

Rain forces revamped BC Cup course

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The snow that blanketed the city Thursday was a welcome sight for organizers of this weekend's Teck BC Cup cross-country ski races at Otway Nordic Centre.

But they sure could have done without the freezing rain that followed, which left a hard crust of ice on the trails. That rain also melted much of the snow which made for great winter conditions earlier in the week and that's forced a few course corrections for today's sprint races.

"A lot of the snow we had disappeared, so we didn't get the full benefit of the snow that fell over the last couple days," said Cal Benson, media co-ordinator for the host Caledonia Nordic Ski Club. "The first day is classic sprints and we've been able to set track there and it's a pretty good course. The second day is free technique and we had planned on doing two loops of five kilometres and now we'll do three loops of a shorter distance."

The Home Hardware classic sprint races start today at 11:30 a.m., while Sunday's RHB Schmitz de Grace free technique interval start event is set for a 10 a.m. start.

The race trails for Sunday are part of the Upper Five, a series of short looping runs located on the hill opposite the biathlon range. One of the trails on the original five-kilometre course covers rocky terrain

which doesn't have enough snow to stand up to the rigours of 200 ski racers, forcing organizers to adopt a shorter course.

Close to 210 skiers from 14 clubs competing in 14 age categories are entered in the weekend races. The races will help determine the provincial team to represent B.C. at the 2015 ski nationals in March in Thunder Bay, Ont.

The two Prince George races account for one-third of the Teck B.C. Cup series aggregate point events. The series also stops in Revelstoke, Jan. 24-25, and Kelowna, site of the B.C. championships, Feb. 20-22. Benson said more skiers would likely have made the trip to Prince George this weekend to test the trails to be used next month for the 2015 Canada Winter Games if not for a conflicting event – the world junior/under-23 team trials set for next weekend in Duntroon, Ont.

Local skiers to watch this weekend include Caledonia club racers Kaia Andal, Erica Kreitz, Sage Bialuski, Emily Dickson, Damian Georgyev, Pippa Roots, John Hagen and Scott Forrest.

Spectators are welcome to attend the races without charge. The Rotary Lodge offers great viewpoints, especially for today's sprint races, which start and finish in the stadium area.

For skiers, the Otway trails not in use for the B.C. Cup will be open while the races are on.