

*Hajkova Wins Again; 3-5-8 Men's Slalom Finish Paves Way For Buffaloes*

## ***COLORADO SKIERS RALLY TO WIN RMISA CHAMPIONSHIPS***

**PARK CITY, Utah** — The University of Colorado ski team first rallied, and then in part to a strong showing in the men's slalom, cruised to victory here Saturday in the Rocky Mountain Intercollegiate Ski Association Championships, which also served as the annual NCAA West Regional.

Colorado, ranked No. 2 in the nation behind Vermont, entered the day two-and-a-half points behind third-ranked Utah (down from 12.5 after an overnight scoring correction), took a slim 1.5 point lead after the Nordic classical races and then pulled away after three Buffs finished in the top eight in the men's slalom. The Buffs won with 865.5 points, with Utah grabbing runner-up honors with 790; the Utes were gunning for its first RMISA title since 2003. New Mexico (777.5), Denver (759) and Alaska-Anchorage (747) rounded out the top five in the seven-team event.

Colorado captured its 11th RMISA title under head coach **Richard Rokos**, the second straight and fourth in the last six years. The Buffs added to their lead and now have 23 RMISA championships overall, also having won four of the five meets in the west this winter.

More importantly, Colorado, along with Denver, New Mexico and Utah all qualified full 12-skier teams for the next month's NCAA Championships, which are set for March 9-12 in Stowe, Vt.

The women's giant slalom was cancelled due to the weather conditions, a combination of continuous heavy snowfall and poor visibility on the intended course. RMISA rules dictate that if a race is cancelled, then its companion, in this case the slalom, is scored double. That helped Colorado, which had outpointed Utah 103-78 in the GS, thus the Buffs picked up another 25 on the Utes. It also helped Denver beat out Alaska for fourth.

"The coaches were concerned about the skiers' safety," Rokos said of the cancellation. "There was way too much snow overnight. To handle that much snow with a small start field, it would've been impossible to run the race. We took a longer period of time to run the men's slalom, but that was a quality event for all racers from top to bottom. If we would have done quick work with both, we would've split the volunteers on both hills and neither race would have been of any real quality."

As far as the win was concerned, CU's 54th in 128 meets since he took over as coach in 1991, Rokos said, "It is a big deal. In the first place, it's a good confidence builder and everybody put a great deal of effort. It's honorable to win the regional championship, especially knowing the competition will be close to what it will be at the NCAA's."

"We had a very consistent season," he added. "We won every race except New Mexico, at that's when we were extremely short handed. It was a consistent performance for both the alpine and Nordic teams."

Junior **Eliska Hajkova** became the first skier since CU's **Maria Grevsgaard** in 2008 to pull off a sweep in the Nordic races at the RMISA Championships. In picking up her third career win overall, she completed the 15-kilometer course in 56:11.2. She was third after the first 5km split, moved into second through 10km, and then used the fastest third leg by some 21-plus seconds to cruise to the win over Utah's Maria Graefnings (56:31.6), whom she trailed by seven-tenths of a second heading into the last 5km.

CU's two other scorers in the women's race were sophomore **Joanne Reid** (10th in 58:40.4) and senior **Alexa Turzian** (11th in 58:43.0). Sophomore **Mary Rose** was 24th in 1:02:52.5 and junior **Katie Stege** 25th in the 1:03:47.9.

The men's 20km classic proved to be one of the most bizarre races in years, with four disqualifications in the race and the top 10 containing several skiers who finished that high for the first time in 10 races this winter. Alaska-Anchorage's Lukas Ebner won in a time of 1:05:11.4, almost a full minute ahead of teammate Lasse Moelgard Nielsen. CU junior **Ian Mallams** posted his career best finish in taking fourth place in 1:06:52.0; he was in the fifth position after all four 5km splits and moved up a notch after UNM's Otto Christian was DQ'd out of third. It was Mallams' fifth career top 10 finish, topping his previous best effort of seventh place in the freestyle at last year's RMISA meet.

Freshman **Andreas Hoyer** took seventh in 1:08:11.2, moving up two spots after the disqualifications. He was in 20th after the first split and 15th after the second, but finished strong with the sixth and fourth fastest times, respectively, over the last two 5km in posting his collegiate best finish; his previous top effort was 15th in the classic in DU's invitational.

Senior **Patrick Neel** (14th, 1:10:01.5), freshman **Spencer Lacy** (20th, 1:11:48.8) and senior **Vegard Kjoelhamar** (20th, 1:12:27.6) rounded out the Buff finishers. Junior **Reid Pletcher** did not finish, dropping out after the third split. Senior **Jesper Ostensen** did not race for a second straight day due to illness.

"It was a full on waxing nightmare — I don't think we were the lone cowboys on wax," CU Nordic coach **Bruce Cranmer** said. "It was not the right choice in skis. We had no-wax skis ready to go, and the top few guys definitely were on no-wax skis. It changed during the race; things went from being icy to slippery.

"Eliska ran a really good, solid race and was able to get the victory," he continued. "Obviously we'd like to see the other girls up higher, but three in the top 11 is a good day, not as good (as Friday), but it was a tough day and we survived.

