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Jefferson City, MO
 Today's Forecast [WX.com](#)
 HI: 56 °F / 13 °C
 LO: 46 °F / 8 °C
 Wednesday March 24, 2004
 Temp : 53 °F / 12 °C
 Humidity : 63%
 Barometer : 30.06
 Wind : 13 from the E

From Missouri's Capital City.

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Tuesday, March 23, 2004

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Posted: Monday, Mar 22, 2004 - 06:29:46 pm CST

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Jefferson City native killed in Colorado avalanche

By News Tribune staff and The Associated Press

CHAFFEE COUNTY, Colo. -- Jefferson City native Kyle Fitzpatrick, 22, died in an avalanche Saturday while descending the west face of La Plata Peak in central Colorado.

His body was recovered late Sunday morning, buried in six feet of snow, the Chaffee County Sheriff's office reported.

A news release said a search dog from Crested Butte picked up the scent after rescue teams began their search after daybreak Sunday.

Officials said they're continuing to investigate the cause of the Saturday afternoon avalanche. But they think the climbing party itself may have triggered the snowslide.



Avalanche victim Kyle Fitzpatrick

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Climber Joel Sabersma was partially buried in the snow, and was rescued by David Bennett, the third man in the party. All three men lived in Colorado Springs.

Bennett, who wasn't hurt, and Sabersma spent several hours trying to find Kirkpatrick, before hiking out from the mountain and reporting him missing about 10 p.m. Saturday.

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Sabersma later was treated for injuries at a Leadville, Colo., hospital.

Fitzpatrick, son of Craig and Kay Fitzpatrick, graduated from Jefferson City High School in 1999, and from Southwest Missouri State University, Springfield, last year.

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Two summers spent in Colorado fueled his desire to move there, said Paul Roberts, a family friend.

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Fitzpatrick was a four-year letter winner in both cross country and track at the high school, said Coach Jim Marshall. He was a district champion and was named to all-state teams in both sports.

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"I've coached 23 years, and he was one of the best I've ever been around," Marshall recalled, "as far as the total person, athlete and student -- just a super kid."

Marshall said Fitzpatrick loved the outdoors.

"When he wasn't running, he was biking or climbing or doing something like that," he said.

Fitzpatrick had planned to be married in Colorado on April 3.

A visitation will be held from 5-7 p.m. Thursday at Grace Evangelical

Church, 3011 South Ten Mile Dr.

A funeral service is planned for Friday morning, but details have not been finalized.

Denver's Rocky Mountain News said La Plata Peak is 14,361-feet tall.

The Denver Post newspaper said the avalanche was about 660 feet wide and 1,650 feet long.

The Colorado Avalanche Information Center said it had reports of about 50 avalanches Saturday.

"We're in the middle of a pretty good wet slide cycle," said CAIC forecaster Scott Toepfer. "That means early in the morning when snowpack is frozen, it's pretty stable. But as the sun comes up and temperatures increase, avalanche danger rises accordingly."

Toepfer said temperatures in the mountains were getting into the 50s, which he called unheard of for March.

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