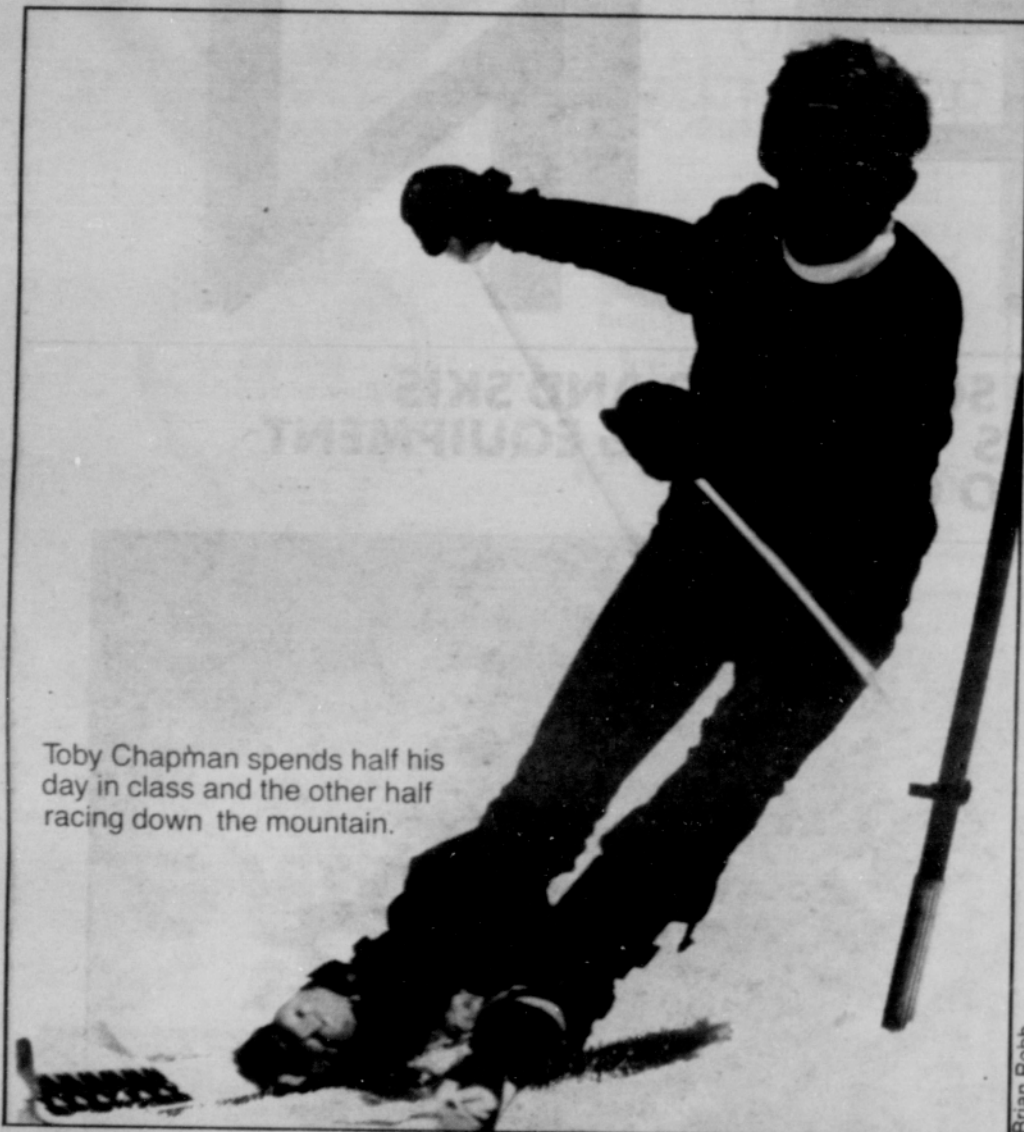


Ski Fun



Toby Chapman spends half his day in class and the other half racing down the mountain.

Academy mixes school and skis

BY BETH RASGORSHEK

Toby Chapman, 14, may have the best school year possible. He spends it skiing as a student at Oregon's Mount Hood Ski Academy.

From January to June, he goes to school on the mountain. The academy helps him keep up with school work and gives him the time to train on the slopes.

Toby, 14, spends his mornings with an academy tutor. At noon he closes the books, grabs a quick lunch and hits the slopes to practice downhill and slalom racing with his seven teammates.

"The first time I skied was when I was five. I went with my mom and dad," Toby recalls. By the time he was eight, he had won his first race. "It was my first trophy, and after that I really got into skiing and took it seriously."

He's been serious ever since. At last year's Junior Olympics he finished ninth in slalom, 20th in both giant slalom and super giant two.

Earlier this month at the Willamette Pass races, Toby finished third in the giant slalom. One of his coaches, Tom Buckner, says the five-foot-five, 100-pound skier has a future in ski racing.

The Mount Hood Ski Academy is two years old and is one of four private ski academies in the Northwest. The tuition is \$2,000 with training fees another \$1,000. Room and board is also added

on. Lift tickets also cost \$200-250 each season.

To help with expenses, Toby does odd jobs and works in the apple orchards in Hood River.

The academy is worth every nickel, says Toby. He skis 15 races during the season and doesn't miss any school, thanks to the program.

It was hard getting use to the schedule on Mount Hood, though. Toby gets assignments from Hood River High School and takes them back to the academy classroom. On Sundays and Mondays he returns home to Hood River to be with his family and work at the school's lab on physical science projects.

Before January, Toby attended school in Hood River and ran on the varsity cross country team. Running is a sport like skiing — he can always improve personal records.

Improving his racing skills is more important to Toby than being involved in a typical high school. "I like skiing everyday. It's a lot more fun this way."

The academy is not limited to only the best high school skiers. Kids who have an interest in downhill racing can get involved in the program.

Toby advises skiers interested in racing to join a team. "A ski team not only helps improve your racing skills, but will make you a better skier, too."

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