

# Teck BC Cup #2 - Otway Ski Trails, Prince George, BC

Sat. Feb.1 & Sun. Feb.2, 2020



On the weekend of Feb.1 and 2, the BV Nordic Cross-Country Ski Club sent 27 skiers to compete in the Teck BC Cup #2 at the Otway Ski Trails in Prince George, BC. The host Caledonia Club reported nearly 200 ski racers from 14 different ski clubs across BC. This is the biggest regional race, and has been cancelled the previous 2 years - once due to lack of snow, and once due to cold temperatures - so our BV skiers were chomping at the bit to get the opportunity to race here again. Sickness struck some of our team, with 7 racers unfortunately unable to start some of their competitions.

Day one were the interval sprint races of skate-ski technique. This requires racers to depart the starting line one-by-one in 15 second intervals, for short sprint distances. The races are brief and intense, with tenths of seconds often separating a number of skiers in the final placements. After the first round of qualifiers, the skiers are divided up by formula into subsequent heats and then sorted out by ranking into A, B, C or D finals, which then add to the equation of how the final rankings are settled. Our BV skiers fared well overall, and hopefully demonstrate an upward trajectory for our club's presence on the provincial circuit. The weather and course conditions were pretty good on Saturday, considering the heavy wet snow and rain that came down on Friday. By the afternoon, strong winds whipped up to create tough skiing against the wind, so much so that even our smaller skiers reporting being blown backwards somewhat at the top of hills!

Starting with the younger kids, in the U8's, Juliette Fleury-Allen put in a great race and got 1<sup>st</sup> in the girl's category, while in the U10-1, boys' category, Benji Wickham got 3<sup>rd</sup>, and Gabriel Wimbush and Hugo Forsyth got 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>. For the girls, Macey Nisbett ended up 4<sup>th</sup> in the U10-2 girls. In U12-1 for boys born in 2009, Adrian Wickham placed 2<sup>nd</sup>, and for his older teammates in U12-2 boys, Jesse Wimbush placed 4<sup>th</sup>, Nico Gagnon 5<sup>th</sup>, Alex Forsyth 9<sup>th</sup> and Sonny McLean 11<sup>th</sup>. U12-2 Girls saw Sacha Fleury-Allen achieve 2<sup>nd</sup>, and Wren Williston 6<sup>th</sup>.

For the U14s, in the U14-1 category, Hayden Gillis got 7<sup>th</sup>, and for the U14-2 boys, Ari Rath Jenne reached 8<sup>th</sup>. Eden Dunbar finished 10<sup>th</sup> in U14-1 girls, and our strong girls' U14-2 group brought a silver for Ava Wimbush, 8<sup>th</sup> for Finlay Gagnon, and 10<sup>th</sup> for Catherine DeGisi. At one point, these three girls were head-to-head in the same heat even! Each skied with strong determination and came together in camaraderie in the finish zone.

In the U16s, Zeph Dumais had an excellent finish of 4<sup>th</sup> in the 2005 group, and Ronan Nisbet put in a valiant effort to achieve 10<sup>th</sup>. For the girls, Chloe Williston maintained strong form to place 5<sup>th</sup>, and Caitlyn Gillis got 9<sup>th</sup>. Gregory Baxter skied to 4<sup>th</sup> in the U18 boys, while feeling sick, and did not continue into the heats due to his illness.

On the second day were the mass-start classic distance races. With sun out and temperatures just below zero, and negligible wind, the waxing and skiing went fairly unencumbered by challenging environmental conditions, though snow falling on the course a bit later led to some subtle changes in the snow characteristics. After a tiring Saturday, the racers had to drum up their energy and focus to put into this day. There were some long uphill climbs as well as some short steep areas of the route for the skiers to face. Downhill areas had some quick elbow curves to force the skiers to be agile with their speed and turning.

For our young trio of U10-1 boys, Gabriel Wimbush had a steady speed to capture first in their category, with Benji Wickham and Hugo Forsyth getting 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup>. Macey Nisbet skied to a 4<sup>th</sup> place finish in the U10-2 girls and Adrian Wickham got 5<sup>th</sup> in his boys U12-1 age category. In a dramatic finish-line lunge, Jesse Wimbush squeaked ahead of a competitor from Sovereign Lakes to get 4<sup>th</sup> in the U12-2 boys, with Alex Forsyth and Sonny McLean getting 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup>. Sacha Fleury-Allen also placed 4<sup>th</sup> in the U12-2 girls, and Wren Williston 7<sup>th</sup>.

Up to the longer distances, where the courses translated to 2 laps of the same route, the U14s raced 5km, and the U16s 7.5km. The U14-1 boys saw Hayden Gillis persevere to place 7<sup>th</sup> for his second day, and in the U14-2 boys, Ari Rath Jenne captured his second 8<sup>th</sup> place of the competition, coming in close behind two other boys. A most unfortunate incident occurred for the U14 girls category. On the second lap, at a junction right near the end of the race, one route of the course was prematurely and erroneously closed to prepare for the distance for the U16 category. This meant that the top 4 racers of the U14 girls were directed onto the wrong path and ended up skiing a longer course. Ava Wimbush of our club was one of these leading girls and came in first amongst this cluster. This error was corrected for the remaining female racers to complete the course correctly, but it ultimately led to the disqualification of those 4 racers who would have been 1, 2, 3 and 4 of the final result. Nonetheless, Ava was very accepting of this misfortune and skied an incredible race regardless. Catherine DeGisi gritted through the race to collect 5<sup>th</sup> in the U14-2 girls and Eden Dunbar reached 11<sup>th</sup> in her U14-1 category.

Up to the U16s: for the boys, Zeph Dumais charged through to gain 6<sup>th</sup>, pulling ahead of his competitor along the last stretch, and Chloe Williston kept pace to 8<sup>th</sup> in the girls U16-2, with Caitlyn Gillis just behind her in 9<sup>th</sup>. Gregory Baxter was feeling better to race again today, and came 3<sup>rd</sup> in his U18-1 group, racing 10km. And capping off the day and the weekend, was our inspiring coach Patrick Williston, leading by example as he tackled the tough 10km terrain to retain a consistent demonstration of pace and technique, finishing 8<sup>th</sup> in the Masters Men.

Besides the empirical aspects of these rankings lies the personal stories and stamina required as each skier challenges themselves, based upon the preceding months of training and how they meet the pressures and influences of the day. The days were very busy and thrilling, as skiers of all the categories were constantly starting, lapping and finishing often with a blur of strides and ski poles. As competitive as these races are, our skiers rekindled friendships with other youngsters from other clubs around the province, and were incredibly supportive of each other's efforts. Cross-country skiing is a great sport to cultivate personal motivation and regulation amidst a team spirit.

All of these kids have an incredible support base of adults, mostly parents, who make sure the structures of our Nordic club run smoothly. There's the volunteer coaches, who have come to know the minds and skillsets of all the kids, and try to tailor support accordingly for each child entering the race. There's the wax team, who have tested and perfected their knowledge of waxing and snow conditions to provide the best physical skis they can provide for the racers. There's the parents who drive and feed and find other ways to create positive care environments. We express appreciation for all the roles the people fill in the club.

Next race is on home turf: the Teck Northern Cup #4/ Chris Dahlie Open, on Sunday Feb.16.

-by Perry Rath