

I - The Western Interior Ski/Biathlon Association's Arctic Winter Games (AWG) Biathlon Selection Process

I. Arctic Winter Games Qualification Background

The Arctic Winter Games (AWG) occur on even numbered years. Team Alaska (the organizational body for AWG's athletes from Alaska) offers six spots to Western Interior Ski/Biathlon Association (WISA) athletes. Three spots are awarded to ski biathletes, and three to snowshoe biathletes. WISA uses its WISA Championships biathlon race, on odd numbered years, to determine its Arctic Winter Games qualifiers.

The financial limitation of travel in the bush makes this early qualification a necessity. This gives pre-qualified, rural athletes a full year to train for the upcoming Arctic Winter Games event. It also provides additional time for rural athletes to fundraise to cover expenses and secure a passport.

NOTE 1: In 2018 WISA received an additional two Team Alaska biathlon spots. WISA has averaged 54 racers at the qualification race series over the last six AWG cycles (dating back 12 years). Those numbers do not include the racers from regional WISA qualification races. When those numbers were added to the 2019 WISA Championships numbers, a total well over 100 rural athletes participated in the AWG process.

It is an honor for WISA to have six guaranteed spots for Team Alaska's Biathlon squad. WISA helps Team Alaska represent the entire state. WISA athletes lend ethnic and cultural diversity to Team Alaska, which is the mission and spirit of the Arctic Winter Games. Our rural and predominately native populations are proud to have the opportunity to attend AWG events.

II. WISA's AWG Participation Process

WISA has established a system whereby the two top-ranked, qualified biathlon race finishers from both the high school boys (Juniors born in 2002, 2003, 2004), and high school girls (Juniors born in 2002, 2003, 2004) have priority to earn spots on Team Alaska. The top-ranked, qualified finisher in each high school biathlon race is placed on the ski biathlon team, the second-ranked, qualified finisher is placed on the snowshoe biathlon team. Athletes who accept WISA's Team Alaska spots must meet all the criteria below to be accepted by WISA. (see Qualification Criteria)

Two Team Alaska spots have been reserved expressly for junior high (juveniles born in 2005 or

later) athletes. One spot will be for a male athlete and the other for a female athlete. One of the spots will be used for ski biathlon and the other for snowshoe biathlon. The WISA board will make the determination for which division receives which spot at the annual WISA Board of Directors meeting. This meeting occurs the night after the WISA/AWG biathlon qualification race. Strength of each division will be one determining factor. Another factor will be the availability of junior athletes (see NOTE below).

WISA Qualification Criteria for AWG

- Athletes must be from schools that are small and rural. (Athletes attending the WISA meet from large, urban areas may compete as exhibition, but are not allowed to qualify for WISA's AWG spots. Please refer to Section C for more details).
- Athletes must attend high school or middle school during the AWG's competition year, and live at the site of the team in which they qualified. The only exceptions are intra-WISA transfers, including moves to attend a residential school in Nenana or Galena.
- The WISA Board must determine that each athlete will be competitive in his or her category. These discussions are based primarily on athletes having no other major conflicting activities during the training period. (for example; students participating in high school basketball have scheduling conflicts that make participation in both sports difficult). In the case of tie votes by the board, the president will make the final decision.
- Athletes must have coaching from an on-site WISA coach. This coach not only helps with training, but aids in communication and paperwork handling between the athlete and Team Alaska. The coach vouches for, and agrees to supervise, the athlete in regards to training commitments. This person also helps the athlete secure funds for the added expenses involved in each sport.
- Athletes agree to train for the sport of skiing or snowshoeing, and develop proficiency in shooting a rifle.
- Athletes must be able to secure finances. While Team Alaska pays for some of the costs for transportation to the event site, room, board, and Team Alaska gear, the athlete is responsible for an entry fee. The athlete must pay a ski uniform fee. For skiers, there will be an additional wax fee, and for biathletes, an additional fee for ammunition.
- Athlete agrees to secure a passport for years that the games are outside of Alaska. Passports should be secured soon after accepting the WISA spot.
- In the case of biathlon, an athlete agrees to secure a competition grade biathlon rifle, and practice extensively with it throughout the year.

