

Minnesota State High School League

Girls Nordic Skiing State Meet

Moening repeats as individual champion; Forest Lake captures team crown

Thursday, March 11, 2021

After a Girls Nordic Skiing season filled with modifications, the final result at the Minnesota State High School League's culminating event looked very familiar.

St. Paul Highland Park junior Molly Moening became the second consecutive skier to win back-to-back championships when she cruised to the individual championship during the Girls Nordic Skiing State Meet at Giants Ridge. In a setting that looked majestic with two 4-kilometer courses that were splashed with sun and fresh powder from a 7-inch snowfall overnight, Moening played the role of the top-ranked skier and favorite from the start.

She blazed through the two races in a combined time of 23 minutes, 53.4 seconds. That was 25 seconds faster than runner-up Margo Nightingale, a freshman from Mounds Park Academy. St. Paul Academy eighth-grader Inga Wing was third, and she was followed by Edina junior Margaret Wagner and Forest Lake sophomore Jordan Parent.

Moening's two runs in a condensed timeframe were mirror images of strength and speed.

She opened the day with a time of 12:42.3 in the classical race. That was 10 seconds ahead of Wagner and 14 in front of Nightingale. With about a 90-minute turnaround, Moening had a time of 11:11.1 in the freestyle race, a clocking of 11 seconds faster than Nightingale and 18 quicker than Wing. Nightingale was fifth overall in the 2020 race and Wing was 34th as a seventh-grader.

Moening follows the path of repeat championships last set by Wayzata's Mara McCollor, who won the Pursuit titles in 2018 and 2019, respectively. World phenom Jessie Diggins of Afton, who skied for Stillwater, is the last Nordic Skier to win three championships, but they weren't consecutive. She won in 2007, 2008 and 2010. Her farewell race in the 2010 state meet might be the best in event's history when she outdueled St. Paul Academy's Annie Hart, the defending champion, in the final 70 meters.

Top-ranked Forest Lake captured the team championship with 588 points to wrest the crown from St. Paul Highland Park, which won in 2020. St. Paul Highland Park had 556 points followed by Duluth East in third at 536. Wayzata was fourth with 525 and Minneapolis Washburn was fifth at 467. It is the first-ever girls Nordic Skiing championship for the Rangers. Scoring for the Rangers were sophomore Jordan Parent, senior Amelea Hauer, junior Ella Niznik and junior Annabelle Stang.

Thursday's state meet capped a season that endured changes and modifications in the midst of a COVID-19 pandemic. In addition to a late start to the season, modifications included wearing masks as part of practicing and competition, shortened courses for the state meet and no pursuit title awarded.