



Local skier Aaron Van Delft, a first-year alpine specialist formerly a cross-country enthusiast, nabbed two gold medals in the boys K1 class on the weekend at an event at Shames Mountain near Terrace.

Submitted photo

Van Delft — Dutch for 'goes very fast on skis'

Ted Clarke
Citizen staff

Canada's Olympic team has its Own the Podium program, which targets the goal of finishing on top of the world in 2010.

The idea must have trickled down to the Prince George Alpine Ski Racers.

They conquered their own little world last weekend on the slopes of Shames Mountain near Terrace.

Collectively, the Prince George team won 11 of a possible 12 medals in the four categories they had athletes entered in at the North zone races.

"We definitely dominated the competition," said PGASR coach Mike Stratton.

Fifteen-year-old Kirsten Reimer (J1), 13-year-old Annie Reimer (K2) and 12-year-old Mikayla Gairns (K1) won all their races by category and were the fastest three skiers overall in the three-race giant slalom event.

"The girls were ridiculously dominant and that was awesome to see," said Stratton. "They were 1-2-3 every day, not just in their respective categories."

Aaron Van Delft, 12, captured two gold medals in the boys K1 class and gained the valuable experience he'll need to challenge his B.C. peers at the K1 provincial championships at Big White near

Kelowna, starting March 20.

"Aaron definitely carried the torch for the guys' side and had some awesome results, especially considering it's only his first year of alpine racing," said Stratton. "He was a cross-country skier before."

"Last year's team championships was the first time he came out and he showed some great athletic skill there. There's still a lot of work to do — the North zone is a lot different from zone championships, and he'll realize that — but it's great to see how well he's progressed in a short time."

Gairns, a gold medalist at an Okanagan zone race at Silver Star earlier this season, will also compete in the B.C. K1 championships.

"For sure, Mikayla will be a force for provincial championships in slalom," Stratton said.

Riley Martin, 11, also competed in Terrace as a first-year K1 skier and laid down some promising runs that Stratton said will bode well for him later this season at the North zone team championships at Purden, March 27-29.

After weather-related cancellations of North zone races at Purden Mountain in January (too cold), and in Smithers three weeks ago (too much snow), conditions were ideal at Terrace. Clubs from Prince George, Smithers, Terrace, White-

horse were entered.

"That was the first zone race we've been able to get off," said Stratton. "It's been a tough season all over B.C. The Okanagan has struggled with the lowest snowfall since the late 80s or early 90s."

"We're heading into a big final push to the season with all the provincial and national championships in March leading into the Whistler Cup."

Alix Wells, 13, and Hannah Zmudzinski, 14, did not race at Terrace while they rested up from the Gold Cup Alberta vs. B.C. K2 competition, held at Nakiska two weeks ago. Wells was fifth overall in the event as the top 13-year-old skier.

Zmudzinski placed 10th among 16 B.C. skiers. They will join Annie Reimer at the K2 provincials at Red Mountain near Rossland, March 12-15. Reimer placed eighth overall provincially as a first-year K2 in 2008.

Having posted a top-five result as the top Canadian at last year's Whistler Cup, Alix Wells is considered a strong candidate to qualify for the K2 nationals at Silver Star, March 30-April 3.

Connor Wells (J2) of Prince George also missed the Terrace races. He and Kirsten Reimer are preparing for the B.C. Secondary School Sports high school championships at Whistler, March 4-6.