

BACK TO SPORTS (</sports>)

NATIONAL TELEMARCK CHAMPIONSHIP

March 25, 2010 at 5:00 am | By RICHARD HANNERS

Whitefish Pilot

Former members of the U.S. Telemark Team gave the current team members a run for their money during the U.S. Telemark Nationals at Whitefish Mountain Resort. But at the end of four days of racing, team members Kelsey Schmid-Sommer and Shane Anderson took top honors as national champions.

For Whitefish resident Schmid-Sommer, this was an unprecedented fifth-straight national championship. Like last year, she lost the first two races but proved to be the "comeback kid" by winning the final two races. Unlike last year, Schmid-Sommer was accompanied on the podium by her five-month-old son Nicholas.

"That Kelsey could return to racing at this high level of competition, so soon after giving birth to her son says a lot about her competitiveness and her love of the sport," U.S. Telemark Ski Association president Russ Hobbs said.

Erika Walters, of Steamboat Springs, took second place for the women with two first-place finishes. Cody McCarthy, of Whitefish, a former U.S. Telemark Team member, placed third overall with three second-place finishes.

Anderson, of Cody, Wyo., and Steamboat Springs, Colo., easily won the men's title with three first-place finishes going into the dual slalom race on Sunday. He was followed by former World Champion Reid Sabin, of Whitefish.

Third place went to Charlie Dresen, of Steamboat Springs. Dresen had retired from the team for the last six years but rejoined the team this year, competing at the highest level.

The snow conditions were ideal all four days. Racing started at 10 a.m. each day and concluded by 2 p.m. for the multi-run events. About a hundred spectators watched from the sidelines along Ptarmigan Bowl and the flatter area near the Bench Run where the course wound around groups of trees for some events.

Schmid-Sommer was edged out of the top position in the Don K Chevrolet Giant Slalom race on March 18 by Walters at 2:09.92.

The giant slalom course is similar to those found in alpine skiing except there is a jump located in the middle. Skiers are judged for distance and their ability to land in a Telemark position, with the heel raised.

With low snowpack this year on Big Mountain, the course was moved from Hibernation Run, near Chair 2, to Ptarmigan Bowl, closer to Big Mountain's summit. The jump was established at the top of the bowl.

McCarthy, a former team member who retired to raise her family here in Whitefish but couldn't resist the pull of competing again on her home mountain, came in third at 2:14.32.

A five-time national champion, McCarthy took second in World Cup racing in 2000. She has two children and competes in Whitefish Winter Carnival skijoring and on hockey teams here. She said she hadn't Telemark skied since 2003 because she spends her time on the mountain now with her kids.

Two other Whitefish women placed in the top-10 in the giant slalom's Elite division — Schmid-Sommer's sister Erika Ruta took eighth, and Maggy Doherty took ninth. Ruta now has the bug and may consider competing for the team next year. Doherty is a former alpine ski racer who took up Telemark racing relatively recently.

Heidi Marcum (formerly Fehlhaber), a former U.S. Telemark Team who lives in Whitefish, competed in the women's Citizen division, completing the course in 2:48.97.

Anderson was the top male finisher in the giant slalom at 1:57.19. Four-tenths of a second behind was two-time World Cup Champion Reid Sabin, of Whitefish. Sabin last raced at this level in 2003 but keeps in shape running his Stillwater Nordic Center north of town and regularly competing at the local Thursday Night Telemark League races on Big Mountain.

In third was 2007 Whitefish High School graduate David Hobbs. Sabin has been one of Hobbs' mentors since he began racing at 14. Hobbs' results at the recent FIS Telemark World Cup in Colorado were the second best on the U.S. Telemark Team. That was his first World Cup event since he fractured his vertebrae three years ago in Germany.

