

WINTER SPORTS: ALPINE SKIING



Ryan Brennecke / The Bulletin

Linnea Baysinger blows past a gate while competing in the girls giant slalom Sunday during J3 Western Region Junior Olympics on Mount Bachelor. Baysinger finished third in the girls giant slalom race.

The best of the West

J3 Junior Olympics draws top young alpine skiers from around the region

By Katie Brauns
The Bulletin

MOUNTBACHELOR—They're young, but man, they can ski.

J3 (junior level 3) alpine skiers, ages 13 and 14, are living the years when change is constant. And for these skiers, the hope is that their speed changes — from fast to faster.

"It's pretty impressive these days what little 13-year-olds are capable of on a pair of skis," Luke Patterson, of Truckee, Calif., and a Far West division coach said Sunday as he rode the Pine Marten chairlift to the top of the race course on Mt. Bachelor ski area's Thunderbird run. "It's really fun

to see the level of competition all the way through the field."

Many of the participants who were competing Friday through Sunday in the J3 Western Regional Junior Olympics said they work all year to qualify for the event.

"It's a lot of people's goal just to make it here. And then, hopefully, do well," noted Lindsay Ahmann, 13, of Marysville, Wash., representing the Pacific Northwest Ski Association division.

"You try to get here and then once you are here, it's all out," said Kyla Miller, 13, of Lake Stevens, Wash., representing PNSA. "There is nothing to lose once

you're here because you're already one of the best of the West."

During the three days of competition at Bachelor, the 166 skiers were representing their regions rather than their local teams.

Five divisions from throughout the Western United States were represented at the J3 Junior Olympics. The divisions include Pacific Northwest (Oregon, Washington and northern Idaho), Intermountain (Utah, Idaho and southern Wyoming), Alaska, Northern (Montana and northern Wyoming), and Far West (California and Nevada).

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Far West skiers led the competition, which included super-G, giant slalom and slalom races for boys and girls held over the three days.

"We've been very successful this week and standing on the podium quite a lot," said Cole Dufty, head coach for the Far West division.

The boys soared along and over the slalom course Sunday.

Far West's Hughston Norton

and Max Hall took the top two podium spots, Norton finishing first in a time of 1 minute, 16.77 seconds, followed by Hall in 1:17.30. K.J. Savaria of Inter-mountain tied for second place.

Madeline Johnson of Far West won the girls giant slalom race, clocking in at 1:58.04.

Pacific Northwest's Anna Mounsey, Linnea Baysinger and Makenzie Norwill all took high spots, placing second through fourth in Sunday's girls giant slalom race.

The highest finisher Sunday from Central Oregon was

Bend's Max Stamler, who placed 37th out of 91 entries in the boys slalom race with a time of 1:23.51.

"It takes a lot of training (to qualify for the Junior Olympics)," said Stamler.

According to Chuck Kenlan, race director and executive director of host organization Mt. Bachelor Sports Education Foundation, it has been more than 10 years since Bachelor hosted the J3 Junior Olympics.

Only about a third of the skiers in each regional division qualify for the J3 Junior Olym-

pics, and among those who do qualify, the top 15 first-year J3s go on to the Topolino Shoot-out (held at different locations around the West each year) for a chance to compete in a world event in Italy.

"If they want to be successful in this arena, they have to work hard," notes Far West's Dufty. "Because everyone else is working, and if they don't work they get left behind — done."

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