

O-zine

International Orienteering Federation

On-line Newsletter

Issue 2 –June 2003

20th World Orienteering Championships:

New Visibility for Orienteering



SPECIAL

The 2001 World Orienteering Championship in Finland was a great event. This year's edition in Switzerland looks set to be even better for the sport of orienteering.



PHOTO: PIRJO VALJANEN

BY ERIK BORG

At this year's World Orienteering Championships (OL WM 2003) in Switzerland, the athletes will encounter well-organised races, and the spectators will experience a better orienteering "show" than ever before. The Championship will take place between 4th-9th August in the eastern part of Switzerland with runners from 42 different countries tak-

ing part. This is a new record.

- It will be a really fantastic event, promises Secretary General Marianne Bandixen.

- We are trying to bring the runners closer to the public than ever before. We have a professional speaker service with very experienced Kjell-Erik Kristiansen as the main speaker. Then we will have a large

screen as seen at World Championships in Finland, and the runners will pass through the arenas several times during the different races, continues Marianne.

The sport is really coming out of the forest to the spectators, compared with previously when the runners have been very remote and hidden from the spectators. It has been very difficult to follow the racing action,

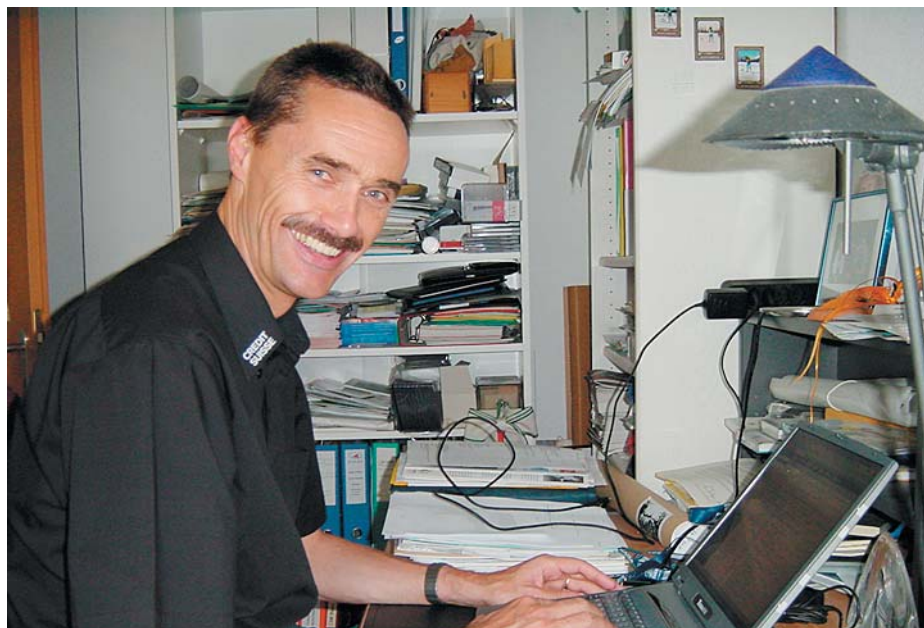
OL WM 2003 Special: Read about the 20th World Orienteering Championships and how the reigning World Champions prepare for this pinnacle event!

In this issue: New visibility for orienteering; Jimmy Birklin - only slightly injured; Middle distance is Jorgen Rostrup's main goal; Hanne Staff feels confident; The travelling orienteering family; WOC and wedding for Simone Luder; Pasi Ikonen is mentally stronger; Marianne is Ms. OL WM 2003.

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EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

PHOTO COURTESY: OL WM 2003



Sönke Bandixen is the President of the Organising Committee.

but with the large screen, more spectator-friendly course planning and arenas, and state-of-the-art timing, spectators at OL WM 2003 will really be able to experience a sporting event of world class.

Why is it so important to make orienteering more visible?

- It's important for the future of orienteering that people become familiar with our sport. In Switzerland, many people encounter the sport during national military service, but that is a totally different experience of orienteering. Increased awareness and visibility is also important in order to gain sponsorship, declares Marianne.

60 000 spectators expected

The organisers are estimating that over 60 000 spectators will attend the Championship events. 35 000 at the Closing Ceremony and Relay Medal Ceremony in Rapperswil, and a total of 25 000 at the four different race finals.

- We have done significant work to attract non-orienteers to the races too, says Marianne.