"It was great to see Ian, Andreas and Pat up there (in the results)," Cranmer concluded. "It was Ian's best college race ever and Andreas had his best race for CU as well. Pat has skied better, but for him in classic, that's a good day. Even though it was kind of a disaster, it wasn't a total meltdown. Ian didn't have perfect skis, but he was able to stay up in the pack. Reid had problems with his skis early and eventually it got slick and he knew a couple guys were high up and didn't want to fight it the last lap.

In the men's slalom, New Mexico's Petter Brenna easily won in a two-run time of 1:50.67. CU senior **Gabriel Rivas** finished third for the second straight day, as he was clocked in a 1:52.26 time. Sophomore **Max Lamb** matched his best finish as a Buff, taking fifth in 1:53.38; he was fifth in the GS in Montana State's meet in mid-January.

Freshman **Andreas Haug**, who Friday was selected as the RMISA Alpine Men's MVP skier, posted his ninth top 10 finish this winter with an eighth place effort in 1:53.81. Junior **Taggart Spenst** (20th, 1:54.94) and freshman **Fletcher McDonald** (21st, 1:55.18) rounded out the CU men Saturday.

"Gabriel is a consistent skier, and let's hope that continues through the NCAA Championships," Rokos said. "So far he has done so well I'm holding my breath that he can do the same thing in Stowe. He's coming to the end of his eligibility. He's a bright kid. I hope he will keep skiing when he's done with school. He's at the point where he's competitive on every level.

"Max started the season strong, had a little slack there in the middle and looks like he's coming back," he continued. "He's obviously better accustomed to this hill than any of our guys after skiing for Utah as a freshman. He had a great slalom today, and a good GS race yesterday. The NCAA team is not picked yet, it will be a tough decision. Andreas is shooting for higher finishes. Sometimes he's skiing more comfortably than he should, he is still getting used to the team concept and having additional pressure to finish races there. But I'm glad he does that, we need him to score points for us."

Rokos and Cranmer now have to select the 12 skier who will represent the Buffaloes; the Buffs qualified 10 alpine performers (five men and five women), and four Nordic men. Only three from each discipline can advance to nationals.

After a week of training locally, the Buffaloes will head east next weekend ahead of the NCAA's. The Buffs are looking for their 18th national championship in the skiing, the first since 2006.

**RMISA Championship Team Scores (Final; 8 events)**—1. Colorado 865.5; 2. Utah 790; 3. New Mexico 777.5; 4. Denver 749; 5. Alaska-Anchorage 747; 6. Montana State 615; 7. Westminster 383.

**Men's Slalom (28 finishers)**—1. Petter Brenna, UNM, 1:50.67; 2. Seppi Stiegler, DU, 1:52.08; 3. **Gabriel Rivas, CU, 1:52.26**; 4. Christopher Acosta, UNM, 1:52.59; 5. **Max Lamb, CU, 1:53.38**; 6. Jonathan Midol, WC, 1:53.64; 7. Armin Triendl, 1:53.77; 8. **Andreas Haug, CU, 1:53.81**; 9. Chris Salbu, UNM, 1:53.82; 10. Christopher Kollenborg, UAA, 1:53.85. **Other CU Finishers:** 20. Taggart Spent, 1:54.94; 21. Fletcher McDonald, 1:55.18.

**Men's 20K Classical (26 finishers)**— 1. Lukas Ebner, UAA, 1:05:11.4; 2. Lasse Moelgaard Nielsen, UAA, 1:06:06.1; 3. Tor-Hakon Hellebostad, UNM, 1:06:25.1; 4. **Ian Mallams, CU, 1:06:52.0**; 5. Miles Havlick, Utah, 1:07:24.9; 6. Martin Kapso, UAA, 1:07:45.6; 7. **Andreas Hoyer, CU, 1:08:11.2**; 8. Erik Bjomsen, UAA, 1:08:51.8; 9. Kristian Soerlund, DU, 1:09:08.4; 10. Ryan Scott, MSU, 1:09:24.7. **Other CU Skiers:** 14. Patrick Neel, 1:10:01.5; 19. Spencer Lacy, 1:11:48.8; 20. Vegard Kjoelhamar, 1:12:27.6. **Did Not Finish:** Reid Pletcher.

**Women's 15K Classical (31 finishers)**— 1. **Eliska Hajkova, CU, 56:11.2**; 2. Maria Graefnings, Utah, 56:31.8; 3. Zoe Roy, Utah, 57:02.5; 4. Christian Loevald, UNM, 57:09.5; 5. Kate Dolan, DU, 57:23.6; 6. Maerta Larsen, Utah, 57:55.7; 7. Sofie Jonsson, UNM, 58:09.4; 8. Terese Andersson, UNM, 58:35.0; 9. Elena Breed, DU, 58:37.7; 10. **Joanne Reid, CU, 58:40.4**. **Other CU Finishers:** 11. Alexa Turzian, 58:43.0; 24. Mary Rose, 1:02:52.5; 25. Katie Stege, 1:03:47.9.

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**David Plati**  
*Associate AD/Sports Information*  
**University of Colorado**  
**357 UCB / Fieldhouse Annex #50**  
**Boulder, CO 80309-0357**  
303/492-5626 (o)  
303/492-3811 (fax)  
[david.plati@colorado.edu](mailto:david.plati@colorado.edu)  
[www.CUBuffs.com](http://www.CUBuffs.com)



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