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SPORTS

Rossland skier headed to Junior World Ski Championships in Utah



Remi Drolet, 16, qualified for the 2017 FIS Nordic Junior and U23 World Ski Championships, taking place in Utah from Jan. 30 to Feb. 5. — Image Credit: Chelsea Novak Photo

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by Chelsea Novak - Rossland News
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After placing first at the US Nationals in Utah last week, a local cross country skier is preparing to compete against the best in the world.

Remi Drolet, 16, attended the 2017 US National Championships at Soldier Hollow Nordic Center in Midway, Utah last week, where he qualified for the 2017 FIS Nordic Junior and U23 World Ski Championships after placing first with a time of 31:41.5 in the Jr. Men's 10 km classic mass start on Tuesday, Jan. 10.

Despite the first place win, Drolet did not return to Rossland with a medal, as out-of-country athletes aren't awarded medals at national events.

"You can win the race, and win prize money, but you can't be called the US champion, so you don't get a medal," explained Drolet.

This was his first year attending the qualifiers for the Junior World Ski Championships.

"My coach Dave [Wood] thought it was a good idea for me to try to go to the trials and see what it was like and how well I could do," said Drolet.

The young athlete had no expectations as to how he would place at the qualifiers. "We weren't really expecting that I would qualify, but I did."

Now headed for the world championships, which will take place Jan. 30 to Feb. 5., Drolet has been training at the Black Jack Ski Club's Hanna Creek Biathlon Area. The worlds will also be held at Soldier Hollow, so Drolet is familiar with the terrain, but it's at a much higher altitude than the Black Jack ski area.

"Dave's making me train a bit higher up at biathlon so I have a bit more altitude training before going there, because the trails there are at a higher altitude, so it's good to be acclimatized," he said.

Drolet credits his success at the US Nationals to preparation, including a stop to train at Sun Valley in Idaho before the event. "We got acclimatized to the altitude and just really prepared and ate well, and got ready for the races," he said. "Once it was time to race, we had a strong wax team helping to wax skis and all that came together to make some good races."

Preparation will also be important as Drolet heads into worlds, especially since he'll be competing in a kind of race he's never skied before. "It's called a skiathlon, where you have to ski half the race in classic technique and the other half in skate technique. So you have to switch your skis halfway through." Drolet has been practicing changing skis and is also focused on mental preparation. "It's going to be bigger than anything I've ever gone to before," he said.

His goal for the world championships is to do as well as he can, and he hopes to place in the top ten for a couple of races.

Drolet will be skipping this year's Western Canadian Championships to train for the worlds and this year's Eastern Canadian Championships, which take place at the same times as worlds. But he does plan to attend the 2017 Ski Nationals in March.

"I hope to maybe get a couple of medals there," said Drolet.

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