

# My experience as a parent with H.A.D.T. - Tom Wright (son Patrick)

**Is it worth it to spend the money to send your young racer to a higher level?**

**Why H.A.D.T is the best and most affordable ski development program.**

**Is it worth the money?** It took Ken three tries before I agreed to spend what seemed to be so much money for skiing at the K-2 level (\$4,000-tax refund). Four years later and a lot more money I don't regret for a minute the time and money to keep Patrick skiing. The teenage years, between 14 and 18, is a time of major adjustments with lots of distractions and potential problems. Skiing helped Patrick focus on a sport he enjoyed, it kept him out of trouble, and he learned to organize his time around skiing and school. In addition he met terrific friends who shared his passion for racing. Some of my friends said they couldn't afford it, that they would be better off buying a newer car. I still have my old vans, but I'm thankful that Patrick has had the opportunity to challenge himself against the very best. From my perspective keeping my son focused, happy, challenged and surrounded by good friends is worth every penny.

**H.A.D.T offers the best ski racing development program while at the same time being the most reasonably priced and flexible option available.** If you check the H.A.D.T record, it indicates a very successful approach to the development of young racers. At this year's AOS banquet H.A.D.T took most of the trophies for J-1 and J-2 male and female racers. In the four years Patrick has been at H.A.D.T we couldn't afford many of the activities his competition had, so he had to rely on a strong program to make him successful. Given the limitations placed on my son, his record says a lot about the success of the H.A.D.T approach to developing young racers. Patrick's record includes some of the following:

**2001 K-2 Overall Provincial Champion**  
**2002 AOS Overall J-1 Champion**  
**2002 Top Ontario FIS Racer SL and GS (same age and younger)**  
**2002 Top Ten Canada SL and GS (same age and younger)**  
**2003 AOS Overall J-1 Champion**  
**2003 Top Ontario FIS Racer SL and GS (same age and younger)**  
**2003 Top Ten Canada SL and GS (same age and younger)**  
**2003 4th GS Canadian Junior Championships (J-1)**  
**2004 AOS Overall J-2 Champion**  
**2004 Top Ontario FIS Racer SL,SG and GS (same age and younger)**  
**2004 Top Ten Canada SL, GS and SG (same age and younger)**  
**2004 Accepted To the Ontario Provincial Team**

**Why, based on my experience, H.A.D.T. is your best choice.**

**1. A long record of successful experience:** Four years ago several of our friends who could afford it joined private clubs. To their dismay these clubs cancelled their FIS programs leaving them to pay even more money at a local academy. I've watched many of these on again, off again situations, which is hard on athletes and coaches. The first question you should ask is how long has the program you are interested in been running and how successful have they been.

**2. Affordability:** Unfortunately I can't afford the \$30,000+ for the academies in Collingwood. H.A.D.T let me custom fit Patrick's program based on what I could afford. There was one program at a private club where I wouldn't have to join, but it was an on again, off again situation and didn't have a philosophy that would give Patrick the opportunity to realize his potential.

**3. Some of the best coaches:** Patrick has had two excellent coaches while at H.A.D.T. Not being able to afford to send Patrick to the many of the camps his competition went to, coaching became the crucial element in my son's success. H.A.D.T. has consistently hired coaches that are enthusiastic, race experienced and great motivators. Having coaches supporting the H.A.D.T. developmental model meant that every week my son had some new skill he was working on.

**4. A well organized program:** Having a solid track record of experience meant that in the 4 years Patrick was at H.A.D.T, I didn't have to worry about travel, accommodations, or race schedules. Many of the on again off again programs would ask to have their athletes go on some of H.A.D.T's trips.

**5. A strong political advocate on your side:** I suppose I shouldn't be surprised, but there are politics in every sport. Ken is a level 4 coach with a great deal of experience. When problems came up it was reassuring to know that H.A.D.T. athletes would be treated fairly and according to the rules.

**6. A developmental model that works:** Having good coaches alone won't assure that the potential of an athlete is reached. The H.A.D.T record for males and females says a lot about the strategy needed to help an athlete reach their potential. While I couldn't afford all H.A.D.T had to offer, I made sure I followed the advice about which races, camps and activities were essential for Patrick to have a chance at being successful.

### **Some Advice For Parents New To This Higher Level Of Racing:**

Patrick came from Snow Valley, a very low elevation club, where he learned to love to race. I had little I had little knowledge about what was involved in racing beyond Snow Valley.

**1. Don't worry about the kids who are the "identified elite" at an early age.** I couldn't afford to send Patrick to K-2 until the second year at the age of 14. If your racer is in Patrick's situation you will probably start last at races. After the "identified" racers who have earned good start numbers have finished almost everyone will leave the race hill. Many racers from small elevation programs have excellent programs but their racers haven't been identified. Currently 100% of the K-2 identification group come from Collingwood clubs which represent less than 20% of the clubs in AOS. I learned quickly that many racers from smaller clubs do very well once they have the opportunity to do so. After winning several races in a row people start to stay until the kids from small hill clubs with the high bib numbers finish.

**2. If you can't afford it do a limited program for the first year and buy used race equipment.** Patrick had used race skis and no training skis his first year. The best place to buy used equipment is at the fall Ski Show. If your with H.A.D.T. make sure you follow the advice about what is essential for your racer to do well.

**3. Find a school that supports athletes.** Alpine Ontario has a good list of supportive schools. In Patrick's case I talked to the principal and found the school very supportive.

**If you have any questions please feel you can call.**

**I highly recommend H.A.D.T.**

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