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Olympic Insider  
by Alan Abrahamson

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## [Missing: Nepali junior alpine ski racer](#)

MILAN, Italy — This past February, at the alpine ski world championships in Val d'Isere, France, the aspirations of the Nepali ski team emerged as one of the stories to watch in advance of next year's Winter Olympics in Vancouver.

The International Olympic Committee likes to promote what it calls "universality," or participation in a given sport by competitors from as many nations as possible from around the world. Here was such an example: Nepal is of course dominated by the Himalayan mountains. But it lacks the alpine ski tradition of other nations. And its resource-poor Olympic committee has, in recent years, been marked by instability.

Even so, here were a handful of Nepali skiers, under the guidance of an Englishman living in the French Alps, Richard Morley, hurtling down the mountain on donated or borrowed equipment, aiming for the Games. That the finishing times of two of the Nepali finishers in the senior men's giant slalom qualification race in Val d'Isere were creeping up toward a minute behind the leaders — in a sport in which hundredths of a second matter — was hardly the point. The point was, the Nepalis were out there trying.

Now comes word of a bizarre twist in the story.

Morley sent an e-mail Thursday that said junior racer Uttam Rayamajhi, who in February was 16 — the ages of Nepali competitors are never quite precise — has disappeared "under great distress," adding that "we all greatly fear for his safety."

Morley is Uttam's legal guardian, and said in the note that French police in Bourg St. Maurice, the regional center near Val d'Isere, suggested "media attention for the safety of the boy."

Morley has for several months been engaged in efforts to resolve a funding dispute with, among others, the Nepali Olympic Committee, the team in recent days facing "distintegration after years of work and sacrifice," the release also said.

The press release said Uttam, missing since Monday from the team's base in the French Alps, disappeared the day after attending a Jehovah's Witness meeting. He vanished during a heavy rainstorm. He had "no money," his French language skills were described as "minimal" and he had with him "very little clothing."

The e-mail note accompanying that press release, meanwhile, also said Uttam "is highly vulnerable to self-harm or immersion into the underworld in order to survive," adding again without explanation that the teen's most likely location is Paris "although he could be anywhere in Europe."

It also said, again without further elaboration, "The whole team is extremely distressed by his disappearance and the events that led to it."

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