

Birchwood brings out best local skiers

By BENJAMIN RICETTO
Today staff

The annual Birchwood Classic Loppet cross-country ski race took place this past weekend at Birchwood Trail and cross-country fans of all ages and abilities were able to strap on their skis and race in some great winter weather.

The third of a five-race series, the race had plenty to offer competitors, boasting 30 kilometre, 15km and 5km races on Saturday morning.

"This event is meant to be a fun event open to anyone, and everyone and allow people to challenge themselves in something they may or may not (have) tried before," loppet coordinator Becky Fadden told Today.

"The weather this weekend has also been fantastic. We were only expecting to have six skiers in the 30km, but we ended having 17 skiers."

Course designer Mike D'Entremont skied his way to victory in the 30 km race, and said he's been competing in the Birchwood loppet for the past four years.

"This is one of the best events and activities that Fort McMurray has to offer, it gets people outside and enjoying our awesome trails," he said. "I spend November to April out here, in all weather and temperatures."

"I've skied in many places in Alberta and these narrow, exciting trails that Birchwood has to offer are my favourite place — plus we normally have the best conditions for skiing."

The Birchwood Classic Loppet, which is put on and organized by the Ptarmigan Nordic Ski Club, also offers free lessons and equipment with a



Johanna Tul, front, is tailed by Ed Salmon during the Birchwood Classic Loppet cross-country ski race held this past weekend. The race, held on Birchwood Trail, was open to any and all interested in hitting the trails on Saturday.

Photo by BENJAMIN RICETTO, Today Staff

year we have over 50 kids in this program" Fadden said.

"Adults or kids, skate or classic, Ptarmigan Nordic Ski Club has a lot to offer, so come try it out."

their membership.
and try cross-country skiing as with their membership they get to use equipment for the year for free. This

The next Ptarmigan Nordic Ski Club Loppet race is the Frozen Nose and Toes 5 km ski-5 km run race on Feb. 28. For details, visit www.ptarmigannordic.com.