

WISCONSIN NORDIC SKI LEAGUE NEWSLETTER

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SPOTLIGHT ON A TEAM

Wausau East/West

History of the team:

High school skiing in the Wausau area started out as the Wausau West XC Ski Club in the '76-'77 ski season. The club went on ski touring trips around the area and a few kids may have raced if their parents were into racing also (like the Gallagher boys and Goeltz's boys). In 1984 we formed the first boys' team, but didn't field a girls' team until 1991. Even though there wasn't a girls' team, individual girls skied and, Michelle Potter from West took 1st in 1989. Eventually, skiers from Wausau East approached administration in the Wausau School District and the two schools agreed to allow a co-op to be formed. Through the early 2000's the two schools often competed as one team. As the team grew to almost 50 athletes in the late 2000's the teams practiced together, but then separated into a Wausau East team and a Wausau West team for the races. Since, the bylaws have changed we now compete all together again.

The team's main practice/race venue has traditionally been Nine Mile Forest. However, in the past, Sylvan Hill and Greenwood Hills also groomed for cross country skiing and were used for practice and races.

Coaches

The early years of the team were guided by Jim and Nancy Gallagher who retired in the early 2000's from coaching. In the 90's Greg and Rachel Kresse also coached the high school skiers, but now focus their energy on the middle school program. The program has seen some very dedicated volunteers through the years, most notably John Hugus, who coached from 2006 until he passed away in 2012.

The current group of coaches comes with a lot of young energy and talent.

- Chris Nichols is a graduate of Wausau West and continued to ski in college for UW-Green Bay. He moved back to Wausau two years ago, and now runs our summer program and also coaches the middle school with the Wausau Nordic Ski Club.
- Eddie Gurney skied for the Peak Nordic program when he was in high school. Like Chris he also skied for UW-Green Bay. Eddie moved to Wausau in the last

year from Illinois with a desire to be able to live an active and outdoor lifestyle that is valued in the Wausau area.

- Elizabeth Simak is from the Hayward area. She skied initially at St. Cloud State and then transferred to NMU and finished college in the UP. Elizabeth also moved here in the past year from the Minneapolis area.
- Dave Borgemoen is a long time, dedicated, volunteer to our program. He makes it to practice when his work schedule allows. Dave's dedication, love, knowledge, and skill for waxing skis consistently provides the Wausau East/West team with the fastest skis and the best kick out there.
- Tracy Gorzek began coaching in 2004. She has been both the assistant and the head coach at various times throughout the years. She grew up in the Twin Cities and also attended college at UW-Green Bay.

What makes our team unique?

Jim Gallagher, the initial coach of the team, was a teacher at Wausau West. He and other parents worked hard to get Nordic skiing to be a recognized varsity sport at the school. This gives the Wausau East/West team some unique opportunities. First, we receive a fairly large budget from the district, which makes it possible for kids from low income families to participate. The school provides transportation to races, pays entry fees, and provides rental equipment for athletes their first year of skiing. About ½ of the team's athletes have never tried competitive cross-country skiing before they join our team as high school students. Secondly, we recruit the foreign exchange students! Since the early 2000's we have had students from Germany, Greenland, Hong Kong, Norway (surprisingly, she had never cross-country skied before!), Iceland, Italy, and Japan. These athletes bring a unique perspective to our team. Most of all, they display an incredible amount of gratitude for the opportunity to learn something new. They teach our athletes how to appreciate this amazing sport that many may take for granted.

What makes us the same?

Just like the majority of the programs in WI, our mission is to create lifelong athletes that love the sport of cross-country skiing. The Birkie is full of Wausau East/West alumni. Some are fast and some are not, but the spirit of skiing is apparent in their smiles and hugs for long lost teammates. Also, many of the athletes come back each year for our Alumni "race" on Christmas Eve morning. Many of the athletes have remained good friends beyond high school and a few have recently been married. Just like most of the other teams out there in WI, we practice hard and we like to have fun.

Submitted by Tracy Gorzek



TIDBITS FROM AROUND WISCONSIN

Rainbows and Skiing

Peak Nordic hosts a summer ski camp for the Peak skiers in June and July. The program runs for 5-days for two hours per day. The June camp was coached by Felicia Geisor and Kevin Lindlau with the assistance of Marie Geisor. The first day of the June camp was interrupted by a short downpour followed by a gorgeous rainbow over the bike trail. Thanks to the quick thinking of Coach Mary, the rainbow over the team was captured on camera.



New Team in Waupaca Wisconsin

Excerpt of letter from Aaron J. Allie, coach of the new Waupaca team below. Welcome to the the WNSL.



Last winter we started a cross country ski "club" here in Waupaca. We had no expectations, and personally I didn't think it would attract many people, however I was happy to be proved totally wrong. Each week we had 10 - 20 1st time skiers, smiling, enjoying, and making big improvements each week. We ended up spending more time in Iola than at the trails in Waupaca.

We talked it over with the parents, athletes and my family, we would like to compete this year. Already knowing we'll be last in every race, but we will be providing an opportunity for future generations to compete at a higher level. What do I need to do to get us registered in the central division? I thought we would start by skiing the 3 - 4 more local races. I attached a document that was handed out at our end of the year meeting.

I spoke with Irina on the phone, but also I've been in meetings with the Iola coaches.

I guess that makes me the coach. Although I've skied for many years, I haven't done a birkie or have any ski coach training. Albeit, I've coached youth hockey, been a personal trainer for almost 20 years and lived and skied in Colorado @ 10,000 feet for 3 years. Not sure what steps to take from here.

Also this would be a self financed team, unless you have any ideas how I can get equipment costs helped out with? I have already bought some more skis and roller skis. Someday will include this into the membership cost, but right now trying to keep costs down to get more people interested.

Thanks for reading all of this, I attached our year-end discussion sheet and a couple of pics.

Any info you can help me with is good, I don't know a whole lot about the league. I guess first thing I should do is sign up for the birkie?

Aaron

Update On WNSL

State Meet location: An extremely close vote awarded WNDG the state championships bid to be held at the Birkie start area, in Cable. Course developments and event improvements are being planned for next year's championship race. Many thanks to both Rhinelander and WNDG for their efforts in coordinating some very competitive and attractive bids.

New Teams next season:

- 4591 Sports Development – Rice Lake (https://www.4591sd.org/about_us)
- Waupaca – (I sent you some info and pictures on 5/9)

Guest Class skiers: A pilot provision at spring meeting was approved for development to allow skiers and teams from outside of WI to compete in conference and state championship meets in 2018.

Requests to compete in the conference and state meets from a skier in Michigan and a team in Red Wing MN were voiced at the spring meeting. Details on the provision will be developed and proposed at the fall meeting, but are expected to include allowing skiers and teams not in WI to compete in the conference and state meet and be listed in the results, but will not be eligible for awards. They would be excluded from team scoring and WI individual skier award placing, but would be allowed to participate in the events as guest skiers. Many thanks to the league coaches for their consideration to include more participants excited to compete in our league events!

WNSL Coaches Fall Meeting date: Sunday, September 17th in Wausau, 10 am

Submitted by Ted Theryl, President WNSL

You are welcome to submit stories, pictures, news and updates any time during the year to donnahoelz@hotmail.com. Just put WNSL newsletter in the subject line.

The alumni coaching and collegiate lists will be updated in the winter newsletter. I will send out the current lists and will bring them to the September 17th meeting to have coaches update them for the upcoming 2017-2018 season.

Many thanks to all who contributed to this newsletter.

Respectfully Submitted by:

Donna Hoelz
Peak Nordic