



### **Club Questionnaire: Juneau Biathlon Team**

**Q: Share some Club highlights from this past season.... for example: Best or most well attended events; fun practice sessions/drills; social events/Club building activities, etc).**

A: This year we kicked off the inaugural Juneau Biathlon Club with a Try-Biathlon weekend. A weekend jammed with biathlon opportunities included evening laser rifle biathlon, a community barbecue, a biathlon rifle clinic, fantastic spring skiing, and networking with partners in Juneau to further develop the sport. Thanks to John Farra of USBA, Steve Wilson of the Anchorage Biathlon Club, and former biathlon coach Hilary Nystrom, the weekend was abundant with knowledge and skill, which created excitement for those new to the sport. Over two dozen youth and adults participated; many new to biathlon, and several new to skiing. Events were supported in partnership by the Juneau Rifle Club, Civilian Marksmanship Program, Nordic Ski Association of Anchorage, and Juneau Nordic Ski Club.

Biathlon practices have been going on intermittently since the spring of 2021, but under the Juneau Nordic Ski Club, the Juneau Biathlon Team was created in the spring of 2023, which consisted of a spring training program that met weekly. We had twelve consistent athletes, most in middle school, who were absolutely stoked to learn about shooting proficiency and cardiovascular training.

**Q: Highlight a story (or two) of Club participants who improved the most, and/or were able to participate in high level competition this past season.**

A: It is always a great feeling to put all the pieces together and see a significant improvement from your athletes. One of the quietest and most timid biathletes saw this reward. He showed up to each practice ready to learn. Round after round of dry firing and zeroing, to practicing combos and then getting competitive with teammates, his excitement led him to make insightful questions and grow that much more. The last practice, he was the sharp shooter of the bunch, and you could see confidence radiating. Not only did he learn to do biathlon, but his character and confidence developed during this time as well.

**Q: Share one secret to your success as a club, or something you consider to be Best Practice.**

A: Community has been the secret of a strong nordic ski community since the 1980s, and the reason for the revival of biathlon. Incredible volunteerism from a tight knit group of passionate skiers is what has kept the passion alive, and brought in new support. Without the continual support and sacrifice from these folks, the vision for these programs would never have pulled through.

**Q: Share either some history related to your club, or some plans or excitement for where your club is headed.**

A: Juneau Biathlon began in the 1980s when biathlon competitions were staged at the Eaglecrest Ski Area. Energy died down during the following decades, until laser rifle demonstrations occurred variously between 2010-2019. From 2019-2021 a biathlon facility was designed, budgeted, and letters of support were sent, before the Covid-19 Pandemic put a halt to developments. In 2021 there was an official revival in biathlon. Over thirty nordic ski team members tried biathlon in Anchorage, then Olympic Biathlete Maddie Phaneuf came to Juneau in the spring of 2022 as an inspiring visiting coach. Informal practices during that same spring at the indoor shooting range with biathlon and marksmanship coaches prepared several competitive athletes to participate in a biathlon summer camp in Anchorage during the summer of 2022. Communications with USBA Sport Development Director John Farra and formal engagement with the Alaska Biathlon Association began during the winter of 2022; subsequently leading to the current Juneau Biathlon Team programming, and partnership with Juneau organizations to assess the development of a biathlon facility. We are excited about the idea of the first biathlon range in Southeast Alaska, where the climate provides high class skiing for 6 months a year, and for biathlon to have representation in the Capital of Alaska.

**Q: How does your club attract new members/XC skiers?**

A: The mission of the Juneau Nordic Ski Club is to put more people on skis, more often, on more groomed kilometers. The same can be translated to biathlon, except with rifles and biathlon targets! The Juneau Biathlon Team was designed to be inclusive and fun. A new sport to many in the community, we provide everything for our skiers/biathletes (facility, equipment, coaching) at a marginal cost to ensure that anyone no matter the financial situation, can achieve their goals. Additionally, we use community outreach strategies to reach broader audiences.

**Q: Has your club had success finding grant funding? If yes, what grants?**

A: We are beginning to pursue grants that are Western United States and Alaska specific. These include the Crossett Grant and Douglas Dornan Grant. Midway USA and Recreation Pittman-Robertson (P-R) Program grants are national grants we are beginning. Our primary funding at this point has come from local businesses invested in our mission and supporting local youth.

**Q: Share if your club has done any fundraising or community-related events. If so, how did it go and what did it take to organize?**

A: Concurrent with the Try-Biathlon weekend, we launched a Kickstarter Fundraiser in an effort to purchase biathlon rifles for athletes from Lost Nation R&D. In Juneau, only .22 long rifles have been used to train for biathlon. To provide an accurate and competitive method of training, our main goal is to provide proper equipment for our athletes so they are ready for biathlon competition down the road.

**Q: How/where does your club purchase ammunition? Any good connections you can share?**

A: We are lucky to have a strong and cohesive biathlon community in Alaska. We partnered with the Alaska Biathlon Association as part of a bulk order through the Spring Youth Rimfire Ammunition Program.

**Q: Is there any aspect that you are in need of guidance on, or you feel you could learn from another Club?**

A: The Juneau Biathlon Club is in its infancy, and we are growing and developing based on the interest of the community. We want to develop a strong biathlon training program for our youth to be able to compete competitively, while also allowing the opportunity for adults to get involved and train. The more ways we can become more versed with techniques for coaching a variety of ages and abilities the better. We are putting equal effort into creating a biathlon facility by gaining public interest and partnerships. With enough education and support we intend to get a range developed. Insight on range development plans from smaller clubs would be helpful in our planning process in the next several years.