

O-zine

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2005 World Cup in Orienteering

Heather Monro is back to her roots



PHOTO: ERIK BORG

Heather Monro is a big hope on home ground when World Cup starts in Great Britain.

BY ERIK BORG

Last autumn Heather Monro (33) returned back home to the UK and this winter she has trained better than ever before. This year at the end of April, the 2005 World Cup series will start in the forests where she started her orienteering career.

– I was born and bred and learnt to orienteer in south-west London, about 8 km from the

sprint final area and 40 km from the long, middle and relay areas. My family moved away from London 15 years ago so it really feels like coming back to my roots!

Heather is a big British hope when the World Cup in orienteering starts on Friday, April 29. Heather has been among the best in the world for the past decade. In 2000, she finished as number three overall in the World Cup. Heather lived in the established

orienteering town of Halden in Norway from 1994 until moving back to the UK last year. She benefited greatly from training and competing for this inspirational club, but in recent years had to overcome a series of injuries.

– Ironically after leaving “orienteering’s Mecca”, the move to Britain may be the boost that my international career needs just now, she smiles.

Help at home

Things have gone very well since last autumn and Heather Monro has been able to make the most of the facilities offered by the English Institute of Sport (EIS).

– I am working on an almost daily basis with their expert coaches, physiologists, medical staff and career advisors. It is the first time that I have ever felt part of the great British sporting family and I train alongside Olympians in different sports. The level of expertise is very high and the service is outstanding. The EIS coaches convinced me that after many years of top level orienteering, I wasn’t going to get any better training in the same way as I always have, so I have taken a totally new, heavily periodised approach to this season’s training. I have trained well and been completely free of injury for the first winter in 5 years. The effect remains to be

In this issue: 2005 World Cup in Orienteering; Heather Monro is back to her roots; The World Games 2005 Duisburg; Support!; Tough competitions and tough training; Japan appointed organiser of the Ski-WOC in 2009; The Mothers’ Championships.

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BARBRO RÖNNBERG
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF



seen, comments Heather.

All the injuries and years with training didn't take away your motivation to continue?

– I've been going for many years and have had lots of injuries. Exactly that is partly the key to my continued motivation. My best season was in 2000 and since then I have had injury problems every year, until now! I am very excited about the prospect of being back in the kind of shape that I had in 2000. Moving home to England and working with the EIS has also been a renewed source of inspiration for me. So much so that I am considering postponing retirement for a while yet, she adds.

Orienteering all day

BY ERIK BORG

Heather Monro is training hard to achieve good results and is also working hard to make orienteering a more popular sport.

– I am employed by the British Orienteering Federation as one of the team of Regional Development Officers covering the whole of England. I work in the north of the country on a part time basis (approximately 50 per cent of normal hours). My job is very closely related to a government initiative to forge links between school sport and sports clubs, says Heather.

– During the time I was in Norway (10 years) orienteering in schools in Britain really took off, however there are still few young people making the transition into the mainstream sport and that is what my job seeks to address. I work closely with orienteering clubs and schools and have been met by plenty of enthusiasm. Orienteering is still a relatively small sport and cannot compete with premier league football for media attention. Nor do we have the terrain and resources that the Scandinavians have. Many children do not have access to woodland or suitable orienteering areas in their home environment, however we are making progress and many urban recreation areas are being well used. The job is ideal for me with my teaching background and

Heather is now living in Durham, an old university town about 20 km south of Newcastle in the north-east of the UK England. It's about 450 km from where the World Cup is being held.

Brother is the race speaker

What will it be like to run the World Cup on home ground?

– I am so excited about the World Cup races. The World Orienteering Championships (WOC) in 1999 on home soil was such a wonderful experience, largely due to the atmosphere created by the home crowd. I am hoping that as a more mature athlete I will be able to make even more of this opportunity. Clearly there is an added 'pressure' of being on home soil and I have had to prepare for this. My brother is one of the main speakers for the event, but I am getting used to that. In WOC '99 it was my home club organising the starts, so I have good experience of how it feels. I know the terrain will be

flexible enough to combine with training.

What could the World Cup mean for British orienteering?