Other Whitefish skiers in the men's Elite division included former U.S. Telemark Team member Neil Persons, who holds the pull-up record at the Bierstube, 10th; Regional Team member Cole Schneider, 12th; Whitefish Mountain Resort groomer Chris Carpenter, who built the jump and the 360-degree banked turn for the course, 15th; former U.S. Telemark Team members Peter McMahon, 17th, and Eric Lamb, 18th; and Allen Casey Hill, 19th.

Caleb Simpson, of Whitefish, took first in the men's Citizen division at 2:45.45, and Whitefish High School teacher Chris Schwaderer came in second in the men's Masters division at 2:29.42.

The Karbon Classic race — the "cornerstone of Telemark racing," according to the USTSA — took place on March 19 with a giant slalom of 40 gates and a jump, a 360-degree 'reipelokke" turn and a section of Nordic-style skating. Skiers had one shot at the course.

Anderson was again at the top of the podium for the men in the lung-burning race at 1:43.55, with Sabin about less than a second behind. Charlie Dresen, of Steamboat Springs, a former U.S. Telemark Team member who rejoined the team after a seven-year absence, placed third.

Hobbs took fifth place, with McMahon about three seconds behind in sixth. McMahon began racing in 1996 but didn't train or ski much this season because of a family emergency.

Other Whitefish Elite division men in the classic race included Carpenter, eighth; Cole Schneider, 12th; Lamb,

13th; Persons, 16th; and Hill, 22nd.

Jay Dobbins, of Whitefish, took second in the men's Citizen at 2:58.28. Actually a snowboarder who knows how to Telemark ski, Dobbins was talked into competing just days before the event.

In the women's classic race, Walters was a repeat winner at 1:56.90 and McCarthy about one second behind in second. Schmid-Sommer came in about 2 1/2 seconds behind in third, Ruta was fifth, and Doherty took eighth.

The Big Sky Brewing Sprint Classic race took place on March 20. A shorter version of the classic race, skiers took two runs, and the times were combined.

The Whitefish racers swept the No. 1 and 2 positions in the women's Elite division, with Schmid-Sommer on the podium at 3:08.65, and McCarthy nearly six seconds behind in second. Walters took fourth at 3:20.52.

Doherty came in seventh in the women's Elite division, and Ruta did not finish her second run. In the women's Citizen division, Marcum took first at 3:37.17, and Kaci Yachechak took third. This was the first time Yachechak, who grew up in the Flathead, raced in a U.S. Telemark Team level race.

Anderson continued his winning ways, taking first in the men's Elite division at 2:48.02, a wide margin over Sabin, who came in fourth, followed by Hobbs at fifth.

Other Whitefish racers included McMahon, seventh; Carpenter, 11th; Persons, 13th; and Lamb, 14th. Hobbs' younger brother Willie Hobbs didn't finish his second run, and Schneider was disqualified.

Eric Hanson came in second in the men's Citizen division at 2:25.67, followed by Marc Blanden at third. Andrew Barinowski took fifth, and Simpson did not finish. Galen Jamison took third in the men's Junior 2 division at 5:51.54, and Schwaderer took first for the men's Masters division at 3:30.02.

The Don K Subaru Pro Dual Slalom race was held March 21 in a dual format, with skiers racing side-by-side, once on each side of the parallel courses, and the times of the two runs combined.

With the point differential between all the top racers so close, the dual slalom would be the deciding race to determine the championships.

Schmid-Sommer took first in the women's Elite division at 1:18.64. Tied for second place were McCarthy and Madi McKinstrey, of Steamboat Springs. Doherty was about half a second behind in third, and Ruta was sixth.

Taking the podium in the men's Elite division was Cory Snyder, of Franconia, N.H., at 1:09.69. This was a breakthrough race for Snyder, his first time on a National Championship podium after finishing the "best race of his life."

Whitefish men placing included Hobbs, fourth at 1:10.46; Sabin, eighth; Carpenter, ninth; Schneider, 10th; McMahon, 11th; Persons, 12th; and Lamb, 17th. Jamison took second in the men's Junior 2 division at 3:46.77.