All-area boys ski team is built for one thing - speed

BY DANIEL STICKRADT
STAFF WRITER

A state team title has never been brought home to Southeastern Michigan in the sport of boys skiing, but the gap is slowly changing. For three straight years, a school from this region of the state has cracked the top three — two schools did it last year in Class A — while several others finished in the state's top 10.

Individually, the number of local skiers that garner all-state accolades is increasing. This year, a total of 10 area skiers were selected all-state, including two on the Class A First Team and another on the Class A Second Team.

All of these all-state skiers can be fond somewhere on the 2003 All-Area Boys Ski Team, as selected by a panel of area *coaches.*

Below is a brief profile of the skiers selected to the first and second teams:

FIRST TEAM

BRANDON ROSENGREN, Clarkston: Without question the area's most dominant skier, Rosengren ended a fine four-year career by landing on the Class A All-State First Team for the third straight year after he finished third in the GS and fourth in the slalom on the slopes of Marquette Mountain, home of the Class A finals. Undefeated in duals, Rosengren began the season by taking second in the slalom and fourth in the GS at the Traverse City Invitational. He also won the OAA Division I meet title (GS only), swept both races at both the Pine Knob Divisional and Pine Knob Regional, and won the slalom and finished second at the Southeastern Michigan Ski League championships on the slopes of Mt. Holly. The four-time all-state and all-area first-team pick will graduate as perhaps the best skier ever to come out of the Wolves' program. He was a four time Team MVP and his team went 31-3 in duals and took home 12 first-place team trophies during his career.

"He definitely has been one of the best in the area all for years," said Clarkston coach Bruce Rosengren. "Brandon had a great work ethic and was a great competitor. But he made it simple with the father-coach part of it. He was never a problem."

JOHN MCNEW, Clarkston: This three-year varsity performer left it all on the slopes this year, as the junior and repeat all-area pick has decided to graduate a year early, perhaps taking his 3.88 GPA to the Ivy League next school year. Second on the Wolves' roster dotted by college prospects, McNew never finished outside of the top 10 all season long in either event. He was second in the GS and eighth in the slalom at the Traverse City Invitational, second at the OAA Division I meet, second in the slalom and third in the GS at the Pine Knob Divisional, second in both races at the Pine Knob Regional and finished third in the slalom and fourth in the GS at the SEMSL championships. McNew capped his season by taking seventh in the slalom and eighth in the GS at the Class A state meet, landing him a spot on the All-State First Team.

"John is just an unbelievable athlete and great competitor," said Rosengren. "For the past three years, he has been right there for us, rarely having a bad meet. He is a very driven, intelligent person who will do well in the future."

McNew was also 16th overall in his age group in the recent Junior Olympics Central States Division held in Colorado. He has applied for early entrance into Yale and Harvard, among others.

RYAN PARROTT, Clarkston: This senior could have been the No. 1 skier on many teams throughout the area, but on this depth-laden squad he came across normally in the third position. A very consistent performer, Parrott finished in the top 20 in all but one race this year, taking 31st in the slalom and 18th in the GS at the Class A state finals. A three year varsity veteran, Parrott's resume included taking seventh in the slalom and 18th in the GS at the Traverse City Invitational, seventh at the OAA Division I meet, fifth in the GS and eighth in the slalom at the Pine Knob Divisional, fourth in the GS and fifth in the slalom at the Pine Knob Regional, and third in the GS and ninth in the slalom at the SEMSL meet. For his efforts, he was selected as All-State Honorable Mention.

"Ryan just had an outstanding year, he was always consistent," said Rosengren. "I think he had one DQ in three years. He was a very dependable skier for us."

Parrott is considering some smaller schools in Colorado to continue his career.

ALEX ROSENGREN, Clarkston: One of two sophomores named to All-Area First-Team and the younger brother of first-teamer Brandon Rosengren, this rising star proved he belonged with the area's elite after he garnered All-State Honorable Mention accolades.

"He's still young, but he came though with some great races for us," said Coach Rosengren. "He will only get better in the future."