– I really hope that it can mean a lot! The World Cup organisers have had an extensive development project running in connection with the races, so I hope that all their hard work bears fruit. WOC'99 was a technical success, however it was a long way from the media centres in London and by bringing the World Cup to this part of the country and working actively to promote it I hope we will manage to raise the profile of the sport. There is also a lot of hard work going into attracting and keeping young people in the sport and having the World Cup is undoubtedly a bonus for them.

What is it like being a top athlete in orienteering in Great Britain?

– It's very different being in the UK, particularly where I am living, compared to being in Norway. I am sure that I would not have got as far as I have without having spent the time in Halden that I did. I have that experience to take with me now and I am finding training OK. I no longer have world class orienteering terrain and training opportunities on my doorstep, but I have a car and can travel to some pretty good maps in different parts of England. And it

very good, so I am really looking forward to it. It has been really fun preparing for the races, travelling to Surrey and reacquainting myself with all my favourite places from 15 years ago! Now I am looking forward to a week where we in British orienteering can be really proud of our achievements, as athletes, organisers and supporters.

Yes, I did it!

What's your goal for the season?

– I only ever aim to produce my very best performance on the day of the race. I cannot do anything about how my competitors perform. I have had a better winter of training than ever before and I hope that my best performance on the day will be better than my best performance previously... your readers can look up my results from previous World Cup years and read what they like into that! I just want to cross the finish line with the feeling of 'Yes, I did it!'

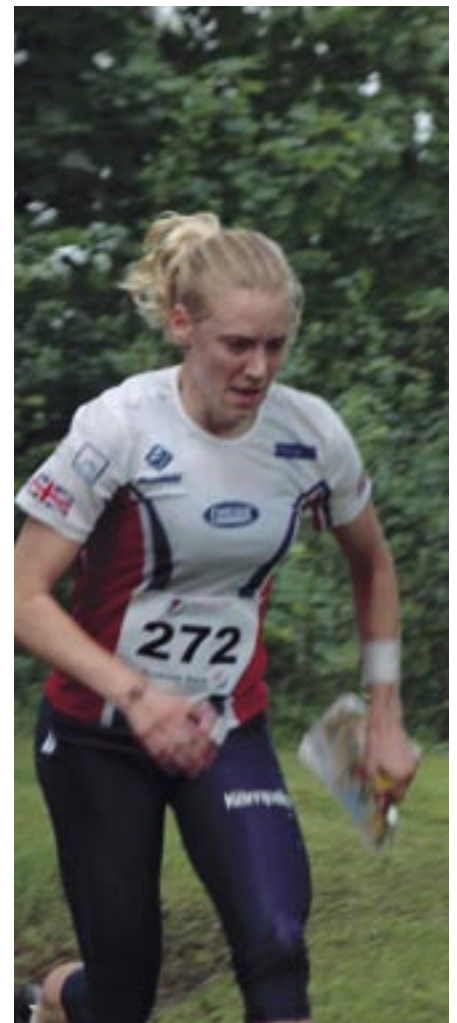


PHOTO: PIRJO VALANEN

has been motivating and inspiring to come home to the Great British sporting family, concludes Heather.



The 2005 World Cup in Orienteering

Round 1, Great Britain event centre Guildford, S. England

Friday 29 April: Sprint qualification*

Saturday 30 April: Relay

Sunday 1 May: Long distance

Monday 2 May: Sprint final

Tuesday 3 May: Middle distance

Round 2, World Championships, Japan:

event centre Tsukude, near Toyota

Sunday 7 August: Middle distance
qualification*

Monday 8 August: Long distance
qualification*

Wednesday 10 August: Sprint qualifi-
cation* and final

Thursday 11 August: Middle distance
final

Friday 12 August: Long distance
final

Sunday 14 August: Relay

Round 3, Italy: event centre Monte Livata, Subiaco, near Rome

Monday 3 October: Middle distance
qual.* and final

Tuesday 4 October: Sprint qualifica-
tion*

Wednesday 5 October: Sprint final

Thursday 6 October: Long distance,
World Cup Final

Saturday 8 October: Relay, World
Cup Final

* - qualification race – no World Cup
points

In the Individual World Cup, seven competitions count for a competitor's total score. These will comprise a maximum of five out of the six competitions in Rounds 1 and 2, and a minimum of one competition plus the World Cup Final in Round 3.

