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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Medal Splash at Nationals

The 2009 Haywood Ski Nationals started off with a splash – literally.

Temperatures in the mid-teens and heavy rain the day before the meet started had the organizers at Collingwood's Duntroon Highlands Nordic Club in southern Ontario scrambling to get a workable course as the stadium turned into a lake and pumps were brought in to keep the racers from developing webbed feet.

Still, that didn't deter over 500 skiers from across Canada and the U.S. as they went head to head in the early morning fog at the first race of the week, a team sprint race.

And Yukon skiers rose to the challenge, bringing home three medals.

First up was the duo of Lee Hawkings and Jeff Wood who pulled off a bronze medal performance in the Challenge Boys category, behind two teams from the powerhouse Nakkertok Club.

Hawkings put in a performance that could earn him a spot with Cirque de Soleil as he somehow kept his feet while skiing around a crash on one ski, the other high in the air, then motoring into the podium position.

Teams of two skiers alternated motoring around 1 km laps, each athlete completing three loops of a course that featured steep soft uphill and tight, rutted corners.

Next up was the Challenge Girls category. Dahria Beatty and Janelle Greer teamed up to produce a strong silver medal performance, with Nakkertok once again picking up the top spot on the podium.

The final medal of the day came in the Open Men's category.

David Greer and Graham Nishikawa hung in with the front pack of the elite Open Men's category as the athletes jockeyed for position on the slushy course. Then, charging into the final lap, Nishikawa turned on the afterburners and moved from fourth to second spot.

The gap was less than a metre as the hard charging Nishikawa made a dive for the line, almost stealing the day from Brent McMurtry of Foothills Nordic

Races continue on Monday with a short distance free technique race.

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