

Ski action photos by Julie Shipman, jshipman@csolutions.net.

RACERS

How a premier skiing academy makes its athletes strong for the slopes

To excel in a sport such as skiing, you need to have good coaching and follow a good conditioning program. To compete with the best skiers in the world, you need to have great coaching and a great conditioning program. Rowmark Ski Academy is a special school for serious skiers who want to be the best.

Olympic and world champion Picabo Street, Rowmark Ski Academy. Silver medalist and world champion Hilary Lindh, Rowmark Ski Academy. The list of alumni of this school reads like a *Who's Who* of elite US skiers. In fact, in the past six years Rowmark has put 11 athletes on the US Ski Team. The reason is Rowmark is a school committed to providing an environment that builds champions.

Rowmark Ski Academy is located at Rowland Hall-St. Mark's School in Salt Lake City, Utah. It's an independent, college-preparatory school that is a skier's paradise – it's 45 minutes or less from seven major ski areas. The team, which is limited to 30 students, will also travel as far as Canada, Austria, South America and New Zealand to enjoy the best snow conditions.

The program director for Rowmark is Todd Brickson, a former coach for the US Ski Team. Brickson has assembled an elite coaching staff, including Thomas Eckfeldt, the head strength and conditioning coach and a coach for the women's team. Says Eckfeldt, "Alpine skiing is a very skill-specific sport, and we are constantly looking for ways to train our athletes to better handle the forces created when racing. For that reason we focus a great deal on developing an all-around athlete, with a foundation of strength throughout the upper body, lower body and core."

Getting Strong for the Slopes

Typically, Rowmark's competitive season starts in late November and runs through mid April, with the championship races occurring in late March. Eckfeldt says that during the season the stresses that occur in the sport help the athletes maintain strength levels, but that time must be spent on energy-system training to aid in recovery from run to run and race to race.



Weight training is essential to reach elite levels in skiing. Shown top to bottom: Taylor Vest Burton pulling, Katie Coleman being shown proper elbow position for the clean by Coach Eckfeldt, and Karen Bell cleaning while being coached and motivated by Coach Eckfeldt, Sandrine Couldwell and Hillary Bean.

Serra Lakomski



Sandrine
Couldwell



Andrew Rutledge



Taylor
Vest-Burton



A BFS Weightroom



In the off-season in the summer and fall, Eckfeldt says, the focus in the weightroom is on building a strength base: “Skiing involves a great amount of balance, so we do many lifts either on discs or one-legged at times to help gain balance under load. We focus on one-legged squats, one-legged good mornings, and front disc squats. As we get closer to the start of the season, the plyometric and anaerobic work starts to take precedence.” Eccentric training is also important.

“We focus on eccentric work of the lower body with timed squats and negatives to help, as well as retrograde exercises such as lunging and running backwards uphill to help with lactate efficiency,” says Eckfeldt. “Core work is also a huge focus. Core exercises are typically geared towards rotational and stabilization exercises, especially ones involving upper body stabilization with lower body movement such as hanging V-ups.”