In the Relay World Cup, all three competitions count for the total score. In the case of a tie, the overall winner is the team with the better placing in the Final.

The World Games 2005 Duisburg:

Support!

BY ROLAND HILFIKER

Towards the end of 2004, the President of the International Olympic Committee followed up an earlier missive to 202 National Olympic Committees (NOCs) with yet another call for their support to the national delegations in The World Games 2005 Duisburg.

– I am convinced that The World Games 2005, with good collaboration between the International World Games Association, the Duisburg organizers, the athletes, and the National Olympic Committees involved, will again be a great success, Dr. Jacques Rogge expressed his optimism in the November 29 letter to the NOCs.

– I am confident that The World Games will continue to prosper and encourage all NOCs to support this important event in Germany, the IOC President concluded.

NOC Involvement in The World Games

Ron Froehlich has been the IWGA President since 1990. Jointly with Juan Antonio Samaranch, the IOC Honorary President for Life, Froehlich was a signatory to the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the IOC and the IWGA on October 26, 2000. Ever since, he has persistently sought to enlist the help of the NOCs in raising the multi-sport games' profile further.

How can the National Olympic Committees contribute to make The World Games a success?

– The IOC President summed it up perfectly: the NOC's sanction of a nationally representative multi-sport delegation to 2005 Duisburg can make the crucial bit of difference – above all for the participating athletes, but also when it comes to how The World Games are perceived by the public at large, says President Ron Froehlich.

– We previously had our athletes parading by sports in the ceremonies. Many national elements were deliberately suppressed per

our Rules. The IFs fielded their delegation of athletes and officials and were the focal point of the protocol. In time for The World Games 2001 Akita, and under the terms of our MoU with the IOC, we revised the concept radically and started to insist that athletes and officials from the same country enter as a national multi-sport delegation. National flags were far more prominent in the athletes' parade and during the medal ceremonies in Akita. An unprecedented number of NOCs had decided to sanction the participation of their national delegation. Many athletes were able to benefit from NOC support ranging from team outfits to subsidies for training and travel.

– A few NOCs simply adhered to an established tradition in sending their delegations to Japan. The Belgian Olympic and Interfederal Committee, for instance, had assisted its athletes and officials ever since Santa Clara 1981, when the Chef de Mission of the Belgian delegation was none other than Dr. Jacques Rogge, but many more NOCs became involved in The World Games 2001 for the very first time. If one looks at the Akita medal table – another premiere in the games' history – 11 out of the top 15 nations received sanction and support from their respective NOC. Overall, 24 of the 93 participating nations were backed by either governmental sports authorities or NOCs during Akita 2001.

– I am confident that we will see a substantial increase in NOCs assuming an active role in The World Games for 2005 Duisburg. Official sanction and support is all that is required, and the latter not with a view to funding only. When the German National Olympic Committee (NOK) announced that one of its partners – a leading sportswear brand – would supply the sizable delegation with outfits, I was delighted. Add to that the NOK's efforts in securing exposure on the home front for the participating athletes, and you end up with a contribution that can mark the difference for hundreds of sportsmen

and women from 100 nations. The World Games – on its own – can take care of the rest, concludes Ron Froehlich.





PHOTO: PIRJO VALJANEN

The winning Russian team in the men's relay with Andrei Gruzdev (right), Eduard and Ruslan Gritsan.

Tough competitions and tough training

BY ERIK BORG

The Russian men won the most at the World Ski Orienteering Championships. The explanation for this is the very tough level of competition, good races and also good conditions for training professionally for ski orienteering in Russia.

– There are many good competitors in Russia. All of them are strong, and we also have very technically demanding races. This makes the level very high in Russia, says Eduard Khrennikov.

Khrennikov was once again in a dominant position at an international championship: he won several gold medals once again, and once again he won the relay gold with

the Russian team.

