

RITE NOW @ ROP



Crossing Country; Breaking Boundaries

Ridge View Academy coach, mentor, and 36-year veteran Greg Townsend was recently featured on FasterSkier.com; his interview with Rachel Perkins canvassed his unique path to putting RAMS on skinny skis, as well as the positive impact Nordic skiing has on youth outlook and attitude. Nordic skiing-also known as cross-country ski racing-is a fiercely competitive mountain sport that usually caters to a somewhat homogeneous and privileged demographic. But in Colorado, Ridge View Academy RAMS under Coach Townsend are expanding the borders and defying the normative expectations of this once-restrictive sport. In fact, they're already leveling the playing field: multiple RAMS have placed in the top ten during intimidating statewide qualifying races, which span up to 30 kilometers and frequently feature young Olympic hopefuls.

After a career of bicycle racing, Coach Townsend spent a season as a paramedic at a Japanese Nordic ski resort. For him, it was a complete eye-opener, offering him key insight into the siren call of the open track. Townsend realized that, although the sport often caters to merciless training and brutal high-altitude feats of sheer hypoxic endurance, a racer's true grit comes from being able to let go and allow the track take them to a positive, self-affirming headspace. "Our guys learn how not to quit," says Townsend; "Underdog is probably a standard."

That determined presence at organized cross-country ski races is actively changing the way other members of the sport-and Coloradans as a whole-regard ROP youth, enabling them to see that "Our kids...don't necessarily have the same choices; but they do have the same ability as anyone else; they just have to believe it themselves." And Coach Townsend is helping them accomplish exactly that, every day. You can learn more at: <https://fasterskier.com/2020/10/opportunity-and-transformation-wi-th-greg-townsend-of-ridge-view-academy/>.
