



Alaska Winter Stars

April 2009

The annual AWS parents meeting will take place on Wednesday April 29th. at 5:30 PM at Kincaid Chalet.

Volunteer Opportunities:

AWS will also be helping with the Gold Nugget Triathlon on Sunday May 17th, Cuddy Park Rollerski race on Saturday June 14th, Mayor's Marathon on June 20th. This is a good fundraiser for Winter Stars, and we would like as many volunteers as we can get.

The Fireweed 400 bike race will be held on July 11th. this year. Last year a lot of our athletes participated in this race, and it was enjoyable for everyone. AWS is volunteering at this race as well, so if you're not planning on racing it would be a great help if you could volunteer. Plus it's a good reason to enjoy the beautiful scenery on the way to Valdez. Pam Mamrol (Rebecca's mom) is coordinating the volunteering for this race.



Well, another ski season has come and gone, this one seems like it has gone by particularly fast, both in terms of time passing and in the performance of Alaska Winter Stars athletes on the trails! We would like to thank all of our members for their participation, dedication and passion, without which AWS not be the wonderful program it is. We would also like to thank the families of our racers; they have been invaluable in ensuring the continued development of AWS skiers, whether they are in the younger junior, intermediate, advanced, or masters group. Thanks as well to our program sponsors: Ian Harvey with the Toko wax company (AWS always has fast skis!) and Ira Edwards with Rossignol. Ira has been super helpful in providing wax help at races and also in helping AWS skiers with ski equipment. AWS hosted the 2nd Annual Roll for the Waves rollerski race held downtown in conjunction with the Alaska Oceans Festival, and for that we received support from the American Insurance Company (thanks Rich!), Orthopedic Physicians of Anchorage, Alaska Mountaineering & Hiking and Manley & Brautigam. Thank you again for all your support and commitment in helping Anchorage to be the best place in the country to be a Nordic ski racer!

We started off the racing season this year in-state, traveling to Fairbanks to compete in the SuperTour races held at the Birch Hill Ski Trails. AWS skiers have traditionally done well on the tough Birch Hill trails, and this time was no exception. The races were highlighted by top-three performances by Andrew Dougherty and Scott Patterson, Amy Glen (UAA/AWS), Max Treinen (UAA/AWS) and top-ten results by Esther Kennedy, Rachele Kanady (UAA/AWS), Kate Backstrum, Tyler Kornfield, and Lex Treinen (UAA/AWS).

Next up was the US Senior Nationals and World Junior Trials, held at our very own Kincaid Park. Unfortunately, the races were marred by the record breaking cold temperatures that swept the entire state, resulting in only two of the four scheduled races being held. The high points of the competition were AWS alumni Mike Hinckley winning the silver medal (!) in the senior men's classic sprint race, Amy Glen blowing everybody's minds with her 2nd place sprint qualifying time, and subsequent 4th place in the finals, and Tyler Kornfield winning the junior men's sprint race. As a result of their great performances at these races a number of AWS skiers qualified for various teams that were selected to compete in Europe and Scandinavia. Andrew Dougherty, Scott Patterson and Tyler Kornfield all qualified for the J1 Scando Trip, where the three combined for a stellar silver medal in the Scandinavian J1 championships. Mike Hinckley and Max Treinen both qualified for the US Under-23 Championship team, and Lex Treinen, Patrick Johnson (ex-AWS, now Middlebury), and Amy Glen all were selected to represent the USA at the World Junior Championships.



Scott Patterson-J1
2009 US Jr. National Champion

In the Besh Cup competitions, AWS athletes again comprised the deepest, most competitive club in the field, putting together a solid series of races that started in Anchorage, traveled to the Tsalteshi trails in Soldotna, and finished as usual in Fairbanks. Both AWS juniors and masters racers competed in this series, which traditionally serves as a qualifier for the Alaska Junior Olympic team. In all, sixteen AWS athletes traveled to Truckee, California for these races, the most of any Alaskan club. There were also a number of AWS skiers that *just* missed qualifying for the Junior Olympic team, what with some bad luck here, some sickness there, or just really bad timing for a bad race. In many of these cases, the Alaska JO team would have been strengthened by your presence on it. We would like to encourage you to use this experience as inspiration to train harder, better and smarter in future seasons. Our performance at the JOs in Truckee was by and large positive. The altitude was less of a factor than it had been in the past; it was probably one of our best performances at an altitude series since the Alaska team won the team trophy in McCall, ID 2002. Going from sea level to almost 8000 feet and competing in four races in six days is a tough but doable job. Races like these are a reminder that those who train hard and with focus can be competitive and win races anywhere. Some highlights for the week: Sam Dougherty dominating the sprint qualifier and heats until getting tangled up in the finals, as well as being one of the members of the most dominating J2 boys team Alaska has ever fielded; Tyler Kornfield coming back to win his J1 boys B-final with ease after putting a pole tip through his ski in the semis; Scott Patterson making it exciting in the finishing straight while winning the J1 boys 15km Skate race; Andrew Dougherty coming back from a disappointing first two races to get Bronze in the J1 10km classic, then teaming up again with Scott and Tyler to make an all-AWS gold medal J1 relay team; Rebecca Mamrol (J1) and Rachelle Kanady (OJ) showing their class with their 5th and 6th places in the 10km Skate race; Annie Liotta putting her J2 relay team back in medal contention with a stellar 2nd leg; the all-AWS J1 girls team of Karina Packer, Esther Kennedy and Rebecca Mamrol clawing their way back to a 5th place relay finish; and Rachelle Kanady leading her team off to a solid silver medal performance in the OJ girls relay. Congratulations to you all, we are very proud of you! None of your efforts went unnoticed; you were a pleasure to spend time with over the long 12 days spent traveling, competing, and returning from these races.

