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## B.C. four take cross-country silver

[Ted Clarke](#) / Prince George Citizen

February 28, 2015 01:15 PM

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Team B.C. had a great day Saturday on the slopes of Otway Nordic Centre, winning the silver medal in the Canada Winter Games women's cross country skiing 4 X 3.75-kilometre relay. From left are Katie Weaver, Molly Miller, Hannah Mehain, and Eliza-Jane Kitchen. - Citizen photo by Ted Clarke

Shut out of the medal parade in their three previous races, the girls from Team B.C. finally put it together Saturday in the last women's cross-country ski event of the Canada Winter Games.

The team of Katie Weaver (North Vancouver), Molly Miller (Kimberley), Hannah Mehain (Vernon) and Eliza-Jane Kitchen (North Vancouver) skied to a scintillating silver medal finish in Saturday's 4 X 3.75-kilometre relay.

"This is amazing," said Kitchen. "We've all been in the top 10, but the boys have gotten all the (able-bodied) medals."

The Quebec juggernaut of Katherine Stewart-Jones, Andree-Anne Theberge and Marie Corriveau, who individually hauled in two gold and one silver medal in able-bodied races at Otway Nordic Centre, teamed up for relay gold. Quebec finished in 41:25.4, winning by 32.6 seconds over B.C. (41:58.0) and Yukon (42:09.6).

Weaver was sixth when she tagged Miller, who put it into passing gear in the second leg. She picked off Sara McLean of Alberta and Elora Adamson of Manitoba at the one-kilometre mark and caught Ontario's Isabella Howden two kilometres in to move up to third place.

Mehain also made up ground on Yukon skier Natalie Hynes and used a one-skate technique to catch Hynes at the top of first big hill. Miller and Mehain both posted the fastest ski times in their respective legs.

"Seeing Hannah come around (in second place) I was shocked, and I was excited " said Kitchen, the B.C. anchor who reeled in Yukon anchor Annah Hanthorn. "I could see (Corriveau) on some of the hills and was thinking, maybe I could catch her, and I looked back and I just hoped third place was not anywhere near behind."

"Coming into the finish I started feel emotional because it's so exciting. It's awesome to be here in B.C., to have all our friends and family out here and even people I don't even know in Prince George cheering us on. "

All four B.C. girls raced at Otway twice last season and that familiarity with the course paid off.

"We ski here at least once year for a race and it helps a lot because you know what's coming, so we had an advantage," said Weaver. "The snow was nice and hard packed and the temperature was awesome."

In the men's 4 X 5 km relay, Ontario (Benjamin Wilkinson-Zan, Scott Hill, Jack Carlisle, and Evan Palmer-Charette) won gold in 48:14, followed by Quebec (48:58) and B.C. (49:50).

"Ben started out and gave us an amazing lead and that set the tone for the whole race," said Palmer-Charette, of Thunder Bay. Ont. "After that, Scott opened up the lead even more and Jack did the same and they handed me almost a minute lead. So I just had to stay on my feet and bring it home and get the win."

Sharing in the bronze medal for B.C. were Julien Locke, Colin Ferrie and David Palmer, all of Rosslund, and Geoffrey Richards of Whistler.

"We started out (in eighth place) after the first leg but we managed to claw our way back and with Colin and David in front of me we pulled it back up to fourth," said Richards, the B.C. anchor.

"I tried to catch first and second but they were too far ahead. Our whole team was top-25 in every race and that's phenomenal for a team like this. Everyone was strong throughout the group."

Brittany Hudac, a triple-gold medalist at the Games in the para-nordic standing ski category, made Canada Games history when she competed in an able-bodied cross-country event. She skied the second classic technique leg Saturday and helped Saskatchewan to an eighth-place finish in the women's relay.

"It was my first time doing an able-bodied relay race and it felt really good, the course was a lot of fun," said Hudac, of Prince Albert, whose left arm is amputated above the elbow. "I caught up to a few skiers who were in front of me, so I was really happy with that. It was just good to have people see that people with disabilities can also race as well and have a good result as well.

"Going up the hills you really have to have strong kicks and powerful glides and not rely so much on upper body with one pole. The conditions are a bit icy so it's tough to get the right grip wax and I was slipping a bit on the uphill but I think everyone was in the same boat."

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