

J2 Nationals: Top U.S. juniors get tested at Sugarloaf

Big snows caused an unusual flip-flop of the schedule, but racing at Sugarloaf USA, Maine did get underway for the J2 National Championship March 3. Because of the snow official elected to start off with the shorter slaloms while the length of the Narrow Gauge could get cleared for speed events. The result was a nasty course that women's slalom winner Katie Ryan said was like racing on a mogul field. The Aspen Valley racer said, "there were huge ruts. It was like a rodeo. I just hung on and got down and ended up being pretty fast."

Ryan edged out Foreste Peterson for the J2 slalom title with Makenzie Brown in third. Maise Ide and Anna Kikut rounded out the top 10 respectively.

Rowmark Academy skier Andrew Kircher collected the men's title with a blazing second run that scuttled the plans of Matthew Strand, the first run leader. Tanner Farrow grabbed third, moving past Canada's Robert Overing in the second heat to do it. Fifth went to Sam Macomber.

Official took a day to get the track in order and then ran the super G's March 5. **Scott Snow of Team Independence in the western region collected that win, becoming the first skier to defend a J2 National title. It was a close race as Snow snuck past Bronson Wright by .13 of a second and Danny Fowler in third was less than two tenths out.**

While he had come into Maine anticipating a shot at Eastern ice, he said the surface was "grippy Colorado snow, like I'm use to," and added he found the famed Narrow Gauge race trail to his liking. Speaking from the side of the course he said, "I really like the hill. I'd heard some complaints it was pretty flat, but there's a lot of terrain."



Snow he feels his racing is still a "work in progress," and that he put on his game face "from the time you get up," and was excited to notch his second SG title. Sandy Vietz finished fourth and Overing was fifth.

In the women's race it was Katie Ryan again, earning her way on to the national development team with the double win. She took the race by .66 of a second over Kaytlyn Samuelson while the rest of the field packed in much more closely behind that.

"This is awesome, rockin' and cool all at the same time," Ryan said. "It was pretty soft earlier in the week and we moved to a firmer surface (for the SG). ... I'm just trying for some fun time and getting ready to do it."

While the D-team slot was a nice bonus, Ryan said, "It's a step closer. ... I mean, that's the idea. The goal is to get on the team and then do well and also to kick some butt along the way."

Yina Moe-Lange, a Danish skier who lives in Sammamish, Wash. and arrived fresh from the Olympics, finished third, three hundredths behind Samuelson and Katelyn Barclay was seven hundredths behind that in fourth. Noah Duff, in fifth was seven hundredths ahead of Peterson's sixth place result.

Peterson did collect the women's GS title, however, coming from behind to get past Courtney Altringer for that win. Anne Strong got onto the podium in third with Paula Moltzan, a first year J2 moving up into fourth with a strong second run of her own. Anna Kikut beat out Sara Kikut for fifth.

The men's GS was all about retribution for title winner Matt Strand. The Buck Hill racer led the first run as he had in the slalom and this time he was not about to let the medal get away. "All I can say is I wasn't going to let it happen twice. I was holding nothing back. It was gold, or nothing. I wanted to win. I worked hard for it and it came down to the last run, against three of my best friends and it was a matter of tenths."

Actually, he was just two hundredths ahead of slalom winner Kircher after the first run of GS with Snow and Farrow very definitely in the hunt as well. He put down a blazing second run on a course he said had been helped by the traffic from the women's race ahead of them. "There were a couple of spots with a few ruts," he said, "but it had been skied in by the women and was pretty good."

He got his title by a quarter of a second over Kircher, Snow finished third, Farrow fourth and fifth went to Nick Prebble of New Zealand.

"I'd like to thank Erich Sailer and Buck Hill," said Strand. "And," he said, echoing sentiments shared by every racer, "my parent because none of this would have been possible without them," 3/6/10

Front page Photo by Doug Williams.
Photo of Katie Ryan talking to Ski Racing by Walt Evans
Photo of Scott Snow by Walt Evans