No other ski orienteer has won as many World Championships gold medals as Khrennikov. His total to date after this year's championships stands at 9 gold medals. When ski orienteering and foot orienteering are taken together, he is the man who has won the most medals, but there is also a woman who has won the same number of golds: Arja Hannus of Sweden also has nine gold medals, four from orienteering and five from ski orienteering.

The Russian stars

Eduard Khrennikov started this year's World Championships with a bronze medal

in the sprint race, just three seconds behind the winner Matti Keskinarkaus of Finland. He came back the next day though and lived up to being the favourite by winning the long distance title. In the medium distance race, he won another bronze behind two of his countrymen, and finished the championships by anchoring Russia to victory in the men's relay. This was the fifth time in a row that victory went to Russia.

Russia had three double gold medallists among the men at the World Championships. In addition to Khrennikov, Andrei Gruzdev and Ruslan Gritsan also won two golds. Andrei and Ruslan shared the gold medal in the middle distance race, and also shared the relay victory.

Ruslan is 26 while Andrei is 27. The oldest man, Eduard at 31 years old, has not fixed a date to end his medal-winning career.

– You never know in sport. So much can happen and suddenly your career can be over. We'll see if I keep going until Japan, smiles Eduard.

Before Japan there will be a World Championship in Russia, but in terms of distance to where Eduard Khrennikov grew up in Russia, the 2009 edition in Japan is actually closer for him than the Russian venue. He now lives in Perm, but comes originally from Komsomolsk on Amur which is in the far east of Russia. Eduard still represents this region in ski orienteering although he has moved westwards.

..... but Matti won the sprint race

Matti Keskinarkaus was the only men's world champion without a Russian passport. He won his race thanks to his experience, the confidence of his coach and perfect preparations.

That Matti won the sprint race was actually against all the odds. Firstly, he did not give his training first priority during the autumn and the first part of the winter as the completion of his training as a pilot was more important to him. But in the last two months, Matti's full focus was on the World Championships. However, it was not certain at all that Matti would even get a chance to compete there.

– I have to thank the Finnish team coach, Mika Kulmala, for giving me the chance to be on the Finnish team. He selected me even though I didn't take part in any of the selection races as I was ill on both weekends, says Matti.

The major goal at the World Championships was not the sprint race either. The



PHOTO: PIRJO VALJANEN

Matti Keskinarkaus won gold in the sprint race at the World Ski Orienteering Championships.

aim was the relay gold medal, but even though Matti raced very well on the last leg and reduced the deficit to Eduard Khrennikov, the Finns had to be satisfied with the silver. Not unexpectedly, the Russian team was just too strong.

Gold in the sprint race was Matti's second individual medal from a World Championships: he won the long distance race in Bulgaria in 2002, and in 2001 he won the overall World Cup. He won in Bulgaria after many years of hard preparations, which is why he

feels that the gold medal from that race ranks higher than this year's sprint gold which came after just a few weeks of preparations. On the other hand though, winning gold in his home country also gave him great pleasure. This was even more so as the race really was in his home terrain. Matti grew up and still lives in Rovaniemi, which is not far away from Levi in Finnish Lapland.

Therefore many of his friends, fellow club members and family were able to be present to see the new sprint king crowned.

Japan appointed organiser of the World Ski Orienteering Championships in 2009

Japan has been appointed organiser of the 2009 World Ski Orienteering Championships. The championships will be held at the Rusutsu resort near Sapporo, Hokkaido, in Northern Japan. The events are scheduled for late February 2009.

– I am very pleased with the appointment. Japan is the first Asian country to host the World Ski Orienteering Championships and this is indeed of great importance for the future development of the sport. The Rusutsu resort offers excellent conditions for the World Championships, says the

IOF President Ake Jacobson.

The World Ski Orienteering Championships are held every second year. The 2007 Ski WOC has been awarded to Russia. The event will be held in Rybinsk, Yaroslavl region, some 380 km north of Moscow.



PHOTO: ERIK BORG

Stine Hjermsstad Kirkevik with her son Simen and husband Tommy. Simen is two years old

The Mothers' Championships

BY ERIK BORG

All the women's individual gold medals at the World Ski Orienteering Championships went to mothers and one mother played a decisive role in the relay too. Stine Hjermsstad Kirkevik (28) and Tatiana Vlasova (27) were the two big stars among the women. Stine had her son with her at the World Championships while the Russian's daughter was at home in Russia.