ALEX FAULKER, Lake Orion: Lake Orion finished second at the Class A state meet last year and fifth this year, and this three-year varsity veteran was in the thick of the Dragons' top lineup in three straight trips to the state finals. Lake Orion's top skier this season, who was named to the All-State Second Team, finished 14th in the slalom and 24th in the GS at the state meet. Faulker won two-third of his team's duals, finished ninth at the OAA Division I meet, second in the slalom and 13th in the GS at the Boyne City Invitational, ninth in the GS and 13th in the slalom at the Pine Knob Divisional, third in the slalom and 10th in the GS at the Pine Knob Regional, and sixth in the slalom and 23rd in the GS at the SEMSL meet.

"I was very pleased with the way Alex skied this year, even though he might not be as satisfied," said Lake Orion coach Norm McKee. "We lost some talented skiers from last year's (state) runner-up team, and weren't as deep this year. But Alex was strong all season. He's the No. 1 reason why we finished fifth in the state this year."

GRANT DOHERTY, West Bloomfield: The second sophomore on the first team, Doherty emerged as the Lakers' No. 1 skier and one of the best coming out of the Alpine Valley Division of SEMSL this season. Named to the Class A All-State Second Team, Doherty won the GS and placed fourth in the slalom at the divisional, placed sixth at the OAA Division I meet, second in the slalom and 11th in the GS at the Mt. Brighton Regional, ninth in the GS and 12th in the slalom at the SEMSL championships, and capped the year by taking 16th in the GS and 20th in the slalom at the state meet en route to Team MVP honors.

"He just had an outstanding year," said West Bloomfield coach Enzo DiSalvatore. "He was our top competitor in dual meets and at the bigger meets he always stepped up. From start to finish, he had a great year."

BRANDON CHRISTY, Bloomfield Hills Andover: The Barons' top skier was consistent throughout the season, and ended a fine four-year varsity career at the Class B-C-D state meet, where he placed ninth in the slalom and 11th in the GS. He was named to the All-State Second Team.

Christy also won the OAA Division II meet, finished third in the slalom and fourth in the GS at the Pine Knob Divisional, won the GS and took third in the slalom at the Cannonsburg Regional, and was second in the slalom and sixth in the GS at the SEMSL meet.

DAN OFFER, Oxford/Brandon Unified: Three years of prep racing paid off this year for Offer, who was selected as All-State Honorable Mention in Class A after a fine season. The Oxford senior, who competed with the Holly/Oxford Unified team for two years before his school united with Ortonville-Brandon this year, was one of the top skiers coming out of the Mt. Holly Division of SEMSL, where he was a routine top five finisher in dual meets. Offer, also a three-year varsity veteran in golf, placed third in both races at the divisional, seventh in the slalom and 11th in the GS at the Pine Knob Regional, fifth in the GS and seventh in the slalom at the SEMSL meet, and finished 22nd in the slalom at the state meet.

SECOND TEAM

JOSH JACOBSON, Rochester Adams: This senior comes from a trio of brothers to ski at Adams during the past decade and he was consistent throughout his senior campaign for the Highlanders. Jacobson, who missed the OAA Division I meet, was sixth in the slalom and seventh in the GS at the Pine Knob Divisional, ninth in the slalom and 13th in the GS at the Pine Knob Regional, eighth in the slalom and 13th in the GS at the SEMSL meet, and 17th in the slalom and 27th in the GS at the Class A state meet, earning him a spot on the All-State Third Team.

MATT BUTATKO, Rochester Adams: The senior-laden Highlanders made the state finals the past six seasons and this mainstay was one of those reasons the past two years. A senior in his second varsity season, Butatko was 11th in the GS and 33rd in the slalom at the Pine Knob Divisional, eighth in the slalom and ninth in the GS at the Pine Knob Regional, and 11th in the slalom and 12th at the GS at the SEMSL meet. He did not place in the top 30 in either event at the state meet, where Adams finished sixth as a team, which was third best amongst all area schools.

