

O-zine

International Orienteering Federation

On-line Newsletter

Issue 4 – December 2007



PHOTO: ERIK BORG

Helene Söderlund had an amazing Junior World Ski Orienteering Championship last season with four medals. This season the young Swede has started her first year in the senior class remarkably well with second place in the first World Cup race in Idre in Sweden.

BY ERIK BORG

Helene Söderlund is only in her fourth season of ski orienteering. She is still only 20 years old. She felt as though she was a

kind of underdog at the start of the World Cup, but her first result showed that she is already one of the best in the world.

– It's incredible fun to be among the best in

What a start for Helene

the world. I didn't have any expectations of achieving a result like that at all, says Helene. Only the Finnish veteran Liisa Anttila beat her in the first race in this winter's World Cup. This middle distance race with mass start was in Idre in the middle of Sweden, close to Norway.

– The orienteering went so well. I made no mistakes at all and I skied well, says Helene.

The first race was a really good day for the home nation with three podium places. Petter Arnesson won in front of Erik Rost in the men's class. The Russians didn't do so well as in the World Championships on home ground last winter with “only” two podium places, third places to both Kirill Veselov and Olga Shevchenko.

Very unexpected

Last winter Helene Söderlund was in the winning relay team at the Junior World Ski Orienteering Championships in Austria, and took two silver medals and a bronze medal as an individual.

In this issue: What a start for Helene; Anttila and Arnesson lead World Cup standings; Ski Orienteering World Cup 2008 Scoring System; Julian is on his way to the top; Hans Gunnar hopes and believes; Roberta has a foot in everything!; It started with an injury.

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Season's Greetings and Good Wishes for the New Year 2008!

BARBRO RÖNNBERG
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Anttila and Arnesson lead World Cup standings

BY CLIVE ALLEN

At the end of the first round of this season's World Cup in Ski Orienteering, Liisa Anttila, Finland and Peter Arnesson, Sweden head the individual standings.

Liisa Anttila, with a first and a second place in the first two races, has a ten point lead over Russia's Tatiana Kozlova in the women's standings. Third position is held by another Finn, Hannele Valkonen. Peter Arnesson has maximum points after two good victories on home terrain, giving him a lead of 42 points over Kiril Veselov, Russia. Erik Rost, Sweden is in third place in the men's standings.

The World Cup resumes with a sprint race on 15th January. This is the first of three individual races and a relay which make up the second round at S-chanf, Switzerland.

Ski Orienteering World Cup 2008 Scoring System

In the Individual World Cup, each competitor's total score is the sum of his/her 9 best points scores out of 11 World Cup events. If, for some reason, the result of a competition does not count for the overall ranking, the number of results to count for the total score shall be decreased by one.

1. The 35 best competitors in each class shall obtain points as follows: 60, 50, 45, 40, 36, 33, 30, 28, 27, 26, 25, 24, 23, 22, 21, 20, 19, 18, 17, 16, 15, 14, 13, 12, 11, 10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1.

2. If two or more competitors share a place in a competition, they all receive the higher point score.

3. In the case of an equal total score for two or more competitors, the best single score decides, then the second best, the third best, the fourth best, the fifth best, the sixth best, the seventh best and then the eighth best. If they are still equal, the placing in the last competition of the World Cup season is decisive, even if it is not among the 9 best results.

4. In the Relay World Cup each Federation's total score in each class is the sum of its points scores in all relay competitions.

5. The 15 best teams in each class shall obtain points as follows: 20, 17, 15, 13, 11, 10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1. For the allocation of points, only the better-placed team from each Federation shall be considered.

6. If two or more teams have the same placing, they shall all receive the higher point score.

7. In the Relay World Cup, in the case of an equal total score for two or more Federations, the best single score decides. If they are still equal, the placing in the last event is decisive.

