Dear MAST Family,

Coaches are meant to inspire, encourage, and fully dedicate themselves to their athletes. We show up early to set the gates, we skip meals to make sure everyone gets feedback, and we stay late to make sure the box gets locked up at the end of the night. At the end of the day we all love skiing, and we all want our athletes to succeed.

How success in skiing is defined has changed for me over the years. In high school, I set my sights on making it to state, and it took me 5 years to reach that goal. Then in college my goal changed to a team-oriented approach. I wanted our whole team to make it to Nationals. I think setting goals and dreaming big in skiing is super important to being “successful”. When you set a big goal, you then have to do all of the little things to make it happen. You can’t just show up expecting to be better. You push yourself, use your coaches, and rely on your friends for support.

Success changed when I became a coach. You couldn’t find a happier coach than me when someone successfully blocked their first gate. Every athlete is scared the first time they block a gate. What happens if I miss? What if it hits me? What if I fall? Skiing can be scary, and we all need a little push to succeed and move forward. I learned that coaches will be the first to believe in you even if you don’t believe in yourself. Our job as a coach is to make you believe that you can accomplish whatever you set your mind to, that you can block whatever gate is in your way.

After being surrounded by such a supportive group of coaches and athletes I was overwhelmed with positivity that everyone can and should believe in themselves. At the end of the day you all taught me more about life than many of you might ever know until you become a coach someday. The beautiful thing about ski racing is that “that gate” isn’t just in the racecourse, it’s in your life every day. You need to be willing to block whatever gate is in your way to move forward, and MAST made me believe in myself to block my gate.

It saddens me to announce that I will not be returning to MAST for the 2019-20 season in pursuit of my lifelong dream of being a ski patroller in Utah. This next year I plan on running into a lot of “gates”. There are going to be times where I don’t believe in myself and I’m probably going to fall on my face a few times (metaphorically of course). Whenever I run into one of these gates I’m going to think of MAST and how none of you ever gave up on us, and that’s the most a coach could ever ask for! Continue to block gates and get better, both on the hill and off.

Ski fast and carve cleanly!

-Willie

P.S. If you are travelling to Utah this winter please email me at [willie.maahs@gmail.com](mailto:willie.maahs@gmail.com) and I will ski with you! I will be patrolling at Park City but will explore different ski areas and I hope to see a lot of familiar faces :)

P.P.S. Here’s a real photo of me reading Mark’s emails and following the results from the upcoming season. If you know, you know.