

PARA Jr I-II Chair Report **(2007-2008 Season)**

This year we experienced a changing of the guard as several of the top racers from the past finally moved on and a new young crop of racers stepped up to make their mark. This made for some exciting racing throughout the season. Also for the third season in a row, our racers had to endure sub par weather and snow conditions during most of the ski season. Those athletes who were fortunate enough to be able to travel out of state to gain access to good snow conditions and extended training opportunities were able to improve their technique and translate that into better race results upon returning home to attend state races. We are long overdue for a good long winter; hopefully, next year will be our turn.

PA Cup Series:

The PA Cup Series began with three (3) days of racing in the east during the last weekend of January. Blue Mountain hosted a pair of GS races on Friday and Saturday followed a Slalom race on Sunday at Sno Mountain. Attendance was down slightly over the previous year with a total of 115 racers (35 female and 80 male) on Friday, 117 racers (34 female and 83 male) on Saturday and 94 racers (29 female and 65 male) on Sunday.

The series then moved to Ski Denton during the second weekend in February for two (2) Slalom races. The field of 112 racers (37 female and 75 male) on Saturday and 111 racers (37 female and 74 male) on Sunday handled the challenging terrain remarkably well.

The PARA J2 State Team was selected after the Ski Denton races.

The Cup Series concluded at Elk Mountain during the last weekend of February for the usual season climax. The GS on Friday had 108 racers (35 female and 73 male), Saturday's Slalom had 120 racers (38 female and 82 male) and 121 racers (39 female and 82 male) took part in the GS on Sunday.

At the conclusion of Finals, the PARA J1-2 State Team and the Pennsylvania Cup Champions were announced. The final result in the women's field was never really in doubt as Meredith Pyke (BMRT) grabbed a commanding early lead by winning the first three (3) races of the season and then continued her dominance by winning four (4) of the last five (5) races. She beat her next closest competitor by 269 points. The men's field started out looking like a real duel to the finish after the first three (3) races produced a different set of winners. Slalom specialist Ryan Symancek (SNO) then stepped it up, handily winning both of the Denton slalom races as well as the Elk slalom to make it 4 for 4 in the series and held on to secure the title with solid performances in each of the GS races.

At the conclusion of Finals, the PARA State Team sweat shirts were handed out and invitations were announced for the Eastern J1-2 Finals.

The 2008 PA Cup Champions are Meredith Pyke and Ryan Symancek

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The 2008 PARA State Team is:

Men				Women			
Name	Class	Year	Club	Name	Class	Year	Club
Ryan Symancek	J-1	1990	SNO	Meredith Pyke	J-2	1991	BMRT
Joseph Sulpizio	J-1	1989	BMRT	Catherine Masson	J-2	1991	PASEF
Tyler Smith	J-2	1991	EMSC	Rebecca Spitz	J-2	1992	WTSEF
Matthew Kenney	J-1	1990	TMART	Kaelyn Ford	J-1	1990	PASEF
Jeff Puckette	J-2	1992	BMRT	Molly Curran	J-2	1992	SNO
Thomas Reihner	J-1	1988	WPRC	Meghan Cawley	J-2	1991	EMSC
Jason Black	J-1	1990	SSRC	Dylan Kowalchuk	J-2	1991	BMRT
Ryan Krout	J-2	1991	BMRT				
Brian Kazar	J-2	1992	BMRT				
Lanny Buck	J-2	1992	BMRT				
Devin Dymeck	J-2	1992	SSRC				
Russell Voigt	J-1	1990	EMSC				
Garrett Gass	J-1	1989	SSRC				

PARA High School Championships:

A new event for the season was the creation of the PARA High School Championship hosted by Sno Mountain. The purpose of this event was to create some excitement around the selection of the team that attends the Eastern High School Alpine Championships. In its inaugural season, this event drew just 50 eligible high school racers (16 female and 34 male) but fulfilled its purpose of aiding in the selection of the team. With better planning and promotion, this event should flourish. The overall winners of the 2008 PARA High School Championships were Molly Curran (SNO) and Tyler Filling (SSRC).

Post Season Events:

Eastern J-2 Regional Championships @ Sunday River, ME

This year the Eastern J-2 Championships began on the Monday following the PA Cup Finals at Elk. Most of the PARA team members chose not to miss the last race at Elk and instead opted to make the long trek to Sunday River after the race, arriving late in the evening (early morning). The athletes made it to race registration on Monday morning a little tired but still enthusiastic about the races to come. In the end, no one finished in the top 20 but all had an enjoyable experience and represented PARA well. This year's team consisted of Meredith Pyke, Catherine Masson, Tyler Smith, Devin Dymeck and Ryan Krout.

The 2009 Eastern J-2 Championships are scheduled for February 23-26.

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Eastern J 1-2 Finals @ Gore, NY

Rain and ice storms just prior to the start of the event raised havoc with course conditions and altered the planned schedule of races at Gore for the Eastern J1-2 Finals. The speed events had to be canceled and were replaced with one additional Slalom race. Ryan Symancek won the first Slalom race and finished 4th in the second race. Michael Hefferan and Brian Kazar also finished in the top 20 in the first Slalom race. In addition to Ryan, Michael and Brian, the PARA Team consisted of Rebecca Spitz, Kaelyn Ford, Molly Curran, Megan Cawley, Dylan Kowalchuk, Kate Preston, Joseph Sulpizio, Russell Voigt, Nicolas Martell, Daniel Nowakowski, Daniel Cohen and Edward Kilgore.

