



February 2015

Mid-Season Update



From the President's Corner...

By Dan Simmons

The rain has gone away and we await the day for it to return in the form of snow. We are in for another tough season but it's going well. We've gotten off six good races at Mammoth, Alpine Meadows and Heavenly Valley. We've welcomed several new racers to our events. Unfortunately Sierra Tahoe cancelled the scheduled Giant Slaloms because of the lack of snow and this upcoming weekend's planned speed events also succumbed to Mother Nature's frugality with Sierra Nevada precipitation. By the time you read this, hopefully we will have pulled off three successful Giant Slaloms at Mammoth. For the good of all of California and Nevada, not to mention our race schedule, think snow or rub whatever talisman you rely on.

While we are working to put on events here, some of us are looking forward to the National Downhill championships, Western Regionals, and FIS Cup at Aspen Buttermilk the first week of February. These regional and national events are a good opportunity to meet colleagues from across the country and always provide excellent racing. The USSA Masters Nationals at Sun Valley also promise a good time. I urge everyone to attend one or both of these events if you can.

I and others were frustrated by our failed attempt to reschedule giant slalom races at Squaw Valley on February 6 and 7. As I indicated in the email post, after talking with many people I decided that it was simply not the right thing conflict with the Western Regionals. My apology to all.

Helmets are becoming a national issue for us. As you may know, FIS adopted some new helmet upgrade rules that require an approved FIS sticker. Informal discussion among the Board guides me to support postponement of the new rules for masters competition until the 2016-2017 season but I don't think proposals for relaxed rules for older classes are a good idea. In the meantime, be careful in purchasing a new helmet to be sure it meets the new FIS standards. The new rules also remind us that it is not safe to be using a helmet that is several years old. Let me know what you think. I'm also interested in what you all might think about advocating a change in our class designations to adopt the current U-XX designations used for juniors (although I'm not 100 percent sure about how I feel about being called a U-70).

One piece of good news, I recently received a determination letter from the Internal Revenue Service approving tax-exempt charitable organization status for Far West Ski Racing, Inc. under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. The effective date is November 14, 2014. My request for an effective date retroactive to July 1, 2012 is pending.

Remember, you have to check-in in person on race day

to be on the start list.

Again I thank all of the people who devote significant time to making our races possible including Deb Lewis, Diann Laing and Mike Braun. Also thanks to Hamish Butler for getting out the Forerunner. Further thanks to everyone who serves as TD and Referee at our events. Without all of this work we would not be holding USSA sanctioned events. Please when you see these folks, say thank you.

Thanks, Dan

Mammoth Season Opener

By Deb Lewis

The 2014 race season opened Sunday under sunny skies and brisk temperatures at Mammoth. Saturday's racing was cancelled as a strong, exceptionally cold storm system moved into the Sierras on Friday evening and brought a welcome 1-2 feet of snow to most of our ski areas. The weekend schedule was adjusted to run the two GS races planned for Saturday on Sunday, rather than the scheduled SL race.

Despite a short delay early in the first run, as rising temperatures creating condensation on the timing beams scrambled the timing crew to resync the finish equipment, the races went smoothly under sunny skies, light winds, and welcome warming through the day. The racing surface held up well, with some softer snow on top slipped clear through the day and a good firm track on the lower sections of the course allowing competitors to let loose coming off the steep pitch.

Far West Masters Scholarship

Program

Dear Eddie Mozen and the Far West Masters,

I would like to Thank you for the scholarship you all gave for this ski season. I really appreciate it and it will for sure help. I have a race this weekend at Mammoth and I hope that I can podium.

Thanks again.

Sincerely, Quinn Earley (Squaw Valley)

Far West Masters Scholarship Program

- by Sandy Hogan

FWM Scholarship Alumni Sweep Open Class at Alpine Race

At our recent December Alpine Meadows slalom, two of our former scholarship recipients (**Christie Patient** and **Owen Wattenmaker**) raced with us, and both captured their open class with a demonstration of fast skiing despite limited visibility and deep ruts. We also watched **Gwen (G.G.) Wattenmaker** forerun the courses; she and Owen are the children of late Masters racer Jeff Wattenmaker, founder of the Jeff Wattenmaker college scholarship, a four-year \$10,000 scholarship awarded each year to one of our racers.

Gwen Wattenmaker, our forerunner, is 13 years old. She started skiing when she was almost two, but never really had an interest in racing until she was around nine. Gwen attends North Tahoe Middle School and is in the 8th grade. Her favorite classes are Language Arts and Social Studies, and she skis for the Squaw Valley Ski Team.

