

U-32 girls, People's ski to Nordic Div. II titles

By BOB FREDETTE Rutland Herald Staff -
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CHITTENDEN — When Mark Chaplin started as cross-country ski coach at U-32, there wasn't a skiing facility the school could use within 30 minutes' drive, there was no budget for equipment and the team's practice trails had to be cleared using a battered old snowmobile.

What a difference there is 10 years down the trail.

The U-32 girls broke through for their first Division II state championship, completing a runaway victory over BFA-Fairfax on Thursday at Mountain Top Inn. The Raiders swept Thursday's classical individual and relay and posted a 44-132 triumph.

"Coming to the point where we not only got our first championship, but dominated, it's very rewarding," Chaplin said.

U-32 used its depth, led by Chelsea Evans in 21 minutes, 57.9 seconds, to control the individual race, with Evans taking second (22:43.7) behind Stowe's Maggie McGovern (21:57.9), with U-32's Kelcie Bean, Larissa Kehne and Holly Bushman capturing sixth, seventh and ninth.

U-32 posted a 14-48 triumph in the event that wrapped up the crown. Then the Raiders tacked on 10 more points with an impressive relay victory of more than 2-1/2 minutes, 35:50.1 to 38:25.2 over BFA.

Esther Nemethy and Nell Davis joined Evans and Bean for the season-ending event.

Harwood finished third (40:05.7), followed by **Peoples (41:00)**, Lyndon Institute (43:01.9) and Burr and Burton (44:05.3).

Also in the top 10 were Stowe's Maeve McGovern (third), **Peoples' Silene Deciuces (fourth)**, Lamoille's Charlotte Reber (fifth), Lyndon's Erin Grout (eighth) and Otter Valley's Emma Rubbins-Breen (10th).

Chaplin, who has coached 10 years, said that the skiing culture at his school still needs growing. Cross country competes against what he says is a Division I-sized sports menu at a Division II school.

But there will be help for the team coming from

the middle school level and Chaplin has all but one skier, Bean, coming back for 2010.

"This (title) will help, but the sport doesn't get the press that basketball gets," he said.

But if nothing else, he said the team now has a newer snowmobile at its disposal, and that's one of the vehicles the Raiders used to plow to their first championship.

DIVISION II BOYS

Ethan Dreissigacker won the individual classical race as Peoples Academy completed its march to the Division II cross-country title, 94-173 over Woodstock on Thursday.

Dreissigacker was also part of the Wolves' winning quartet in the relay race.

Peoples, which led Lamoille 46-84 following the freestyle competition on Monday, **won the relay by more than two minutes, 28:25.4-30:39.8 over BFA.**

Woodstock finished third (30:47.5) and Otter Valley fourth (30:58.2).

Otter Valley was third overall at 192, followed by Lyndon (196), BFA-Fairfax (215), Harwood (280), Burr and Burton (288), U-32 (455), Montpelier (562), Stowe (568) and Lamoille (712).

Dreissigacker was in command in the individual race with a 17:45.4-18:24.4 victory over teammate Jake Barton. They were followed by Canaan's Dan Brodhead (18:44.9), Lyndon's Duncan Berube (19:53.8), BFA's Kyle Bochanski (20:03.2), **Peoples' Connor Hunt (20:09.8)**, James Bassette (20:19.9) and Jordan Fields (20:50.4) of Woodstock, Otter Valley's John Chesna (20:51.8) and BFA's Dustin Hayes (20:53.9).

Keith Hollis, Barton and Hunt joined Dreissigacker on the relay team.

Chesna, Rainer Kenney, Matt Dier and Adrian Brown were the OV relay team while Woodstock raced with Josh and James Bassette, Fields and Ian Lacroix.