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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Critical Win for Nishikawa

After a brutal 30 km race on some of the toughest trails in the country, it all came down to a couple of hundred metres for Graham Nishikawa.

Facing a crucial challenge – he needed the win to clinch a place on the start line in the upcoming World Cup races at Callaghan Valley BC later this month – Graham Nishikawa pulled off a victory just when he needed it most, finishing the 30 km race in just over one hour seventeen minutes, including the time taken to swap skis and poles halfway through the competition.

Racing in the Open Men’s pursuit race, which combines a 15 km classic technique race and a 15 km skate race, Nishikawa and National Ski Team member Alex Harvey tried to break away from the pack with a few hundred metres to go. “Alex made a move and I just sat in with him, figuring we’d sprint for the win. Then, with 100 metres to go, Alex slipped on the ice and I had a clear shot at the finish.”

The move left Nishikawa with a one-second victory over a hard charging Frederic Touchette and, more importantly, a berth representing Canada in the World Cup pursuit at the Whistler Olympic Park later this month. Harvey finished up in 5th place, 13 seconds back.

Nishikawa wasn’t the only Yukoner on the podium.

In the Junior Men’s 20 km race, David Greer picked up a silver medal behind Graeme Killick from the Banff Ski Runners. Greer had a good first half, but waxing problems in the classic race (he didn’t have enough kick) didn’t leave him with enough energy to stay with the race leader for the skate portion of the race and he had to settle for second place.

Other Yukoners had strong performances in the Junior Men’s category as well. Colin Abbot had a ground breaking 12th placing, while Jeff Wood, Lee Hawkings and Knute Johnsgaard, all competing with skiers 2 or more years their senior, placed well.

In the Junior Women’s 10 km pursuit, Janelle Greer continued her streak of strong performances, narrowly missing the podium with a 4th place finish, stopping the clock in 34:52, 48 seconds behind Marliss Kromm of Foothills Nordic. Greer normally competes in the Junior Girls category and her performance in this series of races is a good indicator of podium performances to come.

The last race of the series, a classic technique sprint, is scheduled for Tuesday.

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