

O-zine

International Orienteering Federation

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A good year for ski orienteering

BY ERIK BORG

Kare Kirkevik, Chairman of the IOF Ski Orienteering Commission, has had the privilege of being present at most international competitions where his daughter, Stine Hjermstad Kirkevik, has been on the podium. In 1998, Kåre became a member of the IOF Ski Orienteering Commission. Three years later, he took on the chairmanship.

Kare grew up at Askøy near Bergen, where there is usually no snow in the winter. It wasn't until he became the leader of the orienteering section of Asker Skiklubb, near Oslo, that he came into close contact with ski orienteering, as the club organised many big competitions. This happened some 15 years ago. That is also when Stine took up the sport.

Was it because of Stine you became involved in ski orienteering activities and then even began to work at the international level?

– My international involvement probably is because of Stine. When my countryman, Lars P. Lystad, decided to leave the IOF Ski Orienteering Commission, I was

Kare Kirkevik together with his daughter, Stine Hjermstad Kirkevik, after she had received the gold medal for her win in the overall World Cup.



PHOTO: ERIK BORG

In this issue: A good year for ski orienteering; New junior stars in ski orienteering; Tomas Löfgren: I can be even better; Stine wins all; New World Elite Events Programme; Sweden – better prepared this year for the World Championships.

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Good reading!

BARBRO RÖNNBERG
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

PHOTO: ERIK BORG



Stine Hjemstad Kirkevik starting in the long distance race at the World Cup in Ivanovo, Russia.

asked if I might be willing to replace him. In the past 25 years, I have also had several other administrative tasks, so I think that it was just a natural course of development to start working internationally.

Good season for ski orienteering

The past season has been good for ski orienteering. Finally, there has been enough snow in most of the areas and countries where ski orienteering is practised.

It has also been a good season for Stine Hjemstad Kirkevik. At the events held in Russian Ivanovo, Kare handed out both the gold medal in the overall World Cup and European Championships gold to Stine. For a father, this naturally was an unforgettable moment. Kare is, nevertheless, very conscious of his two very different roles.

– When I attend the competitions, I am a representative of the IOF and I have a large number of official duties of various kinds. Presenting medals to successful athletes is always a rewarding task, but of course it's particularly nice to have a chance to award medals to Stine, Kare smiles.

Difficulties have always been overcome

Many of the international ski orienteering championships in the past ten years have been characterised by lack of snow or mild weather. Kare Kirkevik is very impressed by the event organisers always having successfully managed to overcome the difficulties.

– During the World Cup and the European Championships in Vologda in 2001, the snow literally disappeared while the event was in progress. The weather was warm and rainy several days in a row. Despite this, it was a good event. All the World Championship events held in Bulgaria in 2002 had to be organised in reserve areas. The organiser managed to offer the competitors good races. All in all, we have had many good ski orienteering events in the past few years, he says.

Simpler events

Kare Kirkevik would like to see the number of events begin to grow again, thus extending the ski orienteering season and

making it more rewarding for the athletes to practise the sport. The Ski Orienteering Commission believes that there are many ways in which the goal can be achieved. The events can be organised in small, established ski areas, preferably in ski stadiums. The long distance can have several loops. Mass start has come to stay, and there is a need to try out other new event formats as well.

Olympic participation is the dream

The IOF continues to work towards the inclusion of ski orienteering in the Olympic Winter Games.

– As an Olympic sport, ski orienteering would attract much more attention, says Kare.

To have ski orienteering included in the Games would assist in getting more media coverage, particularly TV, which would make it easier to attract sponsors. The possibility to participate in the Olympic Games would also provide much motivation for the athletes. In many countries, participation in the Olympic Games is a precondition for financial support to athletes.

New junior stars in ski orienteering

BY ERIK BORG

New junior stars have again come to the fore in ski orienteering. Three years ago, Jonne Lehto won all the gold medals at the Junior World Championships. Last year, Erik Rost won all the individual competitions, and this year in Ivanovo, Russia it is Andrey Lamov who has come away with four out of four possible golds. Tatiana Kozlova also had a good haul with three golds.

