

## Two local athletes win aggregate titles

### Whistler Nordics skiers star at B.C. Championships

By Dan Falloon



PHOTO SUBMITTED

**OUTWITTING THE COMPETITION** Mila Wittenberg, shown at a BC Cup race in Salmon Arm earlier this season, captured the provincial aggregate title for the fourth time.

**T**wo Whistler Nordics athletes found themselves atop the province at the Teck B.C. Championships in Kamloops on the weekend.

Michael Murdoch topped the 2000 boys category while Mila Wittenberg won the 2001 girls category for the fourth year in a row.

"Every year, it's really nice. It's a good accomplishment for me," she said. "I've made friends over the years racing against all the girls so I know my competition and who I'm up against and where I like to be in all the races.

"It's definitely getting harder. Everyone's getting closer. The top people are staying in the race and getting better."

At the race itself, Wittenberg took silver in the seven-kilometre classic mass start and fourth in the free technique interval start.

"When it comes to distance racing, I'm stronger at classic," she said.

She had some worries the conditions might not be ideal, but Mother Nature came through and provided some useful snow.

"The weather was nice. It was really warm. I was scared it was going to be soft but I think it froze up overnight and so the conditions were good," she said.

Murdoch, meanwhile, won the aggregate title for the first time since 2013. He said he's been cursed with a number of health nuisances like coughs, colds and sore throats throughout the season — the provincials was the first occasion in 2016–17 where he felt at his optimum.

"It was awesome. I felt really healthy," Murdoch said, noting he had a cough right from the start of September.

In Kamloops, he won gold in both events to help extend his lead.

Other Whistler Nordics competitors at the races included Joe Davies, who took bronze in the classic mass start and fourth in the free technique interval start and Benita Peiffer, who took silver in the mass start and gold in the free technique. Mads Groeholdt took seventh in the free technique and teamed up with Davies and a Hollyburn substitute to take second in the team relays.

Davies also took third in 2001 boys in the aggregate standings.

Next up is Haywood Ski Nationals in Canmore, Alta. in four weeks' time, and Murdoch is pumped for some spring conditions.

"March will be warm, which is good," he said.

## PAYAK COMING THIS WEEKEND

The province's largest loppet is on track to host its highest number of participants yet.

Over 550 racers had signed up for the Sigge's P'ayakentsut event at Whistler Olympic Park on Feb. 25 and 26.

"We've had a great snowfall this season, and fantastic conditions at the venue. The course has been made more accessible, and we have permanent route-signing up so people can check out the terrain and see that they can do this," event chair Dirk Rohde said in a release.

The three distances are 50, 30 and 15 kilometres.

For more information, visit [www.payak.ca](http://www.payak.ca).

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