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# Alumni Profiles

## THROUGH THE GATES

*James Thoman '02 repeats as national skiing champ*

James C. Thoman '02 is going downhill fast – and he has the trophies to prove it.

Thoman, who practices bankruptcy and corporate law with the Syracuse, N.Y., law firm Menter, Rudin & Trivelpiece, in March '07 won the United States Ski Association's Class 1 masters skiing championship in Big Sky, Mont. Competing against "a dozen or so" skiers in his age group, 20 to 29, he won all three of the competition's events to take the overall title.

It was the second year in a row that he has won the age-group title. "Last year it was much more of a struggle," he says. "I didn't sweep all three events. This one, I beat up on the other guys pretty good.

"It was a really great trip," he says. "I went out there with a couple of guys I race with in the New York masters series. It was basically my spring break. We went out a day early and got to ski 5,000 vertical feet instead of 500. And you get to compare yourself with some of the best skiers in the country."

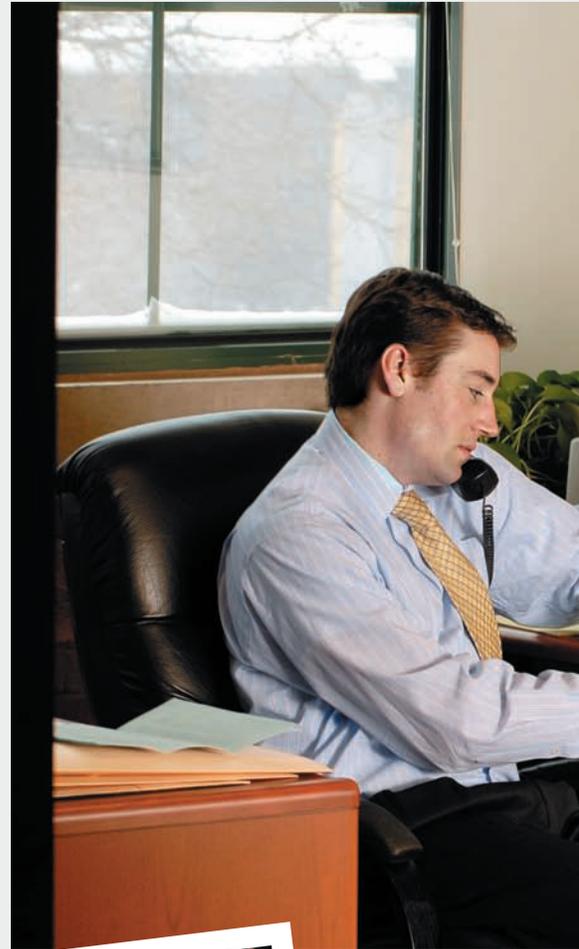
Thoman has been skiing since he was knee-high to a mogul. He grew up across the street from Western New York's best-known ski area, Kissing Bridge, was on the slopes at age 4 and was racing by 10. "Some friends of my family had a daughter who was into ski racing, and they talked my parents into letting me do it," he says. "That way I could ski real fast and not terrify my mother." He raced with Kissing Bridge's travel team throughout the state, and kept skiing through his undergraduate years at the State University of New York at Geneseo.

At UB Law, he says, he got involved with

some adult racing leagues and a "beer league" at Kissing Bridge, skiing Tuesday and Thursday nights throughout the season and coaching at another ski area, Holimont, on weekends.

Now, as a masters skier, he is joined by athletes from 21 to "guys in their 90s." "If you are not on a developmental team and you are done racing in college, if you want to keep going, masters is what you do," he says.

The competition is in three disciplines: the slalom, in which the skier negotiates tight turns while threading through "one gate per second, or even less"; the giant slalom, with slightly bigger turns but at faster speeds; and the super G, with lots of space between gates but at speeds approaching 70 miles per hour. Points are awarded for one's performance in each



James C. Thoman '02 on the slopes and in his office.





event, and these points determine the overall champion.

To qualify for the national championships, Thoman competed in the New York Masters Skiing league, a series of races from January to March. He won that series in 2006 and tied for second in 2007 among all age groups.

He also says Menter, Rudin & Trivel-piece has been supportive. "They did a little blurb on our Web site about it. They basically view it as, if not directly a marketing opportunity, one more thing to get my name and the firm's name out there. They are very encouraging."

And working in a somewhat less demanding environment, he says, is important to him. "That is the beauty of working in upstate New York," he says. "You are not

stuck in your office until 9 at night. My quality of life is much greater because I have something like this in my life and the time to enjoy it. I would not want to have a job where I could not do this."

During the off-season he stays in shape, and he gets serious about strength training in the fall to prepare for the ski season. But the course ahead could be tricky: This year Thoman will be 30, and competing against a whole new class of highly experienced skiers.

Nevertheless, Thoman says, the rush is still there. "I have no interest in just going skiing," he says. "It bores me. But when you set up a course and train to race a race, it becomes exciting again. It is a challenge. Even on a 30-second hill, when you have a race course set up, it is exciting."

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*—James Thoman '02*

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