– Things work well on an everyday basis. Both my husband Tommy and I can train well, but there can be a bit less time to rest and build up energy. It is a very fine balancing act. The results can easily be anything other than expected, comments Stine Hjermsstad Kirkevik.

The Norwegian is the mother of two year old Simen. She won the sprint distance and played the decisive role on the last leg to win the women's relay too. Russian Tatiana Vlasova won both the middle distance and the long distance races. She is the mother of six year old Anna. The third mother with a medal from these World Championships

is Olga Shevchenko who won the bronze medal in the long distance race and has a two and a half year old daughter Katja.

Childminders

The Russian mothers had left their children at home in Russia with the children's grandmothers. Stine Hjermsstad Kirkevik and her husband Tommy Olsen had their son with them at the World Championships, but he didn't stay with his parents. Granddad Kare Kirkevik, who is also the Chairman of the IOF Ski Orienteering Commission, looked after him in between the races. At the races themselves, Vigdis Thingelstad looked after Simen. Vigdis, who is a member of the Norwegian Orienteering Federation's elite sport committee, knew that it would be a good day for Stine in the sprint race as Simen slept the whole time.

– I knew it would go well as Simen also slept last year when Stine won a Ski WOC gold, says Vigdis Thingelstad with a smile.

After finishing Stine asked her son if

he had been cheering for his Mum, but he answered that he hadn't – he'd been sleeping!

Two gold medals again

Stine Hjermsstad Kirkevik won two gold medals at the World Championships last year as well when she won the long distance and the medium distance races. This year she began the championships by winning the first distance with a sprint finish. She was lying one second behind Erja Jokinen before beginning the sprint for the finish line where she clocked a time two seconds faster than the Finn. In the mass-start long distance race she also crossed the line with her hands raised in celebration. It looked like she had won a comprehensive victory until control of her punching showed that she had punched at the wrong first control on the second loop. If she had noticed that the code was wrong when she punched, she would have had time to visit the correct control and still keep her lead. Stine also won the bronze medal in the middle distance race and anchored the Norwegian team to victory in the women's relay.



PHOTO: PIRJO VALJANEN

Tatiana Vlasova won both the middle distance and long distance races. She has a six year old daughter Anna.

Accident setback

It was not a foregone conclusion that Stine would be in top form this winter. For a period last winter she was in doubt about whether she would be able to compete at all. She suffered a serious accident on September 3 last autumn when a strength training apparatus came loose and fell on her when she was training. She got concussion and lost many weeks of training, but the injury actually increased her motivation and she really wanted to be able to return to competition. Just over the New Year, Stine was once again amongst the best in the world when she won the long distance race at the Open Nordic Championships in Sweden.

Preparation without Simen

A couple of weeks before the World Championships, Stine got a slight cold and also a throat infection, but she returned to full health in the week leading up to the Ski WOC. From the Tuesday before the World Championships started she and the Norwegian team were on a training camp in Finnish Lapland, about 30 km away from Levi. While Stine and her husband were at the training camp, their son Simen was at his grandparents' house in Asker, Norway. With a small active boy around it is dif-

ficult to focus on top performance.

– Being able to focus just on yourself during the last week is important to be able to perform well in a major championship. One advantage is being able to rest and prepare, another is having the time to be able to test and prepare the skis properly. We didn't have much time for this earlier in the season, states Stine.

Ready for more

Stine began work again after Easter in an 80 per cent position. During the season itself she works 50 per cent of full-time hours. It has not been finally decided whether she and her husband Tommy will continue ski orienteering for full next year. She believes though that the level of motivation will be the deciding factor, and so she might continue her career.

– I haven't yet won an individual World Cup race, and next winter it's the World Cup again, she says.

The European Championships will also be organised next winter, while it is two years until the next World Championships. Both these competitions will take place in Russia.



PHOTO: PIRJO VALJANEN

Olga Shevchenko won the bronze medal in the long distance race. She was one of three mothers to win a medal at the World Championships. Her daughter, Katja, is two and a half years old.