



Saddlin'-Up with Christi Boggs & Rachel Watson

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Editors note: This is a weekly column highlighting our ski coaches from around the country... including elite coaches, college coaches, high school coaches, volunteer coaches, and learn-to-ski coaches. This is an effort to sample a diverse group of coaches and recognize the people who are the backbone of today's skiers. If you would like to nominate a coach for an interview, please email robertwhitney99@hotmail.com. Please give coach's name, email, phone, and a small paragraph describing the nominee. The more diverse, the better.

Christi Boggs (37) and Rachel Watson (31), co-coach the University of Wyoming Nordic Ski Team in Laramie, WY. They have teamed up coaching and volunteering at UW for the last 8 seasons.



How did both of you get into skiing?

We both grew up in Leadville, Colorado and both our families independently put us on skis as soon as we could walk. Christi's family was big into all kinds of skiing, mostly going on backcountry trips and skiing at Vail. Christi's father was a weekend ski patroller for Vail so we spent all our weekends there alpine skiing until she was 13. Until high school, Christi competed as a ski-meister, doing both alpine and cross country events. After that she chose cross country.

Rachel started skiing on a pair of neon orange plastic skis up and down the street in front of her house when she was 3 years old. By the time she was 12, she was an active member of the Bill Koch Youth Ski League. She loved every part of skiing and started competing in sixth grade.

As a junior skier, Christi was a member of a national championship relay team and had 3 top 5 finishes as a J1/OJ at Junior Nationals. Christi was also Colorado State Champion in 1987. Christi was a member of the University of Wyoming NCAA Nordic Ski Team from 1987-1992. While at UW Christi was first-team All-American 3 times, and second-team All-American once, the top skier on the strongest women's nordic team in the country at the time. After college Christi changed her focus to Biathlon. During the time Christi competed in biathlon and attended the 1993 World University Games, won the Rocky Mt. Cup and won the North American Cup twice as well.

Rachel also has a long history in nordic skiing. As a junior Rachel was Colorado State Champion in 1994, placed top 5 several times at Junior Nationals, and was a member of a national championship relay team. Rachel raced for Denver University for 4 years, qualifying for NCAA's her last two years. While at DU, Rachel trained under coach Knut Nystad and former US Team Coach Trond Nystad. Rachel graduated with a degree in Chemistry in 1998 and with a Master's degree in Molecular Biology in 2001.

Christi's coaching credentials include coaching high school track & field, cross-country running, and cross-country skiing. Both have also worked with the United States Olympic Committee and the Winter Sports for Girls biathlon program.

University of Wyoming had an NCAA team 13 years ago. Can you fill us in on the UW team and how you've volunteered your time to rebuild the team.

Christi was on scholarship for the UW NCAA team, graduating in 1992, one year before skiing was cut as a varsity sport. In 1998, we decided to come to UW for graduate school and volunteer coached the newly formed club team. (We did not actually do the paperwork to get it started but were there from the very beginning.) The first 3 years we couldn't even field 3 men to make a full team. Now, we have more than 35 athletes on the roster and upwards of 25 who will race weekly!

We're 100% volunteer. We both have "day jobs." Christi just finished her doctoral degree in instructional technology (spring 2006) and is the technology director for the College of Education at UW as well as being an adjunct instructor for the Department of Adult Learning and Technology. Rachel teaches all labs/lectures of General Microbiology at UW as well as teaching Biochemistry in the summer. Rachel recently just started her doctoral degree in education. In addition to this, during the fall and spring, we volunteer coach 10-15 hours a week, and during the winter much more.

UW competes in USCSA Nationals every year. How are you transitioning into NCAA racing?

It's great for the athletes. There are very few teams in the USCSA Rocky Mountain Conference, especially on the women's side and if our athletes hope to compete with teams from other conferences at USCSA

Nationals they need to be pushed. NCAA competition provides that push. Some of the UW athletes struggle with the competition but most of them take it in stride and do quite well. Last year was the first year they made much of an effort to do the races and by the last one our top woman was only 12 seconds out of the top ten. This race put her amongst the top 3 scholarship skiers of nearly every other fully-funded team. We hope that as the athletes get used to the competition at these big races they will start to compete more consistently and I think they will surprise themselves. We don't plan to make a complete transition to NCAA, as we have no school support for that, but we love giving our athletes the opportunity to race on that level.

What keeps you coming back, year after year?

Coaching is a labor of love. We just love to ski, love to race, love to coach and love our athletes. We miss racing ourselves sometimes but we feel that we are truly giving back to the sport that we love by teaching more athletes how to love it. Someday we want to have time to train and do the Birkebeiner, the Vassaloppet and the MarciaLonga ourselves but for now we are happy where we are.

Anything I didn't ask, and should have?

Our website is <http://www.uwyo.edu/ski> we have tons of info on there about our training, racing, athletes, results and much more.

As a club team we are very open to all comers. From beginners to athletes with aspirations of national teams, we have a place for them all. We don't give scholarships but we do give huge support, ski & training education, fun and a wonderful environment to ski!



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