PETE BRAUN, Rochester Adams: The third Adams senior named to the second team, Braun took his turn leading the Highlanders. Braun was sixth in the GS and seventh in the slalom at the Pine Knob Divisional, 10th in the slalom and 12th in the GS at the Pine Knob Regional, cracked the top 25 in both races at the SEMSL, and finished 26th in the GS at the Class A state meet.

GRANT FODOR, Lake Orion: Fodor is not built like a prototypical skier – he was a three-year varsity veteran on the Dragons' offensive line in football, coming in a 6-4, 240 pounds – but that didn't prevent him from displaying speed on the slopes this winter. Fodor was 10th in the slalom at the Flushing Invitational, 25th in the slalom and 26th in the GS at the Boyne City Invitational, 11th in the slalom and 21st in the GS at the Pine Knob Divisional, 13th in the slalom and 17th in the GS at the Pine Knob Regional, and 29th in the GS and 33rd in the slalom at the Class A state finals.

"He did really well for us again this year," said McKee. "You take a look at him and he's not built like a skier, but he still came through with some pretty good races for us."

PETE MANLEY, Birmingham Groves: In the Mt. Brighton Ski League, teams do not race in duals, only in mini tournaments. Manley, a senior captain, thrived in the conference as one of its best skiers all season. Manley finished fifth in both races the MBSL championships, and placed 13th in the slalom and 15th in the GS at the Mt. Brighton Regional.

Manley is considering Western State in Colorado next year.

JEFF ADAMS, Birmingham Brother Rice: A senior in his second varsity campaign, Adams led the Warriors in numerous meets this season. He was seventh in the GS and [illegible] in the slalom at the Alpine Valley Divisional, [illegible] in the slalom and 14th in the GS at the SEMSL meet, and 14th in the GS and [illegible] in the slalom at the Mt. Brighton Regional.

"He was consistent all season [illegible] of our top two finishers," said Brother Rice coach Rob Rhodes. "He's also [illegible] a very bright kid."

Adams carries a 3.93 GPA, which [illegible] the Warriors. As a team, Rice was named Academic All-State with a combined 3.63 GPA – fifth best in Class A.

SCOTT DOHERTY, West Bloomfield: The youthful Lakers only had two seniors in its top five, and Doherty was the senior captain of that bunch. Doherty, the older brother of first-teamer Grant Doherty, had a solid [illegible] campaign. He was 11th at the OAA Division I meet, fourth in the GS and 13th in the slalom at the Alpine Valley Divisional, fourth in the slalom and sixth in the GS at the Mt. Brighton Regional, 22nd in the GS at the SEMSL meet and 20th in the GS at the Class A state meet. He was named All-State Honorable Mention.

"He was a little up and down at times this season, but when he was up, Scott was very good," said DiSalvatore. "He helped us qualify for the state meet as a team."

West Bloomfield finished seventh at the state finals, its best finish in two decades.

HUNTER AVIS, Bloomfield Hills Cranbrook Kingswood: While teammate Andrew [illegible] might have been a better technical skier, Avis was the Cranes' most consistent performer and point-scorer all season, which helped him pick up Team MVP accolades. A senior, Avis was eighth in both races at the Cannonsburg Regional, 11th in GS and 25th in the slalom at the Pine Knob Divisional, [illegible] in the GS and ninth in the slalom at the Boyne City Invitational, and 22nd in the slalom and 35th in the GS at the Class B-C-D state meet.

"Hunter is a great kid and a great leader," said Cranbrook coach John Lambert. "[illegible] fun kid to around. He had a very good season racing, definitely our most consistent [illegible] us in many of our meets."

KEVIN VAHLBUSH, Clarkston: Normally being the fifth best skier in the Wolves' talented lineup, Vahlbush was often a forgotten commodity for Clarkston – until the final tallies came in. A sophomore in his second varsity campaign, Vahlbusch rarely faltered, taking fourth at the OAA Division I meet, [illegible] in the slalom and 10th in the GS at the Pine Knob Divisional, 11th in the slalom and 16th in the GS at the Pine Knob Regional, 11th in the GS and 23rd in the slalom at the SEMSL meet, [illegible] in both races at the Traverse City Invitational and capped the year by taking 25th in the slalom and 35th in the GS at the Class A state meet.

