



The Pennsylvania Nordic Skier

The Pennsylvania Cross Country Skiers Association

January 2017



Join PACCSA on February 5th for the Pennsylvania Nordic Championship Races!

The 2017 edition of the Pennsylvania Nordic Championship races will take place on Sunday, February 5th at **Wilderness Lodge** in Wattsburg, PA. This annual fundraiser has something for everyone. Whether you're a hardcore racer, a citizen enthusiast seeking a challenge, or a kid looking for a fun day in the snow, there's a race for you!

As usual, PACCSA is offering a full day of racing on Wilderness Lodge's challenging and expertly groomed trail system. Events include a 5k classic race, a 10k skate race, and a 20k skate race. Also on tap will be youth races (5k classic and 5k skate) as well as fun races for the kid's (1.2k classic fun race, and a 2.4k freestyle race). The male and female winners of the 20k event will be crowned the 2017 Pennsylvania Nordic Champions!

All participants will also be eligible to win valuable prizes from our sponsors. Online registration is available at SkiReg.com. For more information about the Pennsylvania Nordic Championships – including start times, detailed course maps, and directions to Wilderness Lodge – visit PACCSA.org.

Special Lodging Deal for PACCSA Races

The **Erie Wingate by Wyndham** is offering a special rate of just **\$79/night** for racers and spectators planning to attend the 2017 Pennsylvania Nordic Championships. The Wingate is conveniently located along I-90 in Erie, PA and amenities include a free continental breakfast, indoor pool, and hot tub. The Wingate will also make a donation to PACCSA for each room reserved. To take advantage of this great offer, call the Wingate at (814) 860-3050 and mention the Pennsylvania Nordic Championships to get the special rate!

Editor's Note: At the time of publication of this newsletter, mother nature has smiled upon us and dumped a large amount of snow at Wilderness Lodge. The forecast for the week leading up to the race calls for cold temperatures with even more snow on the way. Therefore, we will be having the races as scheduled and expect outstanding course conditions! For additional updates, check PACCSA.org and our Facebook page. Register online and book your hotel today!



American skier Jessie Diggins, celebrating after winning the World Cup 5k skate race in Toblach, Italy last season. Diggins defended her title on January 8th, with teammate Sadie Bjornson finishing 3rd.
Photo: JoJo Baldus

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To view our Webcams and find information about skiing in our region, check out our website!

www.paccca.org

Letter from the President

Three seasons ago, we had some of the best skiing on record. Snow was plentiful throughout Pennsylvania, warm-ups were few and brief, and ski areas were packed everywhere. Every PACCSA member that I ran into on the trails had a giddy look as if to say, “Can you believe all of this snow?!?!” However, as we all know, Mother Nature doesn’t always cooperate so nicely in our region.

Last season’s El Nino weather pattern was a disaster. To add insult to injury, when a major storm snuck through and dumped over 20 inches of snow in the Laurel Highlands, it was followed by spring-like warmth that melted it all away in just a week! Sadly, the 2016/2017 season hasn’t been much better. Although the season started out well enough – especially up north where there was plentiful lake effect snow – we’ve been hit with unseasonably warm temperatures over the past several weeks. Thankfully, the snow forecast is improving for PACCSA’s upcoming PA Nordic Championship Races!



Despite weather uncertainties, I’m constantly impressed by the resilience of Pennsylvania skiers. As a former New Yorker who grew up in the Adirondacks (and was spoiled by reliably good snow conditions), depression and frustration would set in during bad winters. By contrast, Pennsylvania skiers simply roll up their sleeves and set out to find whatever snow exists. I’m constantly amazed by PACCSA members who ski on golf courses after minor snowfalls, or who have no problem taking weekend reconnaissance trips to lake effect snowbelts. Some have even been buying passes to ski on artificial snow at Seven Springs, even though “uphill skiing” is only allowed at the resort between 7 and 9 AM. In Pennsylvania, folks don’t get worked up about a few scratches on your ski bases because every pair of skis are “rock skis.” While others may sulk about crappy conditions, Pennsylvania skiers always find a way.

PACCSA wouldn’t exist if it wasn’t for the resilience of Pennsylvania skiers. Our members and volunteers are part of a special community that endures the bad seasons, embraces the good seasons, and does everything possible to promote the sport we love. I salute all of you!

—Jim South

PACCSA extends a big THANK YOU to the sponsors of the 2017 Pennsylvania Nordic Championships!



Your PACCSA Donations at Work!

PACCSA has been responsible for a number of improvements at Pennsylvania ski areas over the past year. Our biggest project of 2016 involved improvements to the trails at Laurel Mountain. In cooperation with DCNR and the Laurel Mountain Volunteer Group, PACCSA has been making steady progress to repair areas of erosion within the Laurel Mountain trail system. These improvements allow PACCSA volunteers to groom with our recently purchased roller/compactor in as little as 4 inches of snow.