8. A Federation's total score is independent of which competitors make up its better placed (counting) team for each competition. In the prize-giving ceremony for the over-all Relay World Cup, a Federation may be represented by all competitors having skied in at least one of its counting



**Orienteering
WORLD CUP**
SKI ORIENTEERING

11 Dec	SWE	Event 1	Middle	15 Feb	BUL	Event 9	Long
13 Dec	SWE	Event 2	Long	17 Feb	BUL	Event 10	Middle
14 Dec	SWE	Event 3	Relay	18 Feb	BUL	Event 11	Relay
15 Jan	SUI	Event 4	Sprint	6 Mar	KAZ	Event 12	Sprint
16 Jan	SUI	Event 5	Long	7 Mar	KAZ	Event 13	Long
18 Jan	SUI	Event 6	Middle	9 Mar	KAZ	Event 14	Middle
19 Jan	SUI	Event 7	Relay	10 Mar	KAZ	Event 15	Relay
14 Feb	BUL	Event 8	Sprint				

– That championship showed me that I can do well and gave me self-confidence, but at the start of the World Cup I felt I was a kind of underdog, says Helene.

She is of course still very young and this year is her first among the seniors, but her autumn hasn't been the best.

– Until a few days before the first race in the World Cup I didn't really know if I could take part at all, because I had problems with my stomach. I have had these for a long time, but I had trained very well before the problems came in the autumn. Now my stomach feels much better, so I hope the problems are over, she says.

How does this second place compare to your great results at the Junior World Championships earlier this year?

– I have been thinking a bit about what's the biggest. My answer is that this second place is very big like the results at Junior World Championships, she says.

Sport full time

Helene started studying in the Swedish city Borlänge in the beginning of the autumn, but she has now dropped her studies.

– I found I wasn't so keen on the subjects, she says. Now she is ski orienteering and cross-country skiing in the same way as a professional.

– To start with it was wonderful to concentrate only on sport, but in fact I think it can be good to have something else in daily life, she says. She's looking for a job and is also thinking about starting studies again in a few months' time.

This season is only Helene's fourth season in ski orienteering. She isn't planning to take part in too many races, but already from the beginning she has done very well. In her first season she took part in Junior Worlds in S-chanf in Switzerland and took a medal at the relay. Now she hopes she can go back there.

– The World Cup including the European Championships is my main goal for the winter in ski orienteering. I hope can take part there.

Julian is on his way to the top

BY ERIK BORG

Julian Dent did very well at junior level in foot orienteering world championships. Now the Australian is ready to take a new step forward.

– My goal for orienteering: I want to enjoy racing and continue orienteering at World Championships and top-level European races. My aim is to be placed consistently in the top 10 in the world, says Julian. The 22-year-old talent was 22nd in the middle distance at the 2005 World Championships in Japan. He finished in just the same position in the sprint in Ukraine this year. In the Junior World Orienteering Championships in 2004 he was fourth in the long distance event.

– It's tough racing at the senior level. There is a lot of depth, especially at the current time, such as at the World Championships in Ukraine with many emerging Eastern European orienteers. This is great for the sport, but you just have to train harder, he says.

Break from competition

Just as in Europe, there are few competitions in Australia at this time of the year. There is a break from October till March.

– But we have some "fun" races in the summer which are great for training, and even better when we get some Europeans racing here as well. I think it's important to be fresh coming to race at the World Championships, so I try not to race too much at the start of the orienteering season in Australia, in order to keep the mind fresh for the big races later in the year.

What are you doing to reach your goals?

– At the moment, over the Australian summer, it's a great time to do lots of training. I'm just trying to build up the kilometres, and build on this year's results at the World Championships. At the moment I'm working part-time at "The Runners Shop", but it's only a few hours a week so there is plenty of time for training! I have just finished my University degree in International Relations. Now I am looking to train as a teacher, he says.



Julian Dent is working hard to be among the very best in the world.

PHOTO: ERIK BORG

The Aussie is thinking about going to Sweden for a longer period. Just now he isn't sure about where he will be in the coming months.

