

# Black Jack Skier Rockets To Fourth At World Jr. Nordic Ski Championships

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Remi Drolet posts best finish for a Canadian at World Ski Championships since Alex Harvey in 2008

OBERWIESENTHAL, Ger.—Black Jack skier Remi Drolet was 10 seconds off the pace from becoming just the third Canadian ever to win a medal at the Nordic Junior World Ski Championships after he finished fourth in the men's 30-kilometre skate-ski race on Wednesday in Oberwiesenthal, Germany.

"I'm really excited. A result like this is what I was hoping for going into the Championships, but coming in I had some sickness, and my first races weren't great so I wasn't too optimistic," said Drolet. "I just figured I'd go out here today and give it everything I had. It was a great day that I have been waiting for."

Competing in his third World Junior Championships, the 19-year-old Drolet was matching strides with the leaders in the mass start race while battling his way around the five-kilometre

loop six times to finish with a time of 1:14:22.2.

“The game plan was to stay at the front, but at the same time, not do too much leading or waste too much energy,” said Drolet. I wanted to ski relaxed, cheat a bit on the downhill and make my moves there rather than blasting too hard on the uphill.”

The Rossland student-athlete, who is in his first year of his post-secondary education at Harvard University, exercised his race tactics to near perfection. Skiing comfortably in the pack until just under 10 kilometres to go when things started to break up.

Germany’s Friedrich Moch broke off the front on the steepest hill on the course, leaving a chase back to assemble behind him.

“That was quite a long climb and I was really tired already and didn’t have the energy to follow him, so he got away,” said Drolet. “I got in that chase pack and we finished the second last lap together. In the last lap that chase group broke apart and I just went as hard as I could.”

When the dust finally settled at the finish line, the Canadian teenager finished just shy of the podium in fourth spot.

Drolet was 43.2 seconds off the golden mark of 1:13:39.0 set by Norway’s Iver Andersen who reeled in the German in his final loop. Friedrich Moch punched the clock at 1:13:48.4 to win the silver medal. Norway’s Martin Moerk locked up the bronze at 1:14:11.8.

Only two Canadians have ever won medals at the Junior World Ski Championships. Canada’s most accomplished cross-country skier, Alex Harvey, was the last to stand on the podium at the most prestigious junior cross-country ski event in the world. Harvey won two bronze medals in 2007 along with a silver at the 2008 World Championships. The three-time Olympian also won a gold at the Under-23 World Champs in 2011 before going on to win two gold, one silver and two bronze medals at the senior World Championships. Marie Josee-Pepin is the only other Canadian to win a World Junior cross-country ski medal when she claimed the silver at the 1989 Championships.

Drolet is part of a new generation of Canadian skiers ready to carry the torch and follow the path to the podium blazed by their heroes.

“It means a lot to be (mentioned alongside the names of Alex Harvey), and it is encouraging to see I’m at level that I could potentially one day be successful on the World Cup and the international stage. That is a lot of motivation for me to continue training in hopes that one day I will be able to race with the big boys,” said Drolet.

And the results over the past week demonstrate a promising future for these young Canucks.

Tom Stephen also skied back into the top-20 on Wednesday. The Canmore resident clocked a 17th-place time of 1:17:14.8. The youngest member of Team Canada, 16-year-old Xavier McKeever, skied to 32nd spot at 1:19:22.3.

“Remi and Tom’s results today, along with Xavier’s earlier this week, are amazing and super promising for the future of our program,” said Erik Braten, head coach, National Ski Team. “Remi does not have it easy day-to-day balancing school while trying to maximize his training, which makes this result even more impressive.

“He skied the race super smart and I could not be happier for him. Tom still has two years to go as a junior which also shows how strong that race was for him.”

The Canadian women have also had a handful of top-25 finishes in the Junior and Under-23 Worlds.

Quebec’s Liliane Gagnon was the top Canadian on Wednesday in 34th place at 39:33.8 in the women’s 15-kilometre skate-ski race. Remi’s sister, Jasmine Drolet of Rossland, was 36th at 39:34.6.

JIM BAILEY / March 5th, 2020



Doug Stephen Photo



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