

McIvor gets peace-of-mind news

With a spot guaranteed on the world stage, she has a shot at a sponsor for her headgear

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Ski cross racer Ashleigh McIvor earned some peace of mind by getting provisionally nominated last week to the 2010 Olympic team. And it might just help the bubbly blonde Whistler native earn something else -- a headgear sponsor.

"That's huge, if you're guaranteed to be on the world stage like that, it's pretty valuable," said McIvor, 25, of the ability to tell potential sponsors she'll be competing on "the best course in the world" at Cypress next February. She's already spoken to a few different companies that have some intriguing ideas.



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McIvor is one of three Canadian freestyle athletes -- 2006 Olympic moguls champion Jenn Heil and multiple-time World Cup champion aerialist Steve Omischl are the others -- to earn 2010 spots during the past season under the Canadian Freestyle Ski Association's Method A criteria. One athlete from each discipline was selected based on their best two results from three high-pressure competitions.

For ski cross, it was the World Cup at Cypress and world championships in Japan, both in February, and last week's World Cup Finals in La Plagne, France.

McIvor had a shaky start to the season, finishing 30th and 29th in the opening two World Cups in January. Her head, the free-spirited powder hound said Thursday, just wasn't into it.

"It's always been a struggle for me trying to find a balance between competing, racing hard-core, and the free-skiing for fun."

She quickly got motivated and "just started really enjoying my teammates. Soon as I started having fun, I started skiing well."

She made the podium three of the next five World Cups, including a second at Cypress, then won at worlds. At La Plagne, where she was ninth, Aleisha Cline,

who won at Cypress, and Chris Del Bosco, first at Cypress and fourth at worlds, needed wins to beat her out for the 2010 spot.

"My coach was kind of joking that I'd go out of the start and ski right to my lawn chair and start throwing snowballs at Chris and Aleisha."

Cline was fifth, Del Bosco eighth, and McIvor was in.

"It's pretty spectacular. There's so much pressure off me. I had so much fun this year. Amazing. I'm already looking forward to next season, which is something I couldn't say before, ever."

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