Owen Wattenmaker received two Far West Masters scholarships from 2009-2010, saying that after his dad died he was "more of an honorary member than an actual athlete". He attended Sequoia High School in Redwood City, CA, transferred to Sugar Bowl Academy as a junior, and graduated in 2013. Currently he's a sophomore at University of Colorado at Boulder, pursuing a degree in computer science in the engineering program, and racing USCSA. Right now he's looking forward to racing in the upcoming USCSA races that kick off on the 24th of January. After he finishes college, he plans to come back and race FW masters races, and as he showed us at Alpine, he is one fast slalom racer!

Christie Patient raced out of Squaw Valley, receiving four FWMSP scholarships. She attended Truckee High for two years before transferring to Coldstream High School (in Truckee), to gain more time for training and racing. As a result, she raced in two Junior Nationals, won the Super G at Junior Olympics, and in 2009 raced in the US Nationals in Alyeska, AK. She graduated from Coldstream in 2009, deferring college offers to give racing one last shot before attending the University of Nevada Reno. At UNR, the NCAA team had fallen apart the year before, but some dedicated racers started the "Winter Sports Club", a ski and snowboard team. Christie raced in USASA races her freshman year, but then took up rugby with the UNR women's rugby team, and continues to play in her "super senior" year. She spent her first 2.5 years as a biology major, and then changed to an English major with an emphasis in writing,

with an art minor. She will graduate this coming May, and begin looking for a career in the publishing industry, ideally at an independent press, working either in copyediting or production (or both). After graduation, she and her boyfriend of 4+ years will look north for their next home and new career. Christie plans to race with us again this year, once rugby season is over, and said that racing with the Masters puts the fun back in racing. We'll look forward to chasing her down the course this spring!

Alpine SL weekend By Hamish Butler

Low cloud and a steady snow/drizzle mix made visibility difficult on Saturday. On Sunday the weather improved slightly and visibility for racing was much better. The soft wet snow on top of a hard base made for difficult conditions with deep ruts forming quickly on both days. Despite the conditions there were still some very impressive performances.

On Saturday Owen Wattenmaker took the honors with first place in the men's open class, with Mike Schlovski placing second and Kurt Belden third. In ladies open Christian Patent placed first, with Linda Crowell second and Ingrid Braun third.

On Sunday Danielle Palermo made a welcome return to Far West Masters racing taking first place in ladies open, with Ingrid Braun in second and Linda Crowell in third, swapping their Saturday Saturday finish positions. In the men's open Kurt Belden took first place with Seth Cronin-Wilton in second and Ara Papazian in third.

Many thanks to the crew at Alpine Meadows for putting on a well run event and for making the best of the conditions.

Far West Masters Scholarship Program

Dear Eddie and Far West Masters,

Thank you so much for inviting me to the Colorado camp. I had a wonderful time meeting masters and improving my skiing. I really appreciate the scholarship, it will allow me to continue following my dream of being a professional ski racer.

*Thanks for everything! - Katherine Brown
(Mammoth Mountain)*

Heavenly Viva Italia By Deb Lewis

Our first event as racing resumed in the New Year was 2 SL races at Heavenly Valley. Despite the post-New Year's run of warm weather, conditions on the World Cup race hill were very good all day though four race runs. A slight overcast with light cloud cover was welcome on an otherwise warm day, helping keep the snow conditions good. The blended race crew of Gary Hutchins' Heavenly team supplemented by Eric Whitaker's crew from Northstar, aided by hard-working TD Rees Palermo, did a great job for us all day.

The Viva Italia Cup, sponsored by long-time masters racer and champion John Gianotti, is a perpetual trophy using an age-handicap formula to recognize strong skiing across all our age groups. The "Viva Italia!" celebration cry that John made famous in his racing years from numerous podiums was raised again to celebrate a fun day of racing as competitors gathered for pizza and socializing at the post-race party. The 2015 Viva Italia winners were Deb Lewis (W08) and repeat winner Kurt Belden (M07)



USSA and FIS Helmet Regulations By Hamish Butler

I think we all recognize the importance of protective equipment and compliance with USSA regulations to make our sport safe. Indeed, our own Diann Laing was involved in a non-racing accident on the weekend of the December Mammoth season opener when a snowboarder collided with her. Diann was knocked unconscious and was taken via sled then ambulance to Mammoth Hospital and underwent a CAT scan with a resulting diagnosis of concussion. Diann's helmet undoubtedly helped prevent her accident from being more serious. As a result of this accident Diann has done some in-depth research into the new technologies

being used in helmets, to help guide her choice for a new helmet.

In order to continue improving safety, the USSA Alpine sports Committee has passed regulations updating the requirement related to the use of helmets for GS, SG and DH meeting new FIS standards, these new regulations will be phased in during Season 2014-2015 and 2015-2016.

Under these new regulations Helmets designed and manufactured for the particular event of ski racing being contested are required for all competitors and forerunners in all USSA events and official training. Helmets must bear a CE mark and conform to recognized and appropriate standards such as CEH.Din 1077, ASTM F2040, SNELL S98 or RS 98.