The Secretary General believes that the results of the Swiss runners, particularly in the first race, will have a great influence on interest in the event, and consequently the numbers of spectators. If like in the last Championships the home runners do well, then a lot of people will come and watch the races.

Swiss TV is also interested in this major orienteering event in Switzerland. The sprint distance will be transmitted live in a two-hour programme. The other races will be covered by 15-minute reports on TV. The finish of the sprint final will be inside an ice hockey stadium.

The work to obtain sponsors actually started 4-5 years ago. Roughly 55% of the total budget of 1.8 million Swiss francs is covered by sponsors.

- Without the backing of our sponsors it would not have been possible to organise the Championship, states Marianne.

Orienteering is hot

A number of activities and events have been organised in the build-up to OL WM 2003 to generate media attention and public awareness. One of these was on May 23rd this year when over 200 000 school pupils

throughout Switzerland took part in an Orienteering Day. 1356 different schools were involved in organising events and the project entailed making over 1200 different orienteering maps in advance of the big day. This huge-scale event drew lots of attention across Switzerland. It has also gained a place in the Guinness Record Book as the biggest mass-participation sports event in the world. The largest event previously was the Boston Marathon with a "meagre" 40 000 runners.

A few weeks ago a special orienteering stamp was issued by the Swiss Post Office to commemorate the Championship, and the incredible results of the top Swiss orienteers have also been an excellent marketing tool for the sport. Over the last two years, Simone Luder has been among the top three most famous sportswomen in Switzerland.

- Orienteering is hot in Switzerland, but it will become hotter still in August. There's still a few weeks to go, concludes Marianne.

A ticket to the fun

Children and young people under the age of 18 can watch the WOC 2003 free of charge. The Swiss O-week organised in conjunction with OL WM 2003 has attracted 3,200 competitors so far, and they can also gain free entry as long as they have their start number with them. Other spectators will be charged 15 Swiss francs, about 10 Euro.

- Charging an entry fee is only a problem for some orienteers. If you attend any other kind of high quality sports event, you expect to have to pay. Why shouldn't this be the case for orienteering too?, asks Marianne Bandixen.

The OL WM 2003 Programme



OL WM 2003
RAPPERSWIL/JONA
3-9 AUGUST

Monday, 4 August:	Long Distance Qualification in Unterägeri
Tuesday, 5 August:	WOC Opening Ceremony and Sprint Final, Rapperswil
Wednesday, 6 August:	Long Distance Final, Winterthur
Friday, 8 August:	Middle Distance Qualification and Final, Trin
Saturday, 9 August:	Relay and Closing Ceremony, Rapperswil

All the races are organised in the eastern part of Switzerland, not far from Zurich.

Only Slightly Injured

BY ERIK BORG

- I have a few problems with one of my calves, but everything else is fine, says Jimmy Birklin (33). He is only slightly injured and is of course on his way to Switzerland.

The reigning World Sprint Distance Champion in Finland in 2001 is also known amongst his rivals as the world champion of alternative training as since 1989 he has only had one year when he has not lost at least one week of training due to injury. Except for that one year in 1997, he has missed between 7 and 22 weeks of running training in all of the other years. The worst year was in fact in 2001 – the year he became World Champion.

- The problem this year is similar to the ones I experienced then. Sometimes my leg is OK, other times it is not good, says Jimmy.

Chopping firewood

Even when Jimmy is unable to run, he very seldom misses a day's training. He does a lot of alternative or cross-training, such as cycling, running in water, walking in tough terrain, chopping firewood and other physical jobs for friends.

Can you still motivate yourself to continue with the sport when you have so many injuries? You have already become World Champion after all.

- It isn't easy to keep motivated after all the years of competing. Alternative training isn't always so enjoyable, but orienteering is. I have also achieved good results despite the injury periods. If I do manage to have a year without injuries, I should do even better, he comments.

What has the World Championships gold medal meant for you?

- Firstly, it was reward for all the time I have dedicated and it was quite an emotional moment for me. Secondly, I have received more attention, particularly among fellow orienteers. In terms of my financial situation and my career, it has had no real effect at all, Jimmy explains.



PHOTO: PIRJO VALANEN

What a moment for Jimmy Birklin when he won the sprint distance at the 2001 World Championships in Finland as the photographers crowd around.

The last World Championships did not end very well for Jimmy as another injury in the early part of the relay meant that he had to abandon the race, and so the Swedish team was not able to complete the race.

