

Whistler cross-country skiers set for nationals

Youth pick up first and second overall in B.C. for cross country ski season

Rebecca Aldous / Whistler Question

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Michael Murdoch won a gold in the 7.5 kilometre classic race at the 2016 Teck BC Championships last weekend. Photo by Joern Rohde, submitted

Whistler's Nordic club may not be the biggest in B.C., but one wouldn't know it looking at the podium.

Last weekend, Whistler Olympic Park was filled with cross-country skiers vying for medals in the 2016 Teck BC Championships. The three-day event, which was hosted by Hollyburn Cross Country Ski Club, marked the first time in the race's 36th history that the championships was held on the coast. Approximately 400 athletes took part in three different competitions over the weekend — individual free technique sprints, interval starts with classic technique and a three person relay.

By the Sunday afternoon, Whistler athletes had etched their names into some of the province's top spots. Whistler's Mila Wittenberg won first overall in B.C. for her finishes in the juvenile category this season. Sixteen-year-old Michael Murdoch's overall time earned him a silver in the provincial juvenile boys' category.

Murdoch said he surprised himself on Friday, snagging a first-place finish in sprints, one of his least favourite events. With a gold under his belt and his headspace confident,

Murdoch went on to win his second gold of the championship in the 7.5 kilometre classic race on Saturday.

Murdoch said he was pleased with his results. Last year, he placed third overall in the provincial championships and the year before he didn't earn a medal. In two weeks time, he'll head to Whitehorse to take part in the nationals.

"I have never been to northern Canada before," he said, noting the event will mark the first time he's competed at nationals in his age category.

Murdoch and Wittenberg weren't the only Whistler athletes to pick up medals at the championships. Friday kicked off with the individual sprints. In the Atoms category, Whistler's

Luke Mackie placed third, with fellow Whistler Nordic Club member Jesse Thuma behind him.

In the boys' Pee Wee category in the sprints Whistler's Tyler Thuma placed third. In the same category for the girls, Whistler's Molly Mackie placed third.

On Saturday, Whistler's Claire Benson kicked things off, finishing fourth in the Atom Girls individual start race. Pemberton's Ethan Hess proved his grit, placing first in the sit-ski division.

On Sunday, the Whistler Rockers showed off their stuff, as they glided into second place in the relay for the Pee Wee Boys. The team was made up of James Tait and Jesse and Tyler Thuma. Whistler's Pee Wee girls snagged first place, with the winning team consisting of Talia Wittenberg, Katelyn Schick and Molly Mackie.

While the championship was open to all ages, some of the best competitions and the most exciting races took place in the younger categories, Hollyburn Cross Country Ski Club's head coach Greg Inkster stated in a press release.

"It is amazing to see their level of skill, and it's been really inspiring to see them develop over the years," he said.

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