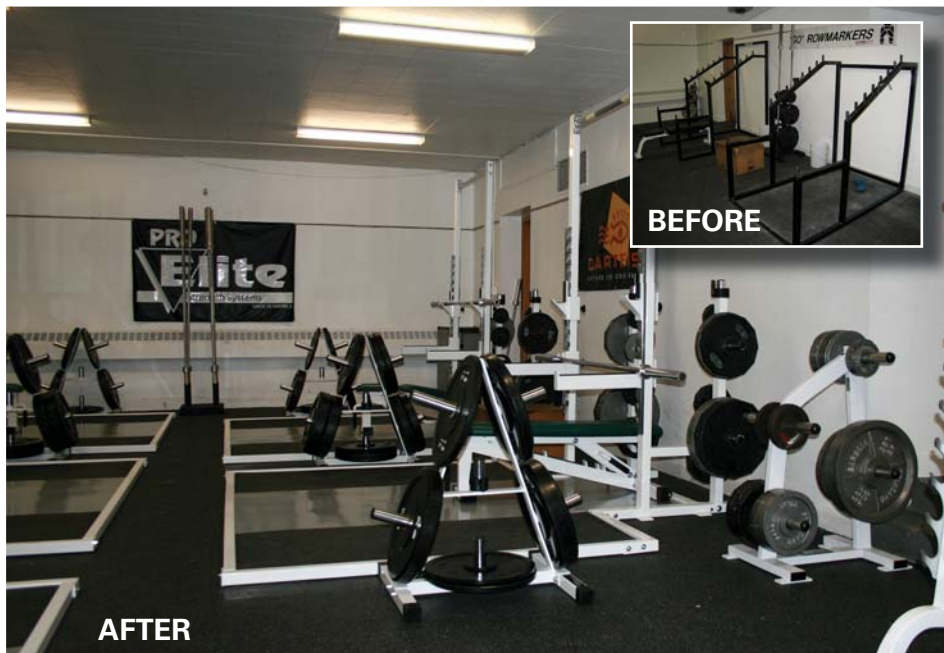
One favorite exercise for Coach Eckfeldt is the glute-ham raise. “In skiing equal quad/hamstring development is crucial, and this machine gives us a great method to achieve it.”

The Rowmark weightlifting program is designed to take 45 minutes to an hour without bottlenecks. Essential to accomplishing all the work they want to do within that time is a great weightroom.

Training Places

This spring the Rowmark Ski Academy’s weightroom got a BFS makeover, with the focus being six elite half racks with platforms that enable them to perform multiple exercises in a limited space. “Our room is relatively small, and in our original design we had pieces that were typically used for only one or two exercises. With the half-rack setup we have tripled our availability of Olympic platforms, thereby reducing our bottlenecks. We

Makeover!



Zach Clayton



Andrew Kircher

Rowmark Ski Academy Alumni

- Picabo Street**, Olympic and world champion
- Hillary Lindh**, Olympic silver medalist and world champion
- Kristi Terzian**, Olympian, two-time national champion
- Alex Shaffer**, Olympian, two-time national champion
- Rowena Bright**, Olympian
- Ovidio Garcia**, Olympian
- Gota Muir**, Olympian
- Roger Brown**, US Team, 2002 NCAA Slalom Champion
- Nick Baker**, US Team
- Erik Fisher**, US Team
- Amber Guaraglia**, US Team
- Courtney Hammond**, US Team
- Keely Kelleher**, US Team
- Alice McKennis**, US Team
- Andy Phillips**, US Team
- Robert Saunders**, US Team
- Kiley Staples**, US Team
- Tague Thorsen**, US Team
- Jennie VanWagner**, US Team

now are able to work four to five athletes on one platform at one time! We have almost doubled our working area because we can now do all lower body exercises and upper body exercises in the same space.”

In addition to its function in training athletes, the weightroom at the school is used by fitness classes and the faculty and staff. “For this reason I chose BFS’s duals line of cable machines. They helped our initial issue of space-saving design while offering multiple exercises per machine. The faculty teaching our personal fitness classes have expressed great enthusiasm for both the platforms and the duals line. They love the duals line because it gives them an easier, more effective way of teaching personal fitness to those who are not interested in the free weight exercises.”

In the area of cutting-edge technology, Rowland Hall-St. Mark’s School recently became one of 10 high

schools in the country to be a Dartfish Academy. The Dartfish video analysis software will be used throughout the entire school, from the classroom to the weightroom, and one of the BFS elite half racks will be used as a trainer platform. “The athlete will be able to perform a lift on the platform and then view their lift from a timed delay, thereby giving the athlete and coach direct feedback in the form of video analysis.”

The Rowmark Ski Academy is one of the finest training programs in the world for young skiers, and BFS is proud to be a part of it. **BFS**



Head Strength Coach and Women’s Coach Thomas Eckfeldt

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