A good winter

Jimmy's primary goal this year is a new WOC gold and he feels quite confident. He has trained well this winter and has been achieving good results. In fact he has not been out of a podium place at an orienteering race since 16 September, 2001. As the current Sprint World Champion, he will obviously be running this distance in Switzerland, but the middle distance and the relay are also high on his list of priorities.

Are you managing to do enough orienteering technique training with so much alternative training?

- I think at this stage in my career I have

a solid o-technical base. If you know how to ride a bike, you can just get back on and ride again later. It's a bit the same with orienteering, but you do have to practice technique in different types of terrain, states Jimmy.

Familiar with the streets

Jimmy has spent approximately one month in total over the last year at training camps in Switzerland. He has naturally visited Rapperswil, venue of the WOC sprint race, several times. There is unrestricted access to the venue for running training, but without a map.

You must know every street corner by now?

- I have been in Rapperswil 5-6 times and I think I know the terrain quite well, but I don't think it's such a good idea that the terrain is open for training. I hope this will not continue in future events, states Jimmy.

Hanne Staff Feels Confident

BY ERIK BORG

Hanne Staff (31) has focused hard on improving her running and technical skills in Swiss terrain. Now she feels confident.

- I have felt very at home in the Swiss forests, particularly after the last training camp with the Norwegian team, but the route choices still present a major challenge. You can never feel 100% sure that you have chosen the optimum route, but I think I now know enough not to make a really bad route choice, says Hanne.

The double individual World Champion has been concentrating a lot on her technical running skills prior to this year's WOC.

- It has been my aim to be able to run faster", she states.

So can you run faster now?

- I haven't done any tests, but everything is going very well. I am doing the training I planned and it's looking good. I feel that I am where I should be right

now so that I will come to the World Championships in August stronger than ever before, adds Hanne.

Staff already has 4-5 weeks of training in Switzerland, and there will be one more in association with the Norwegian team selection races in Switzerland in the middle of July. The Norwegian queen of orienteering is aiming first and foremost at the long distance race at WOC.

- It's the distance in which I feel I have the best chances of success, she says.

Unlike Simone Luder, Hanne will not be competing in all distances at WOC. The o-sprint star with two overall Park World Tour victories is not thinking about the sprint distance at all. The sprint final will be held on the day between the long distance qualification and final races.

- I don't think it is possible to run both these distances. I believe the championships should perhaps have been held over a slightly longer period to allow those runners who wish to compete in all races to do so, concludes Hanne.



PHOTO: ERIK BORG

Jørgen Rostrup is not sure if he will even start in the long distance race which he won at the last WOC. His main goal will continue to be the short distance (now renamed the middle distance).

Three Months in Switzerland

BY ERIK BORG

What did Jørgen Rostrup do immediately after the last World Championships in Finland? Well, he practically got straight on to the plane for the venue of the next World Championships two years hence in Switzerland!

The double World Champion has now spent almost three months in total in Switzerland over the last two years.

- I hope that is enough time, he states.

Prior to the last WOC in Finland, Jørgen stayed in that country for more than a year. It paid off as he became World Champion on the long distance and won a bronze medal in the short distance in Finland too. The short distance race was actually his major goal as he was the defending champion, so he was disappointed not to be standing on the top of the podium again.

Are you going to try to defend your long distance title this year?

- I have no ambitions to defend anything at all. The middle distance continues to be my main goal. The terrain for that race is the WOC terrain that suits me best as it is technically challenging, says Jørgen.

When the middle distance race is over, he will start thinking about the long distance and the relay.



PHOTO: ERIK BORG

Hanne Staff is going for the long distance race at this year's WOC. She has won the "classic" distance both at WOC 1997 in Norway, and last month in Sweden at the Open Nordic Championships where she was joined on the podium by Jenny Johansson of Sweden and Heli Jukkola, Finland.



PHOTO: ERIK BORG

Vroni König-Salmi and Janne Salmi are on the move from one championship country to another.

The Travelling Family

BY ERIK BORG

Janne Salmi (34) and Vroni König-Salmi (33) are the travelling family of the orienteering world. This year sees another World Championships in one of their home countries.

They are both top orienteers with a number of World Championship gold medals between them. Janne from Finland won the short distance race at the 1997 World Championships in Norway, and then the relay gold medal two years ago in Finland. This was also where Vroni won the sprint distance gold. After these championships they moved to Vroni's home country, Switzerland, to Forch which is located just 25 kilometres from Rapperswil, the centre for this year's World Championships.

