

Press release - World Cup qualification for GB Nordic Skiers



Hiihto Cup 2008 - Finland

The British Nordic Ski team have just returned from their final races of the season in the Finish Arctic with the best results seen in Nordic skiing for 14 years. A young team of 5 athletes between 15 and 18 years old headed to the Arctic a week ago for a series of 4 FIS races. Three of the team had recently competed for Great Britain at the World Junior Championships and the two youngest team members, were going to attend their first ever FIS races.

The Arctic weather gave great snow conditions over the 4 days racing, in a highly competitive field with many World cup skiers having just returned from the World Cup finals in Bormio. The first day of competition saw a strong set of results from Fiona Hughes, Callum Smith and Simon Spencer finishing in 17th, 26th and 27th positions respectively. However the team was to be stunned by the performances of Andrew Musgrave and Andrew Young who finished 8th and 17th gaining World Cup Qualifying performances.

Andrew Musgrave from Inch, Aberdeenshire has shown great form all season, but snow conditions prevented him from gaining the highly sought after World cup qualification standard at the recent World Junior Championships. Finally all the cards fell in to place and he was able to gain the required standard. Andrew Young from Huntly, Aberdeenshire in his first ever FIS race just achieved the required standard, an amazing achievement, especially considering that he suffered a broken ankle just 2 months before the start of the season and is only 16 years old.

The second and third days of competition saw the team build on their solid first day of races, with Andrew Musgrave gaining another qualifying result. But the best had been saved for the final day of races where the whole team upped their game, Fiona Hughes from Huddersfield, Yorkshire scored her best FIS points in a skate race of the season. Callum Smith from Inverurie, Aberdeenshire and Simon Spencer from Cheltenham scored some of their best points.

Andrew Musgrave skied a fantastic race to finish 5th Junior and Andrew Young was close on his heels finishing just 9 seconds behind in 7th place. These performances earned them their best points of the season and another qualifying selection race each. Great Britain has not been represented at world cup level in Nordic skiing since 1995 and next season will now see the team competing on the world cup circuit as well as at the junior and senior World Championships. It will also see Andrew Young compete at the European Youth Olympics where there is a very real chance of a top ten finish.

Commenting on the team performances...

Al Dargie – team manager and Junior team coach said “the achievements this season have not been seen for many years in Nordic skiing, and for it to be achieved with such young athletes is unbelievable. Next year will see the team compete on the world cup circuit in the build up to hopefully qualify athletes for the 2010 Olympics in Vancouver”

Roy Young – Head coach said “It has been an amazing week for British Nordic skiing, we will now have a major task ahead of us in securing the financial support required for the team to compete on the world stage. What is also worth remembering is that we still have a good base of younger athletes developing at similar if not better performance levels than the current team.”

For further information or higher resolution images please contact Al Dargie on the details below.

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