

The Russian year



PHOTO: ERIK BORG

The King and the Queen: Eduard Khrennikov and Natalia Tomilova won the overall World Cup titles.

BY ERIK BORG

2003 is the year of the Russians at international level in ski orienteering. The Russians were incredibly good during the most important competitions during this winter, but Sweden in particular gave them tough competition at senior level.

– Why we have done so well? We have a lot of good competitions with technically complicated courses and there are so many good competitors, says Eduard Khrennikov.

2003 was indeed a big Russian year:

- Khrennikov was the real hero of World Cup. He won five of the 11 World Cup races even

though he started in nine of the races. The 29 year old Russian also won the sprint distance at the European Championships.

- Russia won both the last relay race and World Cup overall in both the women's and men's classes.

- Natalia Tomilova won the overall World Cup title ahead of Tatiana Vlasova, both are Russian.

- In the Junior World Championships, Russia won both relays. Elena Grand won both individual titles, but didn't manage to gain a medal in the relay. It was the second team that were best in the relay. This just shows the breadth of

the sport in Russia.

Quite a large number of ski orienteers in Russia are full time athletes. The Russian Army pays their salary, although this is not so high. The best athletes are able to attend a number of training camps during the course of the year. These provide the optimum conditions for succeeding in the sport.

Finland and Sweden were fighting for the position of second best nation on the international scene. At the Junior World Championships, the Finns were a clear number two with two silvers from the relay and the two individual gold in the men's class, but Sweden did a bit better in World Cup with both Bertil Nordqvist

In this issue: 2003 the Russian year in ski orienteering; Interviews with Natalia Tomilova and Bertil Nordqvist; The young old orienteering star; IOC recommendation: "Support your athletes in the World Games"; IWGA campaign: "30+ sports at their best".

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BARBRO RÖNNBERG
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

The new queen of
ski orienteering:

“I want to win for myself”

BY ERIK BORG

Natalia Tomilova has been very good for a long time, but still just a few paces behind the very best in the world. Now is she is the new queen of ski orienteering, and she believes that she can become even better. She hasn't reached the top level of training yet.

– I want to win for myself. Getting attention is not so important to me, says the new number one among the women in the ski orienteering world.

The 25 year old Russian had not won any major international individual victory before this season, but she has been incredibly good over the last few years. She was World Champion in the relay last year in Bulgaria and at the start of the season she was only two seconds from the gold medal in the sprint at the European Championships.

By the end of this year's World Cup season she was unbeatable. She won not only her first individual international victory, but took three in a row. She showed how happy she was with these victories when she stood on the top of the podium.

– I have been aiming for this for a long time, but now I have actually achieved it, winning isn't as special as I had thought, but I am very happy nevertheless, she comments.



PHOTO: ERIK BORG

Natalia Tomilova had an incredible end to the season and secured the overall victory in this year's World Cup in ski orienteering. She showed her delight on the top of the podium.

Tomilova started orienteering as a 10 year old. Three years later she started to train harder. Since the winter in Perm is long, there are good conditions for ski orienteering so it was a more natural choice to concentrate on ski orienteering rather than foot orienteering.

There is a strong group of three juniors girls and two senior women in Perm. Their trainer is Andrej Kiselev.

– He and his advice is very important for me, so it was very nice that he could be present at the last competitions as it is not so often he is able to attend the races.

Why are you so good at ski orienteering?

– I have increased my training, but I can train more, says she.

Tomilova is a full time ski orienteer, but she is quite unlike the other stars of ski orienteering in Russia. It's very common to be away for weeks at training camps, but Tomilova does not attend training camps very often. Last season she was only away for a few weeks and she doesn't just focus on training for the winter.

She doesn't use roller skis very much but takes part in a lot of other sports such as football and orienteering instead. She is also a very good foot orienteer, but ski orienteering is the sport she really goes in for. Her results are the best proof of that.

The Russian Year...

and Stina Grenholm among the best three overall in the World Cup while Finland had only Arto Lilja among the overall top three placings. At the European Championships in Italy, the Swedes were much better than the Finns. Bertil Nordqvist took one gold and Stina Grenholm two individual gold medals. The other nations to win a gold

medal were Russia with three, and Norway with two.

Norway has long traditions in ski orienteering and this year the Norwegian's achieved their best results for a number of years. Tommy Olsen was the Norwegian star. He won the middle distance title and had

a terrific last leg in the relay to secure a somewhat surprising Norwegian gold.

In 2004 there will again be a World Ski Orienteering Championships. The event will take place in Östersund in Sweden, while the Junior World Championships will be organised at Vuokatti in Finland.

More and more interesting

BY ERIK BORG

Bertil Nordqvist has been one of the heroes in the ski orienteering world for the past 11 years. Now he thinks it is more interesting than ever and he has never been at such a high performance level as he is today, but he only has one more year left of his ski orienteering career.

