

UW Nordic Ski Teams Head to Nationals with Championship Hopes

Feb. 27, 2006 -- The University of Wyoming Nordic ski team will compete in the season-ending United States Collegiate Ski and Snowboard Association (USCSA) championships March 6-11, in Sugarloaf, Maine.

They will race all Nordic events, which consist of a 1.5-kilometer (km) skate sprint, a 15km classic mass start, 8.5km skate interval start and a 3x5km relay.

"It's a brutal schedule that leaves only the strong standing at the end," says UW coach Christi Boggs, technology coordinator for the UW College of Education.

This season the UW team became an NCAA Division I affiliate and competed in four such sanctioned events. The other races were in the regular Rocky Mountain Intercollegiate Ski Association division. UW has competed in the USCSA since adopting Nordic skiing as a club-level sport.

"Our top man and woman each had one race that was fast enough to have qualified them for NCAA nationals," Boggs says. "To actually qualify, they needed four of these races, not just one, but it gives you an idea of how fast they skied."

Boggs was referring to Kari Boroff, a sophomore from Daniel, and senior Riley Hopeman of Lander.

"The NCAA races really gave our team a huge advantage," Boggs says, adding that both teams easily won all of the regular regional meets.

Representing UW at the national meet will be Boroff; Ava Bell, senior, Laramie; Erin Hammer, junior, Lander; Aubree Haffey, freshman, Pinedale; Melissa Gangl, junior, Casper; and sophomore twin sisters Katie and Liz Turner, Chugiak, Alaska.

Also Adam Alspach and Justin Daraie, both seniors from Casper; and Hopeman, Joe Howdysshell, senior, Josh Peterson, junior and Brian Sebade, sophomore, all from Lander.

"We think this is the best men's team we have ever had," Boggs says. The top men, Hopeman, Howdysshell and Daraie, have placed in the top three at USCSA Nationals in the past and Hopeman is the returning champion in the classic race.

"The men definitely have their best chance ever of winning nationals as a team," Boggs says. "Last year they were a close runner-up with most of the team laid up with the flu and without Justin Daraie, who was studying abroad in France. If they can stay healthy and ski their best they will come home national champions."

The women also have a strong team, Boggs says, but the Cowgirls lost three key seniors to graduation.

"We are returning Kari, who placed third in the classic race as a freshman last year and is skiing amazing this

year, as well as Melissa and Ava, but the depth of last year is missing," Boggs says. "This team is extremely young and talented and in a couple of years should do some serious damage."

Boggs says the national meet should be good experience and hopes the team can place in the top three. Individually, Boroff should place in the top three in her races, Boggs adds.

The last three seasons UW's Nordic ski program has had remarkable success on the USCSA level. The women won two national championships and finished second once, missing a third consecutive title by just four points. The men have recorded a runner-up and third place finish in two of the last three years.

UW has recorded eight individual national champion titles, and one Cowgirl, Jennifer Kinner of Casper, was twice named the national all-around skier. Also, 20 UW skiers were named All-Americans and 16 were named Academic All-Americans during that time.

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