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## B.C. boys shine in cross country classic

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Team B.C.'s Colin Ferrie, 21, placed fifth at Monday's 10-kilometre cross country skiing classic race at Otway Nordic Ski Centre during the Canada Winter Games. - Citizen photo by Samantha Wright Allen

Three B.C. cross country skiers cracked the Canada Winter Games top 10 at Monday's men's 10-kilometre classic race to kick off the week's events.

Medal hopeful Colin Ferrie placed fifth after a frustrating tumble on the second 5km loop, followed by sixth-place Geoffrey Richards and seventh-place David Palmer.

"Any time you do something like that you've just got to put it out of your mind as quickly as you can and focus on getting back in your stride," said the 21-year-old Ferrie, who lives in Kimberley and trains in Rossland.

"Definitely wasn't quite my top race," he said, adding the course had quite a few sharp turns and was icy on the

second loop, where he lost valuable time on the spill.

That put him 56 seconds behind Yukon's Knute Johnsgaard, who won gold, and 22 seconds behind bronze-medalist Raphael Couturier of Quebec.

"I had my sights set on a medal for sure."

He said it helped having his coach on the sidelines to kick him back into gear - but he's used to pushing himself to his limits.

"I really tried to floor myself to the finish and when I finished I knew that was what I could give on this day and unfortunately it wasn't enough. Doing a sport where you can really kill yourself almost, it's oddly fun."

Ferrie came to the Canada Winter Games after representing the country earlier this month at the U23 world championships in Kazakhstan, where he placed 50th in the 15km free technique and 44th in the 15km skiathlon.

Lisa Patterson of Cross Country Canada said it was a first international experience for Ferrie.

"The results probably didn't really show his potential," Patterson said.

Ferrie said Monday's 10km classic didn't quite show his potential either.

"I didn't quite feel it today, but often there are times when you're pushing yourself so close to the max, but you're feeling so strong," he said of his favourite racing moments.

"You just feel so, almost invincible, and you're moving so quickly that you just get this rush of 'this is what I do and it's awesome.'"

Palmer, who has been struggling with a cold for the past three weeks, said Monday's ranking was about what he expected.

"With seventh I'm pretty happy (considering) how I have been healthwise the last few weeks," he said

"In the Under 23 right now, it's really competitive," Palmer added, noting four of Monday's top-five finishers (including Ferrie) just competed in the world championships. "There's some really, really fast guys. You never know who's gonna win with this category."

Palmer also found the course challenging.

"The track was pretty fast and icy so it takes a lot of skill on the downhill."

The 21-year-old moved from his home town in Burns Lake after graduation to train with the ski team in Rossland.

He started competing in 2007 and has been racing ever since, and has two national championships as well as a gold medal in the B.C. Winter Games.

In Rossland, Palmer is a commercial pilot, flying both land and float planes.

"It's nice being free and in control and just like exploring everywhere. That's sort of why I like skiing too."

He said the cross country community is really supportive and caring.

"It's not just the athletes that are into it, it's sort of like a family sport," Palmer said - a sentiment that Ferrie echoed.

"It's not just my journey, it's a lot of peoples' really."

Both men have three more events: Tuesday's 1.5km classic sprint, Thursday's 5km free mass start and Saturday's 4x5km team relay.

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