In addition, PACCSA Volunteers worked with DCNR to create a new trail at Laurel Mountain that connects the cross country trails to the newly re-opened alpine center. The new trail allows cross country skiers access to food and other amenities available at the Laurel Mountain Alpine Lodge. This effort involved the removal of numerous trees, the creation of needed drainage, and proper grading of the trail's surface. In conjunction with this work, major improvements were made to the Bill Alberts trail, which provides access to the new connector. To access the new trail, simply follow Bill Alberts until you're almost at Locust Camp. Take a right onto the connector, go up a short hill, and follow the edge of the snowmaking reservoir. You'll then enter an open field that takes you to the Alpine Lodge.



New trail construction at Laurel Mountain



PACCSA's Roller/Compactor for low-snow grooming

At Laurel Ridge, PACCSA teamed up with the Laurel Ridge Concession to purchase a new wireless router. The new router provides improved wi-fi speed and range for visitors located within the two warming huts. It has also improved the stability and reliability of images from the Laurel Ridge Webcam.

Congratulations to Charlie Becker!!

Over the past several seasons, PACCSA has held a prize drawing for new and renewing members at the beginning of the snow season. This year, **Seven Springs** donated a pair of weekend lift tickets to assist our membership drive. We are happy to announce that the winner of the lift tickets is Charlie Becker. For those who don't know Charlie, he was the man behind "Charlie's Forecast" which provided PACCSA members with winter weather forecasts tailored to the unique micro-climate of Laurel Ridge. Although Charlie retired from this role last year, he has always been a longtime PACCSA supporter. Congratulations, Charlie!



Charlie Becker



Volunteer Spotlight: Bob Mazur

Many of you know Bob Mazur. Bob has been PACCSA's Volunteer Coordinator and "Chief Groom-Master" for a long time. Bob has also been responsible for making tons of improvements to regional XC skiing trails aimed at extending the snow season.

Can you see the rectangular shapes covered by snow in the photo to the right? Several years ago, Bob came up with an idea to bury "blue board" (a cement-based building product) to insulate a section of trail at the Laurel Ridge XC Skiing Center that was notorious for becoming wet and shedding snow during brief thaws. As you can see, trail sections treated with this method hold snow better than those left untreated. In working with PACCSA, Bob's numerous other initiatives, such as constructing drains and culverts to prevent trail wash-outs and erosion, have greatly extended the number of skiable days in our region despite frequent low-snow conditions. Thanks, Bob!



PACCSA Welcomes New Board Members

PACCSA welcomes its newest Board members, **Charlie Nash** and **Beth Beech**. Over the past few years, Charlie has actively volunteered for a number of roles, including serving on the Race Committee and acting as one of PACCSA's "free ski lesson" instructors. Beth started off several years ago as the official "Kid Wrangler" for PACCSA's Yellowjackets youth program and actively participated on PACCSA's clothing committee. Charlie and Beth have both proven to be strident and indispensable PACCSA volunteers, and we congratulate them on becoming the newest members of PACCSA's Board of Directors.

We'd also like to thank a few Board members who have taken a step back into slightly less active roles. **Sheila Confer** is a founding member of the Board of Directors and has held a number of important positions, including Newsletter Editor and spearheading PACCSA's social media outreach via Facebook and Twitter. Sheila has taken a temporary leave of absence from the Board to pursue academic interests. Similarly, **Dave Jenkins** is also an original member of the Board, served as PACCSA's Vice President from 2010 to 2014, and is probably best known for coordinating the Pennsylvania Nordic Championship Races. Finally, **Joanna Margaret** recently resigned after serving as PACCSA's Social Director for the past two years. Joanna was responsible for creating the successful Pittsburgh Cross Country Skiers "MeetUp" group.

Despite stepping away from their Board-related duties, Sheila, Dave and Joanna all remain active PACCSA volunteers. Sheila will continue to coordinate PACCSA's Facebook and Twitter accounts, Dave remains an integral part of the Race Committee, and Joanna plans to continue helping out in numerous capacities. PACCSA thanks **Sheila, Dave** and **Joanna** for their dedication, volunteerism, and service as members of the Board of Directors over the years.

Thank You for Supporting PACCSA!

As a result of your continued support, PACCSA is able to continue numerous valuable programs that support Nordic Skiers in our region. Below is a list of just a few of PACCSA's activities:

Webcams – Our webcams at Laurel Ridge and Laurel Mountain keep you updated on snow conditions in the Laurel Highlands.

Yellowjackets – PACCSA's fun youth program aimed at developing the next generation of cross-country skiers.

PACCSA Website – An extensive resource providing up-to-date information important to all Pennsylvania skiers.

Free Skiing Lessons – PACCSA volunteers have taught the sport of Nordic skiing to thousands of people throughout the region.

Laurel Mountain Grooming Project – Provides expertly groomed classic trails at Laurel Mountain which are free to the public.

Pennsylvania Nordic Championships – This annual fundraiser is the premier racing event for Nordic skiers throughout Pennsylvania and the surrounding region.



Laurel Mountain grooming equipment



Yellowjackets youth program



Trail Work

Programs like this come at a price. Our fleet of grooming equipment requires constant maintenance, funds are required to provide internet access for our webcams, and insurance premiums must be paid. PACCSA thanks you for your continued support and asks that you don't forget to renew your membership for the 2017 season!