– I have a great club in Sweden, Malungs OK, which has been really supportive. So I'd love to live in Sweden and race the orienteering season, but I also have a really good opportunity to continue studying in Australia for a couple more years, so it is a tough decision. But one day soon, for sure, I will live in Sweden for some time to run in all the big races with Malungs OK.

Course planner at the Junior Worlds

Julian hasn't only done well in racing

this year; he has also done some excellent organising work. He was course planner at the long distance at the Junior World Orienteering Championships in Dubbo in Australia in July. Julian had a lot of work to do in advance.

– It was great to be course planner. I spent a lot of hours out in the terrain. I ran the courses and tested route choices. It was awesome to design an arena and see it all come together on the day. For such a big event to be held in Australia, it was important to showcase the sport in the right way! Also it was great to see what times the winners did, after I had run the course about 20 times, he says.



PHOTO: ERIK BORG.

Hans Gunnar Omdal won his first Norwegian championship in 2004. Bjørn R. Berntsen, President of the Norwegian Orienteering Federation is seen cheering as Hans Gunnar comes into the finish.

Hans Gunnar hopes and believes

BY ERIK BORG

Hans Gunnar Omdal is still dreaming of becoming the best orienteer in the world, but first and foremost, the Norwegian would like life to get back to normal.

– I look forward to being able to run in the forest without being afraid of being completely knocked out the next day. Being outdoors and in good shape is a great feeling, says Hans Gunnar.

The 30-year-old from Vennesla, near Kristiansand, in the southern part of Norway came ninth in the long distance event at the World Championships in Sweden in 2004. He also participated in the World Championships in Denmark, where he ran the long distance and the relay. This year he has been on the Norwegian elite team but he has not participated in any of the team activities.

– I still hope that I can make it to the absolute top, but I have decided to take time to build up my physical strength without thinking so much about being able to

again run fast in the forest. I don't want to become mentally stressed by thinking that I must get back to the top again. My goal is to be able to live a normal and meaningful life. If everything goes well, it will be possible to again focus upon sporting goals. In another year I may be able to see if I can go for the World Championships in 2009 or 2010 or if I have to give up my dream of becoming a World Champion in orienteering, says Hans Gunnar.

Several set-backs

Hans Gunnar has been one of the best orienteers in Norway for many years, but on two occasions he has been forced to take a long break. In 2005 he missed the entire season as a result of chronic fatigue syndrome. For many months his only goal was to become well enough to participate in the moose hunt in the autumn, which he managed.

A couple of months after the 2006 World Championships in Denmark he faced a new set-back. He then slowly recovered and was able to run a few orienteering events in 2007 and was also able to experience

quite a number of pleasant days of hunting before he became ill again. Similarly to the previous year, he suffered a severe reaction as a result of a vaccination. Now he can again walk short distances.

– I have learnt that it is important to take only small steps at a time. If I train too hard on days when I feel well, I may be completely exhausted the day after, he says.

For a few years, Hans Gunnar has been working part-time as a teacher. At first he worked half time in order to concentrate on his sporting career but for quite some time now he hasn't been able to increase his workload.

Not the most important

Hans Gunnar has been set on having a successful sporting career. Now, it is not the most important thing in life.

– Sport is not everything. The most important thing for me is my faith. I believe in an almighty God who can do everything and it happens that I ask myself why doesn't he allow me to recover completely, says the 30-year-old.

He belongs to a free church in his home town of Vennesla.

– I attend a service about every other week. My friends in my home town are Christians, he says.

Good helpers

The Norwegian has good helpers on his way to recovery. He has a regular dialogue with the two Norwegian sports legends Peer H. Staff (father to Hanne Staff) and Thor-Øistein Endsjø.

– They managed to get me back to the top the first time. They give me good advice and tell me what I can and should do, he says.

Anders Gärderud, the Swedish Olympic Champion, and Jarle Ausland, coach of the Norwegian national team till the end of this season, both give him guidance on physical training and orienteering technique.

– Right now I don't need so much advice from them but they are willing to help me further when I get going again, says Hans Gunnar.

