

# Skiers put Whitefish on the map

By MARK GOLDSTEIN  
The Daily Inter Lake

Whitefish and The Big Mountain are fast becoming a haven for telemark skiers.

The resort just hosted three days of World Cup telemark races, and four U.S. Telemark Team members are Whitefish natives or call the town home.

"It's pretty special to be born and raised here and competing on the team in your home town," said Glenn Gustafson, who finished 10th in Tuesday's classic race in an international field of 52 men. "It's definitely something to remember."

Gustafson's Whitefish pals on the U.S. team fared just as well. Cody Thompson was the high-

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est U.S. finisher of the 15 women competing, with a fifth place. Last year's overall winner in the telemark nationals, Thompson finished fourth this week in the giant slalom.

Reid Sabin took third in the men's giant slalom and sixth in the classic, to finish as the highest-ranked man on the U.S. team. Taug Boschen placed 13th, and Neil Persons, a Whitefish racer who is a former U.S. team member, finished 18th.

Gustafson, Thompson, Sabin and Boschen all are first-year members of the team, but the Whitefish skiers represent 35

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FROM LEFT, Taug Boschen, Glenn Gustafson, Reid Sabin and Cody Thompson make up the Whitefish core of the U.S. Telemark Team.



Inter Lake photos by Mark Goldstein

CODY THOMPSON of Whitefish catches big air off a jump Tuesday during the FIS World Cup Telemark Classic Race at The Big Mountain. Thompson, a first-year member of the U.S. team, placed fifth in the 15-woman field with a time of 3:59.67. Thompson's fifth-place finish was the highest of six U.S. women in the race.

# Whitefish telemark skiers anchor U.S. team

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percent of what Boschen calls "the strongest U.S. team ever."

"We're posting better times this year than ever before," said Boschen, who moved to Whitefish from Snowbird, Utah, in November.

He credited The Big Mountain's Thursday-night telemark race league with honing the Whitefish skiers' skills.

"The training is very good. The mountain is very friendly to racers. It's a really great mountain ... There are a lot more telemark skiers in general on this mountain than any place I've ever seen," Boschen said.

Gustafson cited local race-league judges, who donate their time and critique the skiers' technique, "so we can get low penalty points.

"Last year at nationals, that really paid off for all the local racers," he said.

Gustafson also gave credit to Persons, who made the U.S. team in 1995, traveled the world and brought back techniques, and influenced his friends to get into the sport competitively.

All four said the community has offered tremendous support.

"Everybody's really into it," Thompson said. "We've got a great race crew. Everybody on the mountain is really behind it."

Thompson began telemarking while in college in Minnesota.

"I was just trying something new to keep it interesting," she said. "I got more into it last year, because nationals were going to be held here."

After she won the giant slalom and classic races, placed second

in the slalom and was named overall champion, she decided to enter more races this year.

All four agreed that The Big Mountain's course was the best they've seen this year.

"It was a perfect course," Sabin said. "The volunteers and course workers did a great job."

Sabin presented The Big Mountain's bid to the Federation of International Skiing, which put on the race. "The enthusiasm from the organization won it," he said.

Like many telemark skiers, Sabin got into the sport while looking for something more challenging than run-of-the-mill alpine skiing.

Telemark skiers use modified cross-country ski gear — skinnier skis and boots that attach only at the toe, leaving the heel free. The technique, named for

the town of Telemark, Norway, is recognizable for the graceful turn that is its trademark.

"You can go out and ski the groomers, yet be technical," Sabin said. He sees telemark skiing eventually becoming an Olympic event, if not at the 2002 Salt Lake games, certainly by 2006.

"It's huge already in Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Norway, Finland. Everyone's involved in Europe," Sabin said.

The Whitefish skiers will compete in six races over eight days in France and Switzerland next month, the U.S. Championships March 4-7 at Stevens Pass, Wash., and the World Cup Finals in Norway and Sweden later at the end of March.

"We see ourselves eventually on the top. We're headed for the podium," Sabin said.