Johnson
- Mark Carlson
- Rick Crum
- Heidi Jo Karlsson ~ Mountain Sports School Director

## Giants Ridge D- Team Practice Dates:

- **Practices times** ~ Saturdays 1:PM – 3:PM
  - December 6 (Try it Day) – Ski with coaches
  - December 13
  - December 20
  - January 3
  - January 10
  - January 24
  - January 31
  - February 7
  - February 21
  - February 28
  - March 7 (End of season Pizza Party following practice)
  - No Practice Holidays (Dec 27, Jan 17, Feb 14)



## Meeting area for Team Practices;

- December 6<sup>th</sup> “Try it Day” **meet ready to ski**, 1:00 PM at the Mountain Sports meeting flags between the two chalets
- December 13<sup>th</sup> and all remaining practices:
  - meet at the “Sprung Building” located at the bottom of Helsinki

- There will be a D-Team vertical banner next to the building
- If you are late for practice where to meet?
  - Go to the Mountain Sports School they will direct you to what hill practice is on that day, at the top of the practice hill, there will be a sign posted “Giants Ridge D-Team” wait at the sign for a coach.

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### Recommended Equipment

- **Goggles**
- **Junior Race Skis** – Giant Slalom-specific skis are recommended (race-specific skis not required).
- **Poles**
- **Well-tuned and waxed skis** for each practice
  - Tuning and waxing services are available in our Rental Department.
- **Warm Winter Clothing**
  - Windproof/water-resistant snow pants and base layers (moisture-wicking recommended).
  - Speed suits are optional, not required.
  - Warm jacket.
  - Layering system for comfort and flexibility.
  - Leather mittens or choppers.
  - Face mask or double-layer neck gaiter.

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### Safety Equipment

- **Helmets are required** for all D-Team practices and competitions.
    - Concussions are a growing concern in youth sports, and helmets significantly reduce the risk.
    - SnowSports-specific helmets are available at all local ski and snowboard shops.
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### Conduct Expectations

As a member of the D-Team, each athlete represents themselves, their coaches, and Giants Ridge Ski Area. All racers are expected to:

- Demonstrate respect toward others at all times.
  - Recognize that the public has the right to ski on the same terrain we train on.
  - Display good sportsmanship both on and off the hill.
  - Remain in the practice area unless a coach has been notified. When possible, an assistant coach will accompany athletes who need to leave.
  - Refrain from horseplay on lifts and in lift lines. All athletes must be able to ride the lift independently.
  - Know and follow **Your Responsibility Code**
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### Race Day & Course Inspection

- Designated **team meeting area** on race days
  - Race-day procedures shared by **Wednesday** before each Sunday race
  - Course inspection is an important part of ski racing:
    - Racers study and memorize the course before competing
    - Coaches will guide athletes on what to look for and how to inspect effectively
    - Course inspection should become part of every racer’s pre-race routine
    - Younger athletes inspect as a group
    - Older, more experienced athletes may inspect independently
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## Home Hill NJRS Races – we host 1 NJRS race

### How can I help on race day?

- Hosting a race is exciting—but it also takes a lot of work. Successful events depend on cooperation between the ski area, coaches, and parents.
- Giants Ridge has a strong tradition of running excellent races, thanks to our dedicated parent volunteers.
- There are too many responsibilities for staff and coaches alone—parent involvement is essential.
- A **Volunteer Signup Sheet** will be sent out **one week prior** to each home race.
- Our NJRS Race at Giants Ridge is scheduled for **TBD**.

### What is NJRS? (Northland Junior Race Series)

- As a member of the Giants Ridge D-Team, your child may participate in the NJRS race series.
- Racing is **optional** — athletes can choose to race the full series, just a few races, or try one out.
- The series includes **6 races throughout the season**.
- To qualify for the **Championship Race** and be eligible for awards, athletes must compete in at least **3 regular-season races**.
- NJRS races are designed to be **fun and developmental**, giving young athletes the chance to test their skills in a supportive environment.
- Races are generally held **every Sunday starting in January**, with local ski areas and clubs rotating as hosts.
- There is **no entry fee** for racers who are members of an NJRS club, Lift ticket purchase is required.

### 2026 NJRS Race Schedule

- January 11<sup>th</sup> – Detroit Mountain (SL 10+)
- January 25<sup>th</sup> – Lutsen Mountain (GS)
- February 1<sup>st</sup> – Mount Ski Gull (SL 10+)
- February 8<sup>th</sup> – Giants Ridge (GS)
- February 28<sup>th</sup> – Mont Du Lac (GS) \*Saturday
- March 1 – Spirit Mountain
- March 8<sup>th</sup> – Lutsen (GS) **CHAMPIONSHIP**

*\*Championship qualifications – racers will need to participate in 3 regular season races to qualify for an award*

### Member Teams

- Team Duluth
- Lutsen Junior Alpine Club
- Ski Gull Alpine Club
- Mont du Lac Alpine Club
- Giants Ridge
- Detroit Mountain

### Associate Clubs:

- TB Fast (Lutsen)
- Norwesters Alpine Club (Loch Lomond Ski Area)
- Port Arthur Ski Club (Mount Baldy)

\*Associate Clubs do not host races, but are allowed to send racers along with coaching staff to NJRS events.

\*For more detailed information regarding NJRS Registration and Race Day Information look on the Team Duluth Web Site. <https://www.teamduluth.org/njrs>

We hope this handbook is helpful in familiarizing you with our D-Team program. We strive each season to keep our skiers and parents informed through this handbook and periodic updates. If you have any further questions that were not answered in this handbook, please feel free to talk;

**Heidi Jo Karlsson** ~ PSIA Level 3 Trainer, CS2 Children's Certified  
Mountain Sports School Director

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