- The World Championships were one reason for us moving to Switzerland, but we also wanted my daughter Selina to be able to write and speak proper German, not just to be able to talk Swiss German. She was only five when we moved from Switzerland. Now she is 13. We also wanted three-year old Miia to be more familiar with German too, says Vroni.

As they are living in Switzerland, it is also easier to concentrate on the approaching World Championships here. Had they still been living in Finland

there would have been a lot of travelling to Switzerland to prepare for the races. That's not so easy with two children.

And this autumn will you be moving on to Sweden where next year's WOC will be held?

- No, we are going back to Finland again. Our stay in Switzerland was a two-year project. We were open to the idea of staying longer if something special happened, but it hasn't. Janne also has a number of different projects in Finland, and I also prefer the Finnish school system, comments Vroni.

Moving back to Finland and Nordic terrain again means that they have also decided to go for WOC in Västerås in 2004, but the World Championships in Japan the following year are not in their plans yet ...

What's it like competing in a major championships in your own country?

- Finland felt like my home country too in 2001. The championships here in Switzerland is of course a huge inspiration for me. Running here means that I know what to expect, I know the type of terrain and the orienteering problems I will meet. I have actually run in the WOC terrain many years ago when I was 14-15 years old. But there is a downside too. When I am so familiar with Swiss

orienteering I have to be very careful. It can be dangerous to feel confident. It is also a bit special too when you know the organisers, says Vroni.

Vroni has been one of the orienteers that the Swiss organisers have used to market the 2003 World Championships. She participated in the big orienteering day in May when more than 200 000 school pupils throughout Switzerland took part in orienteering.

- There are lots of different activities and events going on, and the championships are a major event in Switzerland. More and more people are becoming aware of the sport, it brings orienteering a higher profile, Vroni adds.

Vroni is contemplating running all the different distances at the World Championships. As current World Champion, she is of course already qualified for the sprint race, but she also wants very much to run the long distance race too. Her training preparations suffered a setback in May. She wasn't feeling 100% well in the spring and took some medical tests. The results initially indicated that she was suffering from an illness, but fortunately further tests proved this not to be the case.

- It was physically quite a tough time, especially with the misdiagnosis. Now things are fine again, she concludes.

Straight from the Championship podium to her wedding



PHOTO: PIRJO VALJANEN

Simone Luder has been the world's leading female orienteer over the last two years. The next World Championship on home terrain is fast approaching.

BY ERIK BORG

August will be a busy month for Simone Luder (25). First she will run in all the distances at the World Championships on home ground. Then it will be time for her own wedding.

Is there enough time for two such big occasions?

- There are three weeks between WOC and the date of the wedding, and we are already organising the details of the wedding. We have a lot of help too, comments Simone.

The 25 year-old Swiss is marrying her

partner, Matthias Niggli, also a top Swiss orienteer. Their wedding will take place on 30th August in Munsingen where they live.

- Munsingen is about 150 km west of Rapperswil and the race venues are even further east, so it's not exactly my home terrain but we have similar terrain near Munsingen, except for the middle distance terrain which is quite special, Simone adds.

Which of these will be the most important event in your life?

- Both the World Championships and my wedding are important to me, but of course for entirely different reasons. I'm

really looking forward to both of them, and on occasions it actually helps to have more than one major event to focus on. I'm sure that both will be really memorable.

Simone is the reigning Long Distance World Champion, and in this year's WOC on home soil she wants to compete in all distances.

- If I'm in good shape and everything is going well, I plan to run all the races, but the most important ones for me are the long distance (classic) and the relay, states Simone.

The Swiss star has been the world No.1 for the last two years since the last WOC in Finland with a string of superb results and has looked almost unbeatable. This year she feels that she is even stronger than before.

- I think I have improved both physically and technically. I have focused on technical improvement and mental training, and I hope to continue to improve in the future, explains Simone.

Simone did not experience her "normal" success at the Open Nordic Championships in Sweden at the beginning of May where she made too many mistakes and also did not have the best of preparation leading up to the event.

- I had Achilles tendon inflammation in March and April but it seems to have cleared up now. I have trained well these last two months and I feel fit and healthy now.

What is it like to have the World Championships on your home terrain?

