

Waggoner, Cook take Junior Birkie titles Second annual race draws 108 skiers

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By Rick Lubbers, Murphy McGinnis Newspapers (Spooner Advocate)

HAYWARD, Wis. — Hayward's C.J. Waggoner needed a shovel as well as his poles and skis in order to win the inaugural Junior Birkie last year, but he didn't need his shovel Friday morning in order to defend his boys' overall title.

Waggoner navigated the 2.5-kilometer course at Hayward's Fish Hatchery Park in just 5 minutes, 36.7 seconds — nearly five seconds faster than Burnsville, Minnesota's Matt Heisel and his time of 5:41.5. Tanya Cook, of Rhinelander, also successfully defended her girls overall title by skating the course in just 6:37.7, exactly six seconds faster than Allison Bohn (6:43.7) of Plymouth, Minn.

"It was a lot more fun this year," Waggoner said. "Last year, I had to come out here and shovel snow." Last year's inaugural Junior Birkie featured a wet, sloppy and patchy trail of snow hauled in from near and far in order to hold the race. Waggoner was part of the trail detail moments before his race started. But Friday's second running greeted skiers with a well-groomed course below and a sunny, cloudless sky above.

The weather was certainly colder than the balmy February temperatures from last season, but the enthusiasm generated by the approximately 108 skiers aged 10 to 15 was much greater than a year ago. The field consisted of 55 boys and 53 girls.

"It was interesting last year, very interesting," said the diplomatic Waggoner. "It was nice and wet out." "There were a lot of puddles," Cook added. Both Waggoner and Cook see a lot of each other on race podiums around the region. Both are Central Cross Country Junior Olympic skiers and they usually race somewhere every weekend from about Christmas time until the end of the season. While Waggoner is done with competition for the weekend, Cook will be busy this morning.

"I am going to ski the Kortelopet for the first time," Cook said.

While medals were given to all race finishers, each first-, second- or third-place finisher in his or her age division (10-12 or 13-15) received other prizes as well. Awards were also given out separately to each age group's top CXC skiers, like Waggoner and Cook, in either the J3 or J4 categories.

Following are results from Friday's Junior Birkie:

Boys 10-12

1. Michael Steavenson, Hayward, 6:39.6
2. Kyle Fredrickson, Hayward, 7:27.9
3. Heath Elliott, Winona, Minn., 7:51.6

Boys 13-15

1. C.J. Waggoner, Hayward, 5:36.7
2. Matt Heisel, Burnsville, Minn., 5:41.5
3. Alex Ostrander, Hayward, 5:44.9

Girls 10-12

1. Kalie Danielson, Hopkins, Minn., 7:24.5
2. Lieschen Klemp, Laurium, Mich., 7:56.4
3. Melanie Hoffman, Sobieski, 8:00.1

Girls 13-15

1. Tanya Cook, Rhinelander, 6:37.7
2. Allison Bohn, Plymouth, Minn., 6:43.7
3. Greta Fay Anderson, 7:18.1