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## Skier races despite deadly illness

### Sarah Yourman isn't letting lethal lung condition stop her at NASTAR

By Brett Larsen, Of the Record Staff

Sarah Yourman doesn't look or act like a girl suffering from a deadly illness. Just one of the more than 1,000 skiers racing in this weekend's NASTAR

championships at Park City Mountain Resort, the 14-year-old from Fair Lawn, N.J. wore a bright smile and a gaudy, pink disco outfit to a retro party at the resort Thursday afternoon.

Diagnosed with cystic fibrosis when she was a baby and diabetes when she was eight, Yourman has made extreme sports as much a part of her routine as trips to the hospital, physical therapy or insulin boosts.

According to her mom, making the best of a bad situation is what it's all about.

"She's taking a very, very positive attitude. I've never heard, 'Why me?'" says Lisa Yourman. "Her mind is, 'I'm going to be a normal kid. Nothing's going to stop me from being normal.'"



Sarah Yourman is running slalom this weekend in spite of her health problems.

To that end, Yourman has dabbled in everything from alpine and freestyle skiing, gymnastics, swimming, bicycle riding to running despite the fact that her lungs are steadily deteriorating year-by-year.

Cystic fibrosis is a lethal, genetic disease that causes progressive loss of lung function, as well as hampering production of digestive juices in the pancreas.

Although modern medicine has increased the life expectancy of those suffering from it the median survival rate is 30 years there is no known cure.

As a result, Yourman takes nearly 60 pills per day to build up pancreatic enzymes, inhales six different aerosolized medicines (similar to those taken through an asthma inhaler), receives more than an hour of physical therapy and wears an insulin pump 24 hours a day.

Instead of taking a gloomy outlook on the future, though, Yourman is doing her best to enjoy the life she has.

"She's on the fast track. Realistically, she's living at a faster pace," says Lisa Yourman. "It's just so remarkable that she's doing all the things that normal kids do."



In fact, with all the high-performance activities that she is involved in, Yourman has experienced things that her peers in perfect health have never experienced.

Since she first stepped onto a pair of skis at two-years-old, Yourman has made the sport her No. 1 passion. As a skier for the Mount Snow Freestyle Team in Vermont, she has excelled in aerials, moguls and racing. Before coming to Park City for NASTAR, where she is running slalom in the 13-14-year-old recreational division, she took first place in a field of 54 racers at an event in her home state.

Eventually, she hopes to ski in the Winter Olympics.

"We support that," Lisa Yourman says of her daughter's Olympic dream. "The sky's the limit, basically."

Yourman also gets support from her 11-year-old brother Jeffrey, who also has cystic fibrosis but has followed his big sister's lead in taking to the slopes. While Sarah has established herself as a strong skier, Jeffrey is developing as a snowboarder.

"They're the typical brother/sister relationship," says Lisa Yourman. "They help support each other. He's learned a lot from her."

Lisa Yourman added that both kids are good examples for other people suffering from chronic illnesses.

"Whatever disability you may have, you can do whatever you want to do," she says. "Don't lock yourself in the closet and feel sorry for yourself."

As for Yourman, she is concentrating on having a good time in Park City. Before joining in the retro festivities at PCMR's Legacy Lodge on Thursday, she sums up her mission.

"I want to keep on doing this because it's really fun," she says. If you don't have fun, she adds, you're doing something wrong.

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