In the college ranks, AWS skiers past and present showed their abilities, recording numerous top placing in both the Western and Eastern circuits. Caitlin Patterson showed the Eastern skiers that Alaskan women can ski on klistler too, winning two Carnival races in her freshman year at UVM; Eric Packer made steady progress in his freshman year at perennial powerhouse Dartmouth, finishing out his collegiate season with a 2nd place finish in the 20km mass start skate race at Bates. Patrick Johnson continued his strong performance for Middlebury, and Max and Lex Treinen teamed up to provide UAA with the best day of skiing results the school has ever had, with freshman Lex taking 2nd place and sophomore Max finishing 5th in the 20km mass start skate race. Congratulations all AWS skiers who are competing in college, you have taken the next step of performance in your skiing.

Not to be outdone by their junior counterparts, AWS masters enjoyed an excellent season of training and racing, with the end result that AWS was the strongest, most competitive master's team in the state. It seems like we say this every year, and this year was no different: this was one of the most enjoyable masters groups we have ever worked with. At Masters Nationals in Anchorage, Ken Rice won gold in the M6 classic race, Ray Koleser finished 2nd in the M5 10k CL, followed closely by Rick Rogers in 3rd and Dan Thorsness in 4th; Chris Wood, Rich Suddock and Jan Buron teamed up to finish 2nd in the relay; and David Doolen placed 3rd in the 40km M7 division. Most of the AWS masters competed in the Tour of Anchorage, where they proved how hard they had worked all season by recording excellent results in the season's traditional grand finale. Also, a big kudos to AWS parents who raced at Nationals, you are honorary AWS skiers! In addition, we had some AWS masters that did not race, but simply wanted to improve their ski skills and fitness, and all of them made major improvements in their abilities from the beginning of the season to the end. We enjoyed working with you all, and look forward to continuing to do so in the future!

With high school playing a large role in junior skiing in Alaska, we would be remiss not to mention AWS skiers' performances in the high school racing circuit. Every week of high school racing brings together most of the best skiers in the region and the state. Our skiers won the majority of the high school races in Region IV, with Tyler Kornfield, Greta Anderson, Karina Packer, Andrew Dougherty and Scott Patterson all winning races. At the State Championships in Fairbanks, AWS racers dominated the opening classic race with a win by Esther Kennedy in the girls 5km classic race, followed by 9 of her AWS teammates in the top 15! Wow! On the boys' side, Tyler Kornfield won the 7.5km classic race, followed closely by Scott Patterson, Andrew Dougherty and Nick Treinen for an AWS sweep of the top 4 spots in the 7.5km classic race. The next day continued with a win by Scott Patterson in the boys 10km skate race, clinching his 2nd Skimeister award. In the girls 7.5km skate race, AWS skiers took five out of the top ten spots, led by Rebecca Mamrol in 4th. Overall, AWS skiers made up the core of the varsity teams at half of the Region IV schools, competing in a fierce but still friendly rivalry against each other in this race series as well.

Finally, AWS skiers again traveled up to Fairbanks (four times in a season, that has to be a record!) for the USSA Long Distance Nationals, as well as for two makeup races from the cold-curtailed US Nationals in Anchorage. While this was at the tail end of a long hard season, AWS racers still competed against the best in the country. Our skiers were a little tired, and the hard Birch Hill trails exacted a painful price. However, the team of Emily Rogers and Kate Backstrum won silver in the junior girls sprint relay, followed by Karina Packer and Greta Anderson in bronze. Juniors Eric Packer and Scott Patterson qualified for the finals of the senior men's sprint relay. The comeback performance of the week has to go to Kate Backstrum, who skied in all four races, and put in some gutsy performances in the women's 15km skiathlon competition and the 30km Classic. On the men's side, Scott Patterson showed great form, finishing amongst the elite seniors in the country with a fine 17th place finish, followed closely by Lex and Max Treinen. Thanks a ton to Margaret Hillhouse for filling in and providing coaching support at these races!

What we as coaches have observed after this season is that the AWS skiers are in the top ranks of junior competition in this country, and are knocking on the door of top senior results. We also saw inspiring results by AWS athletes against their counterparts in Scandinavia, showing that not only are we a top domestic team, but that we are competitive with the Europeans. We have shown that those who are not afraid of hard work and commitment can compete and win against teams with more resources and PR at their disposal.

Spring is a time to recharge, reassess, and rededicate ourselves to the work ahead. It is the perfect chance, while the memories are still fresh, to think about what went wrong, what went right, what needs to be changed and what needs to stay the same with our training and preparation for the next season of skiing and racing. We are excited about the prospects of improvement that we see in all our skiers, and are already planning the focus of the coming months of training. Before we get too far into the spring, take some time to think about your performances from the past year, what your goals were, did you meet them, why or why not, and based on this, what will your goals be for the next year (or the next several years). Make sure to write these goals down as a reminder to yourself, otherwise it can be difficult to keep the intensity needed to achieve them! Find an inspirational passage or quote that you can keep in mind (a personal favorite, Theodore Roosevelt's "The Man in the Arena") for those times when the going gets tough.

Congratulations and good luck!
Your Alaska Winter Stars coaches,
Jan, Erin and Ben