

## PACO'S FUN RACE

@ Auburn Ski Club

January 23, 2007

*By Mark Nadell*

Nordic ski racing is obviously alive and well in the Northern Sierra Nevada. In what was possibly the best-attended cross country ski citizen's race at Auburn Ski Club on Donner Summit in modern history, the Paco's Fun Race brought together young and wanna-be-young racers together in an amazing display of numbers and enthusiasm.

Over 160 competitors jammed the trails at the Auburn Ski Club Training Center, with a multitude of cheering spectators and parents filling the stadium. Because Paco's Fun Race was the first "major" event of the season, being part of multiple Far West race series such as the Sierra Ski Chase, the Masters Team Cup, and, most importantly, the first stop on the Junior Olympic Qualifying series, it was an important race for both juniors and masters alike.

During the week, nighttime temperatures reached down into the single digits on the Summit, leading to days of very cold, dry snow conditions on the shady trails at Auburn Ski Club. A significant weather change occurred on Saturday, however, with daytime temps reaching into the mid-30's, and overnight lows only into the mid-20's. Wax techs were scrambling to keep up with the changing snow, and original plans for colder glide wax were replaced with somewhat warmer waxes and more fluorinated concoctions. In the end, participants and spectators alike were treated to almost perfect conditions for both racing and watching, with comfortable temperatures, perfect snow and grooming, and blue, windless skies.

Because this event, like most at Auburn Ski Club, is an "interval" start race, where athletes go out on the trails staggered in 15 second intervals, the finish order is sometimes in doubt up to the last racer on the course. And in the men's division, while many of the top racers went out early, the University of Nevada's Dominic Henriques and Montana State University's Tyler Wright (current and former Far West Nordic Juniors) set the initial time to beat. But it was another former Far West Nordic Junior, the University of Colorado's Joaquin Goodpaster from Truckee, who blistered the course late in the day, starting in the 168<sup>th</sup> position and rocketing to the overall win with a time of 23 minutes and 32 seconds for the 10 kilometer course. Henriques of Tahoe City managed to hold on for second place in 23:47, with Truckee's Wright taking the Bronze in a time of 23:56. The top Master skier for the Far west was once again Rick Reynolds of Truckee, taking 6<sup>th</sup> place overall with a time of 24:48. Russell Kennedy of Truckee was the top J1 (16-17 year old) boy for the day, posting a 7<sup>th</sup> place overall, with a very fast time of 24:52.

The Women's race was won by Palo Alto's Beth Reid, who managed to beat all but the top 11 male racers, winning with a time of 25 minutes and 47 seconds.

Reid, who is unarguably the top female racer in the West, had no difficulty with any of her competition, winning by almost a full minute over Truckee's Kara LaPoint (26:43), another University of Nevada, Reno nordic team member. Third place for the women was taken by Truckee's Debbie Hakansson with a time of 29:00.

Probably the most important segment of racing on the day, however, was in the Junior Division. Paco's Fun Race was designated this year as the first event of the 4-part Junior Olympics Qualifying Series, and this year's race brought in over 60 juniors, many coming from outside of Truckee, with even a few racers from far-away Minnesota.

The Girls 5 kilometer race was one of the most heated battles of the day. Joanne Reid of Palo Alto, a J2 (14-15 years old) skier was the dominant junior female racer of the entire race, posting a remarkable time of 13 minutes and 8 seconds for the one lap course. Hot on her heels, however, was Truckee's Annika Taylor, who finished barely 4 seconds off of Reid's pace, and serving notice that future junior races might be just as hotly contested. Third place for the girls went to a J1 (16-17 year old) racer from Crowley Lake, Dayna Stimson.

In the J2 boys 5K race (J1 boys raced the 10K), it was Miles Heapes from Tahoe City who set the overall pace, finishing with a time of 12 minutes and 24 seconds. Justin Ondry of Truckee managed second place, 45 seconds back, with a time of 13:08. Connor Benton, a visiting J2 boy from the Twin Cities area in Minnesota, took the third best time for the race, posting a 13:41.

With cheering spectators and parents lining the stadium, the juniors got their first taste of major ski racing for the season, with many of the qualifying spots up for grabs in this first event of the series. Although there were some disappointments, the young Far West racers showed that they are ready for a season of battling for the coveted spots on the team traveling to Anchorage, Alaska in March for the 2008 Junior Olympics National Championships.

The next major event of the Far West schedule falls next Sunday, December 30<sup>th</sup>, at Auburn Ski Club. The Snowshoe Thompson Classic Race is one of the oldest and most prestigious events in the Sierra, and will be a hotly-contended race once again in the Masters and Sierra Ski Chase series. After that, racing in Truckee takes a short hiatus, with the next major event coming on January 20<sup>th</sup> at Auburn Ski Club – the ASC Classic Sprints, the next race in the Junior Olympic qualifying series. In the meantime, there will be races in the Mt. Shasta and Mammoth Lakes area to keep ambitious competitors busy.

As always, for a full results list and schedule, go to [www.farwestnordic.org](http://www.farwestnordic.org).