Roberta has a foot in everything!

BY ERIK BORG

Roberta Falda is not only the first-ever female world champion in trail orienteering; she is a very keen organiser too. Her coach also won a gold medal in Ukraine.

– I'd like to improve trail orienteering in Italy, organize good events and create a team of paralympic athletes and help prepare them for competitions. It could be very nice to be the coach for athletes who win a medal, but I also want to win again myself, smiles Roberta.

How do you think trail orienteering can grow and what do you think of the future for the sport?

– I think there is a lot of work to be done to promote this sport, but at the same time I think we can meet all the challenges with success. Trail orienteering is the only sport in which people with disabilities can compete against each other at the same level. That's great and unique! It's also great for people who work in promoting and developing this sport! Trail orienteering provides good opportunities, it's important to be able to recognise them.

Her very good adviser

The 35-year-old Italian won the paralympic class in Ukraine as the first female winner in trail orienteering ever.

– It's so strange to be a World Champion. The months after Ukraine have been great, smiles the Italian.

What is the secret of your success?

– I enjoy it very, very much! I also did a lot of training to prepare myself for the world championships. I was in Sweden to train before going to Ukraine. It was difficult there, but very useful. At the same time I have a great coach in Krešo (Keresteš), who became the champion in the open class. It was great, both of us winning at the same championships. I call him my coach because he helps me very often, but first of all we are friends, she says.

The two champions met about two years ago and have become good friends.



Roberta Falda and Krešo Keresteš, just after they both became world champions.

– We met in Slovenia during a competition. Since then we have often competed in the same events in Slovenia and in Italy. When I was in Sweden and took part in the Nordic Trail Orienteering Match, I was together with the Slovenian team, she says. They are also often in contact when there are no competitions.

– Last year Kreso and his wife Anja were in Trento here in Italy and took part in a competition where I was the course planner. They spent the night at my house before we left together for a competition in Slovenia the next morning, she says.

The two world champions also have ideas about organising an Italian-Slovenian multi-day event some time in the future.

Started as a foot orienteer

Roberta has only participated in trail orienteering for three years, but she is a very experienced foot orienteer. She started orienteering when she was 11 years old.

– I ran in foot orienteering races for a long time, but after an accident some years ago I was not able to run any more. Then I became only an organiser of events. In 2005 I had the opportunity to try trail orienteering, and I've found it very, very interesting. Now I much prefer trail orienteering.

How do you train for trail orienteering during the winter?

– At this time of year I have some rest! I'm currently preparing a course-planning guide for Italians. But training during winter is more or less the same as in summer – going into the forest and studying maps and terrain, she says.

Eight years in federation

Until February this year Roberta was working for the Italian orienteering federation.

– I was there as a secretary for 8 years. Now I work as a secretary in a "normal" office, she says.

PHOTO: PRIVATE



Michaela Gigon suffered an ankle injury and changed from foot orienteering to mountain bike orienteering. Now is she a queen of the bike.

It started with an injury

BY ERIK BORG

A problem with her right ankle made Michaela Gigon change to mountain bike orienteering as her main sport. Now the Austrian has won gold in world championships for four years in a row, and is heading for more.

– It's great to get gold. I could just go on like that forever. It stops me from having to work in a normal job, where I would have no time for lots of training camps and races in interesting countries, says Michaela.

The Austrian tried bike orienteering for the first time in 1990 at "Wiener Rad-OL" which was rather a fun-event at that time. She liked it, but 11 years went by before she started to take bike orienteering seriously.

– The reason for the final change from foot

orienteering to MTB orienteering was a cartilage problem in my right ankle. My doctor told me that I should stop running on uneven ground in the forest. So the choice was either running on the road, which is boring, or doing completely something else. It was a bit like doing either MTB orienteering or nothing, she says.

The 30-year-old athlete is doing really well at the big events, becoming world champion every year since 2004. Before 2000 she didn't even know that MTB orienteering existed as a serious sport. She has made remarkable progress.