Amazing Skate Wax Collection for Sale

Tom Murray is a long time PACCSA member who has competed in numerous high profile races over the years. In addition to the PA Nordic Championships, Tom has participated in the North American Vasa, the Lake Placid Loppet, the Gatineau Loppet, and the Birkebeiner. Needless to say, over the years, Tom has become an expert on the most innovative skate waxing techniques!

Tom is stepping away from competitive skiing and is looking to sell his rather incredible collection of skating wax. His kit includes a large number of high-flouro waxes and pure-flouro speed powders from manufacturers such as Toko, Solda and Swix. Tom estimates his collection is worth more than \$2,000, but is willing to let it all go for just \$700. If you are interested, please go to PACCSA.org and use the "Contact" tab. We'll send you an inventory list as well as Tom's contact information.

PACCSA Volunteers at Work

PACCSA volunteers regularly do trail work throughout the region. This included pre-season trail clears at Laurel Mountain, Laurel Ridge, and the Northwoods ski areas. In addition to removing debris from the trails, wood piles were replenished, drains were cleared, and invasive saplings were trimmed back. Special thanks to all of the PACCSA volunteers who helped out!



Jim Logan, Beth Beech and Mike Blessington splitting wood



Bob Mazur leading the drain-clearing crew at Laurel Ridge

Take a Photo with PACCSA's Laurel Ridge Webcam

For years, the PACCSA Webcams have been exceptionally popular. For those with a computer or smart device, simply logging onto PACCSA's webpage provides public access to the latest snow conditions at both Laurel Ridge and Laurel Mountain, including snow depth, air temperature and relative humidity.

However, did you know that the Laurel Ridge Webcam also includes a special feature that allows skiers to take photos of themselves? To access this feature, first locate the Webcam on the southeast corner of the Ski Concession building. It's easy to find since it's pointed directly at the blue and white snow depth board. Just below the camera's housing is a bright red button. If you press this button, the Webcam will take a photo 30 seconds later. Pro tip: you'll get the best results if you stand in front of the small hill that the blue and white snow depth board sits upon.



Matthew South, Jim South, and a couple of snow people strike poses at Laurel Ridge

After you have taken your picture, go to PACCSA.com to view the photo. Click on the "Webcams" tab and select "LAUREL RIDGE - SKIERS" from the drop-down menu. Have fun with this feature!

STOP! Volunteers Needed!

PACCSA is seeking volunteers willing to help out with the 2017 Pennsylvania Nordic Championship races in Wattsburg on Sunday, February 5th. **All volunteers will receive a T-Shirt** commemorating the event. Jobs include Course Marshalls, Start/Finish Officials, Photographers, and Kid's Event Wranglers. If you'd like to help out with this year's event, let us know by using the "Contact" tab on the PACCSA website and sending a message to the Race Director. Thank you for your support of PACCSA activities!



Volunteer Sheila Confer directing race traffic!

Writers Wanted

Do you have an idea for a story or an article you would like published in an upcoming edition of the Newsletter? Contact us via Facebook or through PACCSA.org by clicking "Newsletter" under the "Contact" tab.

Early Season Racing on Man-Made Snow!

The REI Frosty Freestyle is a Michigan Cup race held each January in Brighton, MI. Racers can choose from distances of 5k or 15k. One neat feature of this race is the fact that the venue (Huron Meadows) has snow making capabilities. Because of the early-season snow drought, the 2017 edition of the race took advantage of this ability. PACCSA stalwarts Naomi Jarvis, James Fenn and Alan Hough raced on the stockpiled strip of man-made snow, reporting that it was very fast! Naomi and James both competed in the 5k, winning their age groups with times of 21:36 and 16:55, respectively. Alan competed in the 15k, finishing 6th in his age group with a time of 47:10. Congratulations to these PACCSA skiers!



Alan Hough racing in the REI Frosty Freestyle



**Pennsylvania Cross Country Skiers
Association**

PACCSA
309 W. Marion St
Munhall, PA 15120

Find us on

 Search "PACCSA"

 @PACCSA

Member Name(s):

[Dashed box for Member Name(s)]

**PACCSA Board of
Directors**

- James South - President
- Charlie Nash - Vice President
- Rick Garstka - Treasurer
- Sally Smales - Secretary
- Bob Mazur - Volunteer Coordinator
- Naomi Jarvis - Yellowjackets,
Webmaster
- Brian Joly - Race Director,
Newsletter
- Mike Blessington - Fundraising
- Beth Beech - Board Member

*General comments and inquiries can
be sent to PACCSA via the contact
page on our website*

PACCSA Membership Form

You can also renew your membership online! Visit www.paccca.org

Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

E-mail _____ Date _____

Membership Information

_____ Single \$6/yr _____ Family \$9/yr _____ Donation Only

Number of Adults: _____ Number of Children : _____

Please indicate if you are interested in volunteering any of your skills:

- Mail Newsletters (they will be sent via e-mail unless this box is checked).
- Please add me to PACCSA's e-mail chat group!