

Tyler Kornfield, one of last years Service High graduates, has gone on to make history- as the youngest U.S. National Cross Country Ski Champion. From Monday, January fourth, through Friday the eighth, the U.S. Cross Country Ski Championships were held in Anchorage's newly re-vamped Kincaid Park. Kornfield competed in the freestyle and classic sprints as well as skiing the 15 kilometer freestyle and 10 kilometer junior classic races.

Kornfield is an all-round fantastic skier, but the 18 year old really shows his true power in the sprint races. On Monday's freestyle sprint, Kornfield finish 4<sup>th</sup> behind two out-of-state skiers, and local, former teammate Mike Hinckley, one of this year's Olympic Ski Team hopefuls. What was truly amazing was Kornfield's 2<sup>nd</sup> place finish on the 1.5 kilometer classic sprint. Tyler was behind leader Erik Soederstroem, of Sweden, by just .2 of a second. While Soederstroem was the winner of the sprint, the fact that he was not eligible to qualify for the U.S. teams makes him an "unofficial winner". As Kornfield was the first American across the finish line, he was crowned the U.S. victor.

Kornfield began skiing around the age of two, going out with his mother until he joined Anchorage Junior Nordic at six. He then joined Alaska Winter Stars, an all year training program for cross-country skiers, headed up by Jan Buron. Buron is also the head coach at Service High School.

Originally headed for Dimond High School, Kornfield instead joined Service as a freshman so as to be able to continue skiing with Jan. Kornfield was enrolled in the Seminar program where he remained all four years. When asked if he ever had problems balancing school, skiing, and a social life Kornfield answered, "It gets tough, but I think after a while you learn to deal with it, especially since there's a lot of social aspects in skiing, such as trips to J.O.'s (Junior Olympics) and to (the) State (Cross Country Ski Championships). You can make a lot of good friends. I've learned to incorporate... it's *important* to incorporate a social life with training. That's definitely what Jan teaches you. Training isn't just about going out and skiing, it's having fun."

Kornfield was one of last year's Service 2009 graduates and has since joined the engineering program at the University of Alaska, Fairbanks. When asked if his training had radically changed with the UAF ski team, he said no. He continues to train much the same way he did with Coach Buron and uses the logbook he has compiled from the last couple of years of training to help build his current training schedule.

Kornfield feels that he has been on the edge of competing at the level he race at the Championships for a long time. "It was just this little bump that you had to get over...it's just the right race at the right time. A whole bunch of guys, a whole bunch of junior guys were doing the exact same thing. I was just able to get in front of them, but they have beaten me several times and I've beaten them several times. It just goes back and forth."

Kornfield intends to continue to ski for UAF for at least the next couple of years, but ultimately his goal is the Olympics. "I'm probably within range this year, but they have a really small cutoff." Kornfield may not make the Olympic team this year, but there is not doubt that he is becoming a formidable competitor.

For high school skiers who might wish to continue to compete after graduation Kornfield gives this advice; "Stay consistent in training, keep a training log...when I'm in college its really helpful looking back and seeing where I was then and what I should do for this (training) cycle. That's the most important thing; keeping track of your training,

staying consistent, and listening to your coaches.” Kornfield finishes, “If you do that, it should all come together.”

About a week after U.S. Cross Country Ski Championships finished, Kornfield left for Germany to compete with the United States at the World Junior Nordic Ski Championships in Hinterzarten, Germany from January 25 to 31. Anyone interested in following the results should be able to find them at ***www.usa.org*** or ***fasterskier.com***.

Submitted by:

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