

# Three Outlaws skiers race in the Western States Regionals

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Correspondent

Evan Palmer and George and Bela Chladek got an experience of a lifetime last week: the opportunity to race in the Western States High School Regional Championships held at Mammoth Mountain, California, on Friday and Saturday, March 13-14.

All three Outlaws did a great job racing in the giant slalom in the inaugural Western Regional Championships. Evan, George, and Bela were part of a team that included all the Central Oregon schools, and also Marist High from Eugene. The best racers from California, Nevada, Wyoming, and Oregon were at the high-level competitive event (24 total).

The course was set on Andy's Double Gold at Mammoth Mountain, which made for the longest giant slalom run the high school kids had seen. The long steep pitch in the second half of the course made it a very challenging race. The day started off with sunny weather for the first run, but clouds and fog moved in for the second run and made the conditions more difficult.

Evan came in 14th out of 69, George was 31st, and Bela finished in 42nd place.

Coach Gabe Chladek said, "Bela got a headwind for his run, which mattered on the flats, especially because he was one of the few freshmen to attend the race, and his smaller size was affected by the wind."

Overall, the boys team finished fourth in the giant slalom event.

The slalom race was scheduled for Saturday, but skiers woke up to heavy winds that gusted up to 104 mph on the mountain. Due to the extreme winds, the ski area was unable to operate chair lifts and the slalom race was canceled.

"This was a big disappointment as the slalom event is typically the stronger event for the Central Oregon skiers," said Chladek. "The day ended up being enjoyable and beneficial as the racers and coaches from the different teams spent the day seeing the area together and building relationships."

Chladek added, "The biggest take-home from the event was the bridge-building between teams and leagues, and I think it will set the stage for a legacy of close relationships in high

school ski racing in the western region."

All three Outlaws commented on their experience.

George said, "Skiing at the Western States Regional High School Championships was a really rewarding experience. I really liked getting to join with the best racers from the other teams in our league and race as a team against high level competition."

Evan commented, "It was an amazing experience to see our rival teams come together and compete as one against the other states. I never thought I'd be so successful in ski racing when I started my freshman year and am so thankful for everyone that helped me on my journey."

Bela, the only non-senior on the boys OSSA team from Central Oregon this year, said, "I thought it was a great experience, and I'm already looking forward to the chance to qualify for the championships next year."

Next year's Western Regional Race is tentatively scheduled for Jackson Hole, Wyoming. Chladek told *The Nugget* that the Outlaws will work hard next year to send a few racers to the big event.



PHOTO PROVIDED

Outlaws skiers performed admirably at Mammoth Mountain last weekend.

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