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Clarkston's Rosengren named top ski coach

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The expectations this season were high for Clarkston and veteran coach Bruce Rosengren made sure his team lived up to those expectations.

Considered one of the state's top three boys ski teams all year long, Clarkston never left that elite group, which led to Rosengren being selected the 2003 All-Area Coach of the Year by his peers.

Rosengren

Clarkston, which finished third at the Class A state meet last year and returned five of its top six skiers, turned some heads in mid-January by winning the prestigious Traverse City Invitational, topping state powers such as Petoskey, Traverse City Central and Traverse City West.

The Wolves, which were ranked No. 1 for a long stretch of the season, went on to go 9-0 in duals at Pine Knob, won the Oakland Activities Association Division I meet, the Pine Knob Divisional, the Southeastern Michigan Ski League meet, and the Pine Knob Regional before finishing third at the Class A state finals at the Upper Peninsula's Marquette Mountain behind defending champ Marquette and Petoskey, which had won the Class B-C-D state title the previous year before jumping up to Class A.

The third-place finish was the only time Clarkston didn't win a meet all season.

"Realistically, anyone of the three of us could have won that (state) meet," said Rosengren. "Ski that another day, and we might have won and so might have Petoskey. It was that close."

Clarkston's third-place state finish marked the third straight year that a team from Southeastern Michigan placed in the top three at the Class A meet. White Lake Lakeland finished third in 2001, while Lake Orion was second and Clarkston third last year. No team from this part of the state has ever won a state crown in skiing.

"It's bound to happen sooner or later," said Rosengren. "The past 3-4 years, we've brought some pretty talented teams up there and have competed with those schools from up north."

Clarkston will graduate three of its top six skiers from this year's team, while a fourth will graduate one year early. Still, Rosengren expects the Wolves to be amongst the state leaders again next year, as his junior-varsity was amongst the best in Southeastern Michigan and his incoming freshman class is loaded with prospects.

"Coaching this team was a pleasure; we always came to compete," said Rosengren. "When it came to race days, I didn't have to do a lot of coaching. This group was very focused and very competitive. We had a great season.

"Looking ahead, I still think we'll be right in there in the future," he continued. "We do bring back some talented guys and we have some others coming up."

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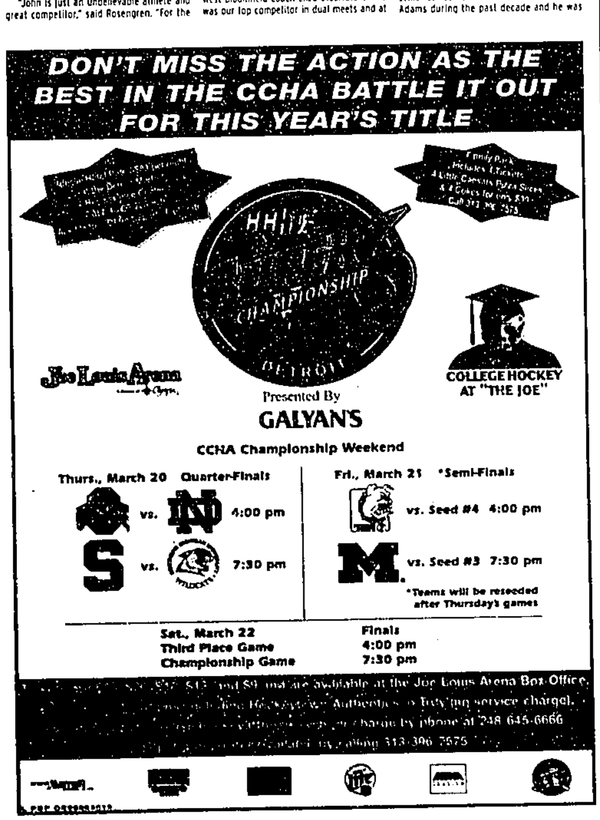

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