

## Local Ski Jumpers Compete in Pepsi Challenge Nordic from page 19

The 2005 Pepsi Challenge and 83rd Fred Harris Memorial Ski Jumps brought hundreds of ski jumping fans to Brattleboro, Vermont's Harris Hill. Saturday and Sunday, February 19 and 20, were two glorious days, and two dozen jumpers kept the weekend events memorable. Strengthened by three Slovakian athletes, two Austrian jumpers, and US Ski Team member Jed Hinkley of Andover, this field of athletes had the crowd ringing bells incessantly.

On Saturday, last year's winner and hill record holder Kuka Bardofer of Slovakia again dominated the field. Jumps

of 91.5 meters and 84.5 meters took him into first place. Nicholas Fairall of Andover jumped 86 meters and 79 meters for fourth place, and Hinkley took fifth. Chris Lamb of Andover and Jonathan Kling of Loudon took sixth and seventh. Ryan Nicholson and Andrew MacEwan took 10th and 14th.

In the Junior Class, Peter Freire, formerly of Sutton, took second, and Pat Hudson, Nick Alexander, and Josh Flanners, all former Lebanon Outing Club members, placed well, as did Cooper Dodds, the newly crowned New Hampshire State High School Champion.

The day ended with a Target Jump, a real crowd pleaser. Fairall planted a jump of 91 meters, earning a cash reward for coming closest to the target.

On Sunday, Jed Hinkley thrilled the crowd with a trial jump of 94 meters, the second longest of the day. Primoz Koza of Slovenia won, with Fairall, Lamb, Hinkley, and Kling all finishing in the top ten.

VanLoan finished in eighth place in the World Cup B rankings at the conclusion of the second period. He is also in Obersdorf preparing for the first Combined events of the FIS World Championships, which took place February 19. Considering the strength of the team this year, the possibility of a medal in the Team relay is real.

Hinkley has been fighting his way up the rankings on the World Cup B circuit. He has just returned from Karpacz, Poland where he finished eleventh and twelfth in events in which there were 65 international skiers.

While Hinkley has not seen his best results in the early part of the season, and was not named to the team for the Worlds, he has been finding his "groove" lately and will see his next big challenge at the National Championships in Steamboat Springs, Colorado in March. He also returned to his old jumping grounds in February to compete in the Harris Hill Competition in Brattleboro, Vermont.

With these young athletes as models, another generation of dedicated nordic skiers is rising. Two jumpers from Andover, Nick Fairall and Chris Lamb, have been working this winter to earn places on the US Junior Ski Team for the Junior World Championships in Rovaniemi, Finland in March. Qualifying events have been held in Lake Placid, NY, Ishpeming, Michigan and Eau Claire, Wisconsin. With Fairall currently ranked as the third junior in the US in jumping, and Lamb close behind, it is possible to again have two Andover athletes representing the United States in international competition.

Fairall, along with younger skiers Zach Daniels and Obi Greer-Carney will also represent the Eastern division of United States Ski and Snowboard Association at the Junior Olympics held in Steamboat Springs in March. Hinkley, VanLoan, Fairall, and Lamb will all travel to Steamboat in March for the National Championships.

And so, a tradition is being established. These young people are learning to set goals and pursue dreams. They have been able to do this with support from adults around them. Parents, teachers, coaches and schools have all factored into their success, along with their own drive and talent. This is why the official results of nordic ski events around the world often list as a skier's home club: AOC (Andover Outing Club).

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