III. Conditional qualifications and Exceptions

As noted above, some top finishers are racers that cannot qualify due to age restrictions. Age categories are changed from one game cycle to the next. Anticipated age restrictions for the 2020 Arctic Winter Games: – Junior Division, born during the years 2002, 2003, 2004; and Juvenile Division, born in 2005, or later). For specific age requirements to upcoming games refer to the website - <http://www.teamalaska.org/>).

There have also been instances where top WISA biathlon finishers have declined the offer to represent WISA at the AWG's. In these cases, the WISA board will determine worthy representatives to fill WISA's vacant spots (see below). In the case of a tie vote by the board, the president will make the final decision. To aid the board in this decision-making process, the following rubric is used to guide the coaches in the decision-making.

1. Athlete is a lower place finisher. Finishers lower than second will be considered in order. The board must determine each prospective participant to be competitive in their respective category. These athletes must fulfill all the criteria in Number II above.
2. Top Junior High finishers who fulfill the criteria in number II can be chosen if no viable high school candidates are found.
3. Race results from regional qualifying races can also be used. Athletes from these events are considered to be on the "alternate" athletes list.

NOTE: As per tradition, Junior high (juvenile) athletes will be used to fill any unfilled High school (junior spots). This situation will influence the determination of which Junior High gender gets the ski spot. For example, in 2010, the top female junior declined the position to concentrate on basketball (she later became the top scorer on the National Championship runner-up UAA Seawolves basketball squad). The second ranked female was a graduating senior. The third ranked female accepted the Junior Ski Biathlon position. But, there were no other junior female athletes willing to make the commitment for the Snowshoe Biathlon spot. This position was then offered to, and accepted by, the top Junior High female.

If the above situation was to occur again, WISA would keep the balance of spots by having the WISA junior high female division use one ski biathlon spot and one snowshoe biathlon spot. The male junior high male division would then receive a snowshoe spot.

J - The Western Interior Ski/Biathlon Association's Arctic Winter Games (AWG) Selection Process: Cross-Country Skiing

WISA has established a system whereby the top cross country ski race finishers (one from the high school boys, and one from the high school girls) can earn spots on Team Alaska's Cross Country Ski Team. Athletes who accept WISA's Team Alaska spots must also meet all the base criteria (see bullets for AWG Biathlon Selection).

The board will determine worthy representatives to fill WISA's vacant cross-country spots. In the case of tie votes by the board, the president will make the final decision. To aid the board in this

decision-making process it will consider race results, a participant's ability to meet base criteria, and coaches input.

In some cases, a skier that is not a ski race winner will be considered for the Team Alaska spot. In these cases, the following rubric is used to guide the board in the decision-making.

1. Athlete is a lower place finisher. Finishers lower than second will be considered in order. The board, must determine a prospective participant to be highly competitive and competent in their respective category. These athletes must fulfill all the base criteria.
2. Athletes must agree to further their proficiency in both the skating and classic techniques.
3. Top Junior High finishers are chosen who fulfill the criteria in number II if no viable high school candidates are found.

Team Alaska Categories for Cross Country Skiing: The team consists of 24 skiers, plus three coaches. The athlete pools consist of 4 Junior Boys, 4 Junior Girls, 4 Juvenile Boys, 4 Juvenile Girls, 4 Midget Boys, 4 Midget Girls.

Age categories are changed from one game cycle to the next. Juniors, born in 2002 or 2003: Juveniles, born in 2004 or 2005: Midgets, born in 2006 or 2007

For specific age requirements to upcoming games refer to the website – <http://www.teamalaska.org/>.

K - The Western Interior Ski/Biathlon Association's Arctic Winter Games (AWG) Selection Process: Contingency Plan

In case the WISA Championships are not run due to weather, or other unforeseen circumstances, the WISA Board of Directors will meet via tele-conference call to determine the six WISA spots for the upcoming Arctic Winter Games.

Item's used in the determination will include this season's race results, last seasons' race results,

and coaches' recommendations.