Helmets must cover the head and ears. Helmets with spoilers or edges that stick out are not permitted. Protective features integral to the event being contested, such as chin guards on SL helmets are permitted. Soft ear protection is only permitted for helmets used in SL.

Helmet mounted cameras are not allowed on helmets in official training or competition.

The USSA Alpine sports Committee has mandated that these regulations will apply to Masters racing from the 2015-2016 season.

The Far West Masters Board are currently reviewing the new regulations and are tracking discussions started by Intermountain Masters with the USSA, including a proposal to postpone adoption of the new regulations until Season 2016-2017. NE Masters also have a very well thought out position paper on the topic.

The Far West Masters board will continue to monitor discussions at both the USSA and the international FIS masters level, and may provide further information to guide our racers on the requirements of the new helmet regulations for next season.

In the mean time please remember that a helmet may be compromised after an impact, and also that there is a "life expectancy" for helmets. Please plan to replace your race helmets periodically, just as you do with your race skis. A helmet that you've been wearing for 6-8 years probably isn't that good anymore; protecting our heads is not something we should take for granted.

Grania Feddis Anderson GS races, Mammoth
By Deb Lewis

The Grania Feddis Anderson GS races at Mammoth were held on a beautiful weekend at Mammoth Mountain, with sunny skies and light breezes on the race venue. The Mammoth race crew and course setters did an excellent job preparing the course, artfully working around the thin spots in the coverage at the upper break-over onto Andy's Double Gold (ADG), and treating the masters by setting up a classy start tent.

Saturday morning opened with competitors inspecting the very firm conditions on the race hill, which was an intimidating warm-up for many. After reminders that it can be more difficult to side slip and inspect than it is to ski the racing line when the racing surface is very hard, most competitors tackled the challenge and were pleasantly surprised that it *could* be skied with an attacking attitude and good edges.

We were pleased to welcome a number of new racers for their first Far West Masters race, including overall men's winner Brian Welch from San Diego, who showed that his years at the beach hadn't degraded skills developed as a ski racer growing up in the east.

After 2 races on Saturday and another on Sunday, most competitors went home tired but satisfied that they'd accepted and met the challenge of racing on demanding conditions.

Far West Masters Scholarship

Program - by Sandy Hogan

Just wanted to thank you for awarding Sarah Auer \$500. This will definitely help with all of the costs associated with ski racing, which as you know, is very expensive.

Sarah is really looking forward to a great season as she has already been training very hard with Sugar Bowl Academy. She is very passionate and really wants to someday be on the US Ski Team. Keep an eye on her!

Thanks again for your support.

Maureen Auer, Mother of Sarah Auer

Far West Masters Scholarship

Program by Sandy Hogan

Where are they now?

Jonna Mendes was a two-time scholarship recipient in 1994 and 1995 as a Heavenly ski team member, and became one of our earliest USST members. Early in her racing career, she was named Ski Racing Junior Racer of the Year, and then became a 10-year member of the USST. She raced in two Olympics (Nagano and Salt Lake City); racing her first Olympics at the age of 18. Jonna won the World Championship bronze Super-G at St. Moritz in 2003, and also captured 4 US national titles, two in downhill and two in GS. She currently lives in Sun Valley, Idaho, and has been the program director for the Sun Valley Ski Academy for the past 4 years. She and her husband Will have a 4-year old son, Declan, who is a skier, of course!

Eric Mann was a J-1 on the Mammoth Mountain Ski Team when he received his first of 4 Far West Masters scholarships. Graduating from Mammoth High School in 2002, he raced in the US Junior National Championships, placing 3rd in the Super G in 2003, and 2nd in SG in 2004. As one of six USA team members racing in the 2004 World Junior Championships in Maribor, Slovenia, he met his future wife, Jennah Durham.

He attended Williams College and continued his ski racing career, becoming a 3-time All-American (2006, 2008, 2009) with 4 Collegiate wins and 2 additional podiums on the NCAA circuit, a 2-time EISA All-East First Team (2006 and 2009), and a 2-time NSCA All-Academic Team (2006 and 2008). He was also one of six team members representing the USA to race in the 2007 World University games. He also played NCAA Div III Football for Williams College before graduating with a BA in Computer Science.

At Dartmouth College, he earned a Bachelor of Engineering degree, and then a Masters in Engineering Management at Dartmouth's Thayer School of Engineering and Tuck Business School. He lives in Minnetonka, Minnesota and is a Lead Engineer in Eaton's Hydraulics Advanced Technology Team. During the recent holidays, Eric and Jennah celebrated their 5th wedding anniversary with family and friends in Mammoth. Eric says: "Thank you to all of the masters and the FW Masters Association for their support of up and coming athletes. I couldn't have achieved all of that without your support." We say, "Eric, you make us proud!"