

No average Bears

by Birt Townshend

The Bear ski team according to coach Bruce Wilson was to peak sometime in February. However, the squad has done well already and by February may become the province's second strongest team.

The Bear's Bryan Mekechuk swept the January 3 and 4 downhill race at Prince George. Mekechuk skied to a four second victory over two runs on the technical Purden Mountain course.

The course average speed was 90 km/hr and contained some difficult bump and S-turn sections. In fact Mekechuk mentioned there were some "multiple injuries, fractures, and lacerations."

However, the rest of the team, racing at a Fortress mountain downhill, did not perform as spectacularly as their teammate Mekechuk. Still, Mark Stein managed a fourth place Jan. 4 and missed third by .01 second. Also, Keith Losie placed tenth Jan. 3.

Perhaps the team's best results came in the Mt. Norquay Alberta Cup season opener last weekend. The race featured ex-national team racers and others like Jim Read, being groomed for a national team spot. The Bear's Mark Stein placed fifth Saturday and pulled up to fourth Sunday. Saturday, Stein was beaten by Bill Irwin, Gregg Hann, Gord Perry, and the winner, Jim Read. Sunday, Stein took advantage of a fast second course and his number



Three Bears, Wilberg, Mekechuk, and Stein toast the New Year's results.

one start position to grab fourth place.

Stein remarked on Sunday's race: "it was advantageous to be first down because the course was faster (than the first) and broke down quickly." Consequently, racers following Stein had a rougher course and generally, slower times.

The Bear's success was not limited to the mountain races last weekend. At a Rabbit Hill slalom the Bear's Karl Wilberg took first and teammate Chris

Wright placed third in Saturday's race. The Bears filled up the top ten with a fifth by Mike Matishak and a seventh by Clark Seadon.

On Sunday Wilberg placed second behind winner Gilbert Wall from Jasper. The Bear's Wright and Matishak finished well in the top ten, and Cameron Huckell finished fourth.

The race season is well under way and the next elite race will be a prestigious Pontiac Cup slalom at Revelstoke.

photo Brad Keith

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