Why has ski orienteering become more and more interesting and challenging for the Swedish star?

– There are many more paths in today's races and this makes for much more complicated orienteering. I like what has happened. It sets bigger challenges for our thinking and concentration, says Nordqvist.

Even though the 34 year old Swede has been one of the best in the world since 1992, he won his very first individual international title this winter. It was in the long distance race at the European Championships in Italy where he took the gold medal. In the World Cup he was fighting with Eduard Khrennikov for the top posi-



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tion. He ended up with the second place, but the Swede was satisfied.

– It was a good winter. My best ever.

Bertil is now heading for his last World Championship on home territory next year. He will end his career in Östersund.

– These championships have been the major goal and meant a lot for my motivation for a long time, he comments.

Why are you better than ever now?

– I am studying at the university in Östersund for the third year. The set-up here is organised for an ideal combination of

studies and sport. I also get good help with at the university with my training and I can also train with other athletes. All this has a lot to say. And I have also got more and more experience and routine. When you see that your level is increasing is it also a lot of fun, he says.

Next year will be his last. In a way he is looking forward to the end of his international sporting career.

– All the travelling seems a bit harder than previously and it is no longer so exciting to travel. I have been there and done that before, comments Bertil.

How do you believe ski orienteering shall improve in the future?

– Today's disciplines are good, but the work to make the competitions more attractive for spectators must improve. It is important to have an audience so it is important that they can have good opportunities to follow the competitions, he states.



PHOTO: ERIK BORG

Bertil Nordqvist is one of the veterans in the ski orienteering world. This year he won his first title. He is now heading for gold at the World Championships in Östersund next year.

IOC recommendation to the National Olympic Committees:

Support your athletes in the World Games!

The President of the International Olympic Committee, Jacques Rogge, calls for support to athletes and officials taking part in The World Games.

In his recent letter to the 199 National Olympic Committees, President Rogge wrote:

"The International Olympic Committee is pleased to inform you that ever since the IOC formalised its close relationship with the International World Games Association (IWGA), in October 2000, with the signing of a memorandum of understanding, there is greater support on behalf of the National Olympic Committees to athletes and officials taking part in the World Games.

Taking advantage of the IWGA's efforts to inform your National Olympic Committee about the upcoming edition of the World Games 2005 Duisburg, I encourage those NOCs with recognised national federations participating in the World Games, to support their involvement in these Games.

With the concept of all delegations parading



by country, under their national flags, firmly established in the 7th World Games in 2005 in Duisburg, the need for central administrative structure and similar support arises in your country as well.

In order to maximise the experience of your athletes and officials at the World Games, and to utilise your expertise in the preparation and administration of a national delegation at a large multi-sport event, your efforts to support the delegation of your nation at the World Games 2005 Duisburg would be greatly appreciated."

IOC President Jacques Rogge has been a firm supporter of the World Games concept from its inception. He served as *Chef de Mission* for the Belgian delegation to the First World Games in 1981. After ascending to the presidency of the Belgian Olympic and Interfederal Committee (BOIC), in 1989, he helped to further define the BOIC role in programs preparing athletes and

officials for their participation in the quadrennial multi-sport event.

In 2001, many of the 92 nationally representative multi-sport delegations received sanction and support from their respective NOCs. The Chinese and the United States Olympic Committees assisted athletes and officials with outfitting, travel and other needs. The Netherlands and South Africa adopted programs identical to the Belgian model: *Chefs de Mission*, physicians and therapists – all appointed by the NOC – looked after the delegations' well-being in Japan. The Japanese Olympic Committee, besides supporting athletes and officials in 30 different sports, provided valuable know-how to the Organizing Committee for the 6th World Games 2001 Akita.

The 2005 World Games in Duisburg is the next milestone in anchoring this global and multidisciplinary sports event within the Olympic Movement. With the concept of all delegations parading by country firmly established – and all awards ceremonies held to the raising of the winners' national flags and the playing of their anthems – the new format of the World Games should induce all NOCs to take an active part in their success.

IWGA Campaign:

"30+ sports at their best!"

The International World Games Association (IWGA) has recently adopted an ambitious communications and marketing strategy, and the IWGA corporate identity has undergone a change in an effort to reinforce the brand of the World Games.

A comprehensive campaign package has now been circulated to the Presidents of the National Olympic Committees, the IOC Members and other important target groups. The package includes a 36-page colour brochure "The World Games" and a CD with two 4-minute video clips: '30+ sports at their best' and 'Duisburg on the Move'.

The main objective of the campaign is to communicate the core values of the World Games to the IWGA members, to candidate host cities, to media, and to other partners in the Olympic Movement.

All messages of the current campaign aim at increasing the audiences' awareness of the World Games. From slogans to descriptive texts, the campaign messages emphasise the unique characteristics of this multi-sport event - the premier contest for more than 30 different sports practised by 1,000,000,000 people world-wide.