– I think the 10 years of foot orienteering that I did before MTB orienteering are a very good base. I have always been a better orienteer than a runner because I never liked running very much. Michael Prehlsler, who ran the coach education course in 2000, asked me if he could be my

coach to practise his new knowledge. We did lots of training together and he taught me how to ride a bike on tricky tracks. As I found that kind of training much more fun, I trained more than before. Clearly, training helps! I also take part in many races in many different areas to gain more experience.

Used her brother's bike

She got some good MTB orienteering results in Austria in 2000 on her brother's bike, and these results were good enough to enable her to compete in some MTB orienteering World Cup races. She was then near the bottom of the results lists.

– I started seriously with MTB orienteering in the spring of 2001 after buying my own bike. Michael Prehlsler took me to several bike shops in Vienna and I said: "I

have 20000 shillings (=about 1500€) and I need a bike". My coach then used a lot of technical terms like: "XT, V-brakes, hard tail, full suspension, gripshift," to explain what I wanted. I had no idea what he was talking about but at the third shop I bought a mountain bike, she says.

The army girl

Michaela works in the army.

– I am in the lucky situation that I am employed as a professional mountain bike orienteer. My job is to train hard and win medals at World and European Championships. Up to now that has worked quite well, she smiles.

When she's at home in Vienna she arrives in the army barracks at 07.30. Every Monday morning she explains how she plans to train for the rest of the week. After breakfast she goes to the university, only ten minutes away; she finishes at university at 10 o'clock. The rest of the day is free for training.

How is it to be a MTB orienteering star in Austria?

– Quite a few people who are involved in sport in Austria seem to know me now. I just never know if I ought to be able to recognise them or if I have never met them before. Apart from that, most Austrians have never even heard of MTBO.

Close to everything

Even though Michaela lives in a city with a population of 1 million, it is a perfect place for bike orienteering.

– Vienna is probably one of the best places in the world for training MTB orienteering, she says. It's possible to have flat rides without any motorised traffic beside the Donau. There are also hills that are not especially high, up to 350 metres height difference, but they are quite steep and perfect for technical riding.

– The Czech Republic is also very close and that's important. There the best MTB orienteering races in the world are held. The maps are always good and they have lots of high-class competitors. Only the best 25 women and 50 men are allowed to start in the Elite classes - and there are lots of others who would like to. If

you can win a Czech Cup race you can also win the World Championships, she says.

On the map MTB orienteering doesn't always look that difficult, but with the high cycling speed it gets very challenging.

– For foot orienteers the MTB orienteering courses may look easy at first sight. But on a bike you reach much higher speeds than when running, and reading the map is often not possible while you are riding. So you have to memorise a lot of the course, which makes it more difficult than it seems, Michaela says.

Against her doctor's advice

Even though her doctor said she had to stop orienteering on foot, she is still doing that sport at a high level. In 2007 she won three Austrian championships: long, middle and night. Her best international result is 10th place at long distance in the World University Championships in Plzen in the Czech Republic in 2004. Her best World Orienteering Championship result is 41st place at the middle distance in Scotland in 1999. She also took part in the World Orienteering Championships in 1997 and 2006. She also goes cross-country skiing, ski touring,

ice skating and snowboarding.

– My coach said that I should train on a bike at least once a week so that I don't forget what it's like. I don't do any training on an ergo meter. I prefer to ride my bike outside at –5°C than ride on an ergo meter, she says.

At this time of year she normally does one long endurance run as training, or a shorter one plus strength training.

More studies

She finished her studies in Mathematics and Physics to become a teacher four years ago and was quite happy not having to see the university from the inside any more, but now she's back.

– After four years in the army I thought that some brainwork would not do me any harm. So I started with Geometry in October. My goal is to finish that as well one day, she says.

What's your goal in sport?

– Having a lot of fun at MTB orienteering races and winning a few more gold medals, she says.



Michaela Gigon has won gold in world championships for four years in a row, and is heading for more.

PHOTO: PIRJO VALJANEN