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Two Junior Medals on Day One

Media Advisory

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Copper Mtn., Colo. – Coming off its eleven medals at the 2008 Disabled Nationals ski races last spring, the Ability Ski Team from Park City's National Ability Center (NAC) has won its first two medals of the 2008/2009 season. Mikayla Briere [pronounced bree-AIR] (sit ski; Lincoln, New Hampshire) won her first gold medal. Sam Blakely (standing; Henefer, Utah) won a bronze medal. Both medals came in the junior division of the NorAm Level II Slalom races at the 21st annual Hartford Ski Spectacular at Copper Mountain, Colorado yesterday.

For Briere, this is her first year as a member of the Ability Ski Team. She spent the summer training with the National Ability Center's adaptive cycling program, wheelchair rugby program, Nordic dry-land camp, and rock climbing. The cross-training paid big dividends as Briere won the gold medal in her first race of the year.

Blakely's bronze medal was his first ever in competition. This summer, he traveled to Beijing for the Paralympic Games after winning a trip through the U.S. Paralympics' Paralympic Academy. While in Beijing, Blakely spoke with multiple national athletes about their experiences and picked up training pointers to help him in his training.

The Ability Ski Team's new head coach, Rip Priddy [prEYE-day] said, "We're proud of Sam and Mikayla for their great finishes. Sam really wanted this after missing the podium at (U.S. Disabled) Nationals last year."

Sue Greenberg, the team's new assistant head coach, said, "Mikayla was so surprised at her victory. It was fun for all of us to see her so excited, and I think it sparked some of the other (Ability Ski Team) members for the GS races."

Today the team will be competing at Copper Mountain in the Giant Slalom races.

The first chance for Utahans to see the Ability Ski Team in competition on Utah's Greatest Snow on Earth will be February 10-12 at the Huntsman Cup. Those three days of races will be held at Park City Mountain Resort.

For more information on the Ability Ski Team and other adaptive winter programs, contact Ryan Jensen by email at RyanJ@DiscoverNAC.org or by phone at 435.200.0990. You can also learn more about other adaptive recreational opportunities by visiting the National Ability Center's website at DiscoverNAC.org.