Whether these efforts produce the expected results depends on the quality and the strength of the IWGA brand: 33 International Sports Federations (IFs) uniting under a common seal of quality, under favourably descriptive attributes.

In the past, the attribute most frequently used as the common denominator for 30+ sports was 'non-Olympic'. Henceforth, with all IFs pledging to deliver on such claim, the new and more positive by-line should read differently.



The World Games Forum

After a hiatus of just over two years, the IWGA resumes the publication of its periodical in print format and as a NETzine (in PDF format). The World Games Forum is – at least for 2003 – a quarterly to be published at the end of January, April, July, and October. Among other issues, the January edition includes a progress report on the IWGA communications campaign, and an article on competition climbing - a new sport of the World Games. The World Games Forum seeks to bring a variety of issues before the stakeholders in the World Games, addressing those topics that will ultimately decide over the event's success, and generally to try to establish a productive dialogue between them.

Anyone is invited to register at www.worldgames-iwga.org for a free subscription to the World Games Forum as a NETzine (PDF format).

PHOTO: ERIK BORG



The young old star...

BY ERIK BORG

Erkki Luntamo has been injured in two wars and is 88 years old, but he was skating like a youngster in the World Masters Ski Orienteering Championships in Estonia. Orienteering has a lot of young, old stars.

Luntamo, from the Vakka-Rasti club in Uusikapunki on the south-west coast of Finland, was the oldest competitor in the World Masters Ski Orienteering Championships for ski orienteering veterans in Estonia. On November 25th he will be 89.

– How long will I go on competing? I will continue until I am 90, says Luntamo.

Finland – the biggest nation

Like everybody else, Veli-Markku Korteniemi, the IOF Event Adviser for the races in Estonia was very impressed by Luntamo.

– He came very quickly and strongly into the finish. He should be able to par-

ticipate for a few years yet, comments Korteniemi.

Finland was in a big majority among the oldest participants in terms of both total participation and number of winners. Why were there so many Finns in the older classes?

– Ski orienteering is a big sport in Finland and there are a lot of veterans – they have many championships at home too. Estonia was also easy to get to and trips were organised by clubs and groups. I think it is important to have organised travel. In future I hope that information about the championships will reach the veterans in all IOF countries. They should know about the opportunities for taking part in this kind of competition.

A career spanning more than 70 years

Luntamo took part in cross-country skiing at school. In 1931 – as a 17 year old – he started orienteering.

– I started in a competition organised by the temperance movement (non-alcohol federation), he says.

His whole life has been entirely free of

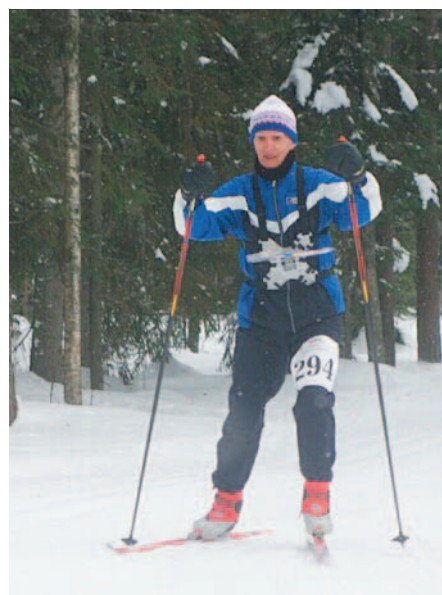


PHOTO: ERIK BORG

Erkki Luntamo is 88 years old, but still moving very quickly on the ski tracks. Who would think he is close to 90 years old!

alcohol and tobacco. He thinks that's the main reason for having such good health. He had been badly injured in 2 wars: the first time was in the winter war in 1939–40, and the second was in 1944. He is a 20% war invalid. That didn't seem to have any influence on his speed.

He was skating along very rapidly, and a lot of younger people found it hard just to keep up with him. So although he was the sole participant in the Men 85 class, he was a very worthy winner. His race on the second day was almost perfect – he took just 48 minutes on the five kilometre long course. In the first of the two races he was a bit angry with himself after finishing. He had lost 40 minutes at one control, but he was full of energy and had no problem in completing the 7.5 kilometres that day.

Norway in summer

Erkki also goes foot orienteering in summer and this year he is of course heading for Halden in Norway where the World Masters Championship is taking place for the orienteering veterans in July.

– I think it is even more fun to take part now than when I started. It is so nice to meet people at the competitions, but it is a little bit sad thinking of all those who have left us or are not able to take part any more, says Erkki.



PHOTO: PIRJO VALJANEN

Erkki Luntamo is also an active foot orienteer. In July this year, he'll be heading for gold at the World Masters Orienteering Championships in Norway.