



Photo by Bob Berlin

*Cody Thompson at the finish line of the Classic Race at Big Mountain during the second FIS Telemark World Cup event of the season.*

## Local champ powers down the slope

By Tonya Easbey  
of The Journal

Being overall champion two years running at the US Alpine Masters Nationals wasn't enough challenge for Whitefish local Nicole "Cody" Thompson. So she strapped on her telemark skis and championed the Big Mountain Masters Race, then the US Telemark Nationals. Now she's shooting for the World Cup Finals in Norway, working up points in last week's World Cup Event at Big Mountain.

Thompson earned a 5th place in the Classic, and 4th and 5th places in the Giant Slaloms, a bit lower than what she hopes to score at the finish line in Norway, where she'd like to rank within the top three places. And then...?

"I'd love to go to the Olympics, if it gets put in," said the 28 year-old. Telemark skiing may be an exhibition event in the upcoming 2002 Olympic Games in Salt Lake City, and the pressure is out to include it as an Olympic event in 2006.

"But that would be 2006, and then I'll be 35,"

she said. "So mainly I'm just going year by year, looking to travel and see the world through (racing). And do the best I can."

But travel and gear is expensive. The Big Mountain, the 'Stube and the Iron Horse sponsor Thompson, thus far having raised \$3,000 of the \$5,000 needed to send her to Europe for the rest of the World Cup events. Thompson's skis are sponsored by Rossignol, but most of her equipment funding comes out of her own pocket. Her boots are fellow teammate Reid Sabin's old footwear.

"Being away from work (to travel to the races) is going to hurt," said Thompson, a certified masseuse, although she does manage to plug her career into race days by offering massages to skiers at events.

Unlike the United States Ski Association, the newer United States Telemark Association doesn't have the funding for coaches, training, or organizations. But give it time.

Telemarking is the new hip way to get down the slope. The early 90's brought in snowboarding

- the 2000's will renew telemarking. Although the telemark turn has been around since the 1800's in Norway, advanced equipment and the desire to experience "the backcountry" has pushed telemarking into a mainstream sport.

Thompson started free-heeling it about five years ago, and is starting to get to the point where she is as fast telemark turning as alpine. She started "sticking with it," after doing well at nationals, and has chosen her telemark skis every time so far this year.

"You get a lot more 'face shots.' You're more in it," she said. And the people are more friendly.

"There is not as much ego in "tele" racing," she said. Words of encouragement are shouted to race participants from both teammates and competitors.

Thompson had her own cheering squad in the crowds during the races last week. Her aggressive style on the slopes and mellow manner off has made her a favorite among local spectators. So how long before they are carving their own turns down "Thompson's Run" on the Big Mountain?