The site for the 2009 Eastern J1-2 Finals has not been announced but the event is scheduled for March 13-19.

Eastern High School Alpine Championships @ Mt. Cranmore, NH

PARA sent a team of sixteen (16) racers, which finished in 9th place. The highlight of the event through was that one PARA racer, Ryan Symancek, won the Slalom race and finished in 2nd place overall in the men's field. In addition to Ryan, the team consisted of the following members: Catherine Masson, Rebecca Spitz, Molly Curran, Kaelyn Ford, Elaine Beaver, Lindsay Holmes, Margot Leneveu, Adam Drobish, Peter Twigg, Michael Hicks, Michael Hacker, Ryan Cura, Stanislav Cornwell, A.J. Kania and Ryan Krout.

The 2009 Eastern High School Championships are scheduled to be held at Cannon Mountain in Franconia, NH on March 13-15.

Eastern FIS Races:

The interest by our athletes to participate in Eastern Regional FIS races continues to increase. Due to conflicts with the PARA race schedule and academic commitments, some race dates are obviously more popular than others and it is becoming more difficult to accommodate all of those who are interested. It is important for all parents, athletes and coaches to review and understand the selection procedures and entry requirements. Our quota for each race is two (2) athletes. Final selections are made just prior to the entry deadline for each race based on rank within the state and are not issued on a first come first served basis. Requests must be submitted directly to the J1-2 Age Chair by email at least 30 days in advance and reconfirmed two (2) weeks before the race. Athletes will be notified as soon as possible after selections are made. The following racers competed in FIS races this past season: Ryan Symancek, Joseph Sulpizio, Tyler Smith, Meredith Pyke and Catherine Masson. We also had one other PARA racer who participated in a number of FIS races this season under a foreign quota allotment; Peter Twigg (GBR). A few other racers expressed an interest in participating but for one reason or another chose not to attend.

Next season, the races previously referred to as Development FIS and ENL (Entry League) will be termed as NJR (National Junior) FIS races. These races will be for J-1 and J-2 racers only.

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They are an excellent opportunity for our racers to gain experience in this level of competition and begin working on their FIS point profile.

Frank Sheibley Memorial – Most Dedicated Athlete Award:

The Frank Sheibley Memorial - Most Dedicated Athlete Award was presented to Ryan Symancek. Ryan had a phenomenal season, winning the 2008 PA Cup Championship and also winning or placing extremely well in several notable out of state races and post season events. Ryan finished the season with an impressive 53.58 USSA Slalom Points. We congratulate Ryan for his hard work and dedication.

Suggestions for next season:

1. Modify the method by which the maximum GS points limit is established for post season speed event eligibility requirements. The present limit is 150 USSA GS points. We only had one (1) female racer start the season with points below this limit and only three (3) female racers finish the season below the limit. Of the seven (7) female 2008 PARA State Team members, 186.06 GS points was the highest. Also only 4 women in the state finished the season with any sort of speed profile, all in SuperG and each below the 250 PARA limit. Unless more women venture out of the state to chase lower GS point races and/or develop a speed profile, it is nearly impossible for them to make much improvement to their GS points. This means that only those who directly qualify to attend the Post Season Championship Events will be eligible to participate in the speed races. Most if not all of the alternate selections would not meet the speed eligibility requirements.

I propose that the PARA Speed Eligibility GS Points Limit for both men and women be adjusted annually to match the USSA GS Points of the previous year's State Team member with highest GS points based on the final published USSA Points List for that season. For the 2009 season the GS limit would be reset to 149.80 for the men and 186.06 for the women. The 250 Speed (SG or DH) Points Limit would remain unchanged.

2. Permanently increase the number of races in the PA Cup Series from seven (7) to eight (8) races. The trial 8th race this season appeared to be well received by the parents and athletes. This increase creates a balanced series of races, GS versus SL.
3. Several of our State Team athletes declined their invitation to attend J1-2 Finals, as did a number of alternates; consequently there were a few last minute insertions to fill out the team roster. No one was intentionally by-passed and a reasonable effort was made to fill the open quota spots with the highest ranked athletes possible. Clubs are reminded to think and act proactively with respect to their athletes and help to secure confirmations from those who directly qualified for events and communicate this information to the J1-2 Age Chair. Clubs are also encouraged to submit the names of possible alternates from their team who are able to fill in if a spots becomes available.

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In summary; the clubs and coaches continue to find ways to adapted to the unusual pattern of winter weather conditions and remain successful in preparing their racers for the season. Congratulations to our top racers who did a suburb job of representing PARA and themselves in regional competitions.

Thanks to all clubs, parents, athletes, coaches, PARA officers, PARA committee members and USSA Officials for their efforts and cooperative spirit throughout the season.

Respectfully submitted,
Fred Craft
April 28, 2008