- I'm really looking forward to the Championships. I think there will be a great atmosphere around the event and I'm sure there will be many Swiss spectators to cheer us on. It's quite a special motivation to run a major race in your home country, she says.



PHOTO: ERIK BORG

Pasi Ikonen on the way to a very clear gold medal in the middle distance race at the Open Nordic Championships in Sweden earlier this year.

Pasi Ikonen is Stronger Mentally

BY ERIK BORG

Pasi Ikonen (22) was one of the stars of the World Championships in his "home" terrain of Finland two years ago winning gold and silver individual medals, and he is now even better, although he is plagued by an injury to his toe.

At the Open Nordic Championships he demonstrated remarkable orienteering speed in the technically-demanding middle distance race. He was simply much better than all his rivals.

- The terrain was perfect for me – nice and easy, grins Pasi. Maybe everyone else thought that the terrain was nice, but easy it certainly was not.

You have gone up to another level now?

- It is easier for me mentally now. I am not so keyed up to win as I was before, so it is easier to run my best at major races such as the international championships.

The Finnish runner's main goal this year is to win a new gold medal at the World

Championships in Switzerland.

- I want to run the long distance and the relay. I am not so interested in the sprint race, but as I haven't been able to train as I would have liked this winter due to a series of injury problems, it may be that the sprint and middle distance races will be best, comments Pasi.

Up and down

Although Pasi had Achilles tendon problems prior to the Nordic Championships at the beginning of May, his main injury problem has been his toe. He injured this when he was running up some steps in a

Park World Tour race in Italy last autumn.

- I have consulted three different doctors and they have all told me to rest for six months, but I can't just rest. I just hope it will get better naturally in a year or two, adds Pasi.

There were a couple of weeks in May when Pasi was unable to train normally following the Nordic Championships. He had to train alternatively by cycling, but this is not the optimum for a top orienteer at this stage of the season.

- I am now able to train properly again, but it's not long to the World Championships now, he states.

No compass

Pasi has shocked the orienteering world by running without any compass at all. He intends to continue to navigate in seemingly impossible terrain without one of the normal orienteering aids.

- My coach tells me that I ought to use it, but I think he is only joking, laughs the amazing Finn.





Marianne is Ms. OL WM 2003



PHOTO COURTESY: OL WM 2003

Marianne Bandixen is working far more than full-time on the organisation of the World Orienteering Championships in Switzerland. She is the Secretary General; her husband, Sönke, is the President of the Organising Committee.

BY ERIK BORG

Marianne Bandixen is actually the only person working full-time on the organisation of this year's World Orienteering Championships (OL WM 2003) in Switzerland. Her husband, Sönke, is the President of the Organising Committee, but it's not just a family affair.

The WOC 2003 will also attract non-orienteeing spectators who will pay an entry fee to see the best orienteers in the world in action.

- How much do I work? Well about 150-200 % of the hours of a normal job. I start work at 06.30 in the morning and it may be 23.00 in the evening before I am finished, comments Marianne.

Are you the only full-time staff member?

- Yes, I know it sounds crazy compared with the Swedish Orienteering Federation for example, where I think they have 12 employees, but the Organising Committee has eight directors and some

of these have the opportunity to work a half day or a full day on OL WM 2003 business, she adds.

Her husband, the President of OL WM 2003, for example works a couple of days a week on Championships organisation matters. Then of course there is all the work at the weekends, so there is a lot of orienteering going on in the Bandixen home.

- It would have been impossible to work in this way if either of us was not interested in orienteering, but we both love the sport. It's our life, declares Marianne.

She is also the Secretary General of the Swiss Orienteering Federation and has held this post since 1990. It is a part-time position and she works 10-40 % of a full-time job.

Do you have any time to compete yourself?

- We have both orienteered for a long time, Sönke began in 1969 and my first

event was in 1972.

Have you achieved any good results?

- Sönke has competed for the regional team, while I have not been so bad in the veteran classes, but I don't focus that much on results. They aren't really anything to write home about, she comments.

Will there be any additional staff during the World Championship week itself?

- Oh yes, there will be 700 volunteers from 15 different orienteering clubs and the Swiss Army is helping us by providing 500 military personnel too, states Marianne.

Finally, what will you and your husband be doing after the World Championship?

- We only have plans as far as 10th August, but we have jokingly said that we can of course begin organising the next World Championship in Switzerland after then, concludes Marianne.