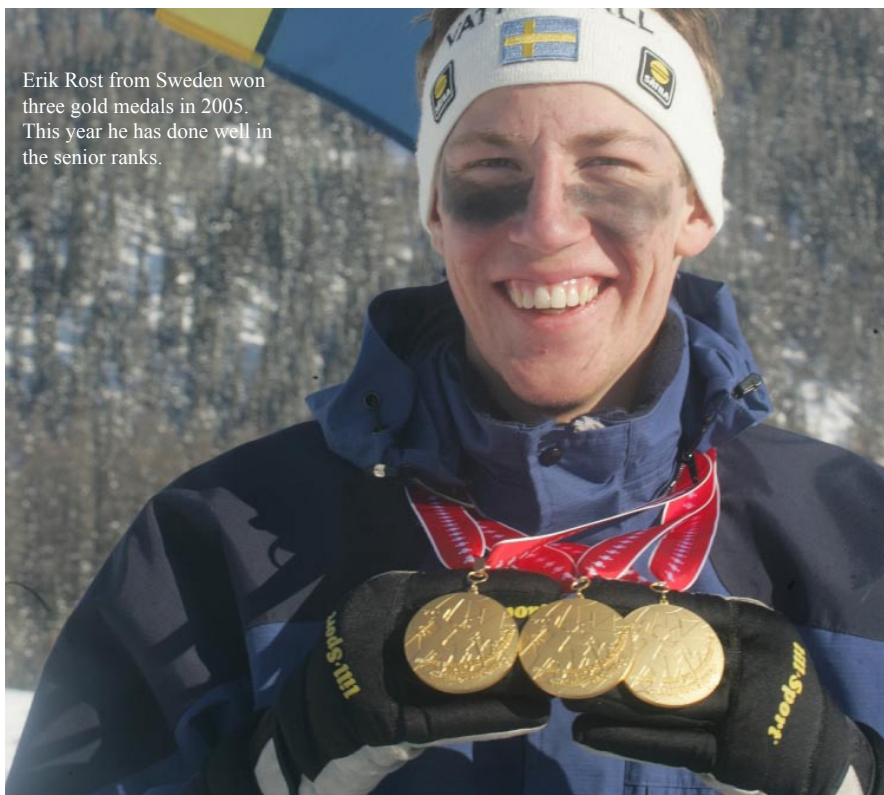
Lamov has impressed greatly this winter. Even against senior opposition, the Russian junior has fared well. He took part in the World Cup round in Finland and achieved 9th place in the middle distance race. At the Junior World Championships he completely outclassed all the others. Only in the relay were his opponents anywhere near to matching his time. In the individual races he was wholly supreme.

Lamov achieved what Jonne Lehto did on his home terrain two years ago; the Finn won everything in Vuokatti. Since then the sprint format has been added to the programme, so Lamov won one more gold medal than the Finn. Overall both have the same number of Junior World Championship golds – 5.

Last year it was Erik Rost who was the big star, with three individual golds and a silver in the relay. Russia, with Lamov one of the three in the team, were victorious this year.

Next winter Lamov joins the senior ranks. This year's results show that he can become a top senior in no time. Erik Rost has coped with the move from junior to senior level this year impressively well. He was 14th overall in the World Cup standings and had expected it to be tougher amongst the seniors. Jonne Lehto on the other hand has not continued as impressively in the senior class as he finished as a junior.

Amongst the women, Tatiana Kozlova did almost as well as her compatriot Lamov in Ivanovo. The Russian girl won three golds and one silver, the silver at long distance. She was at the top last year too, with gold medals from the sprint and the relay. She too has five Junior World Championship gold medals from her short career so far.



Erik Rost from Sweden won three gold medals in 2005. This year he has done well in the senior ranks.

PHOTO: ERIK BORG



Tatiana Kozlova also had a good Championships, winning three golds.

PHOTO: ERIK BORG



Tomas Löfgren:

I can be even better

Tomas Löfgren rejoiced in Sweden's relay victory when he arrived at the finish. Staffan Tunis and Finland took silver.

BY ERIK BORG

Swede, Tomas Löfgren, won everything during the last World Cup round in ski orienteering. He took four out of four golds, but he knows that he can get even better.

Was this your best form ever?

– Yes, I was in incredibly good shape. Everything seemed so easy - I was mentally strong, and physically strong as well. I was able to give my best and could try to increase my speed. I felt like I could go on forever. My form in the long distance was by far the best I have experienced. However, one should not forget that the flat terrain suited me very well as I have a solid build and in Ivanovo I didn't have too much climb, says Tomas.

The quadruple European Champion won the middle distance race in the 2004 World Ski Orienteering Championships at Åsarna, Sweden. In Russia, he felt almost the same as when he won the World Championship gold. He wasn't so successful earlier this year, though. He skied very well but had some problems with orienteering technique. Before the European Cham-

pionships he also had some other minor problems, so his goal was to win some medals at Ivanovo.

Are you determined to continue after this week or do you feel that you have had enough? You already have a World Championship gold.

– I am certainly more determined to continue. I know that I can still improve a lot and it would be nice to try to reach the next level in 2007. But if I were to quit now, I would be quite happy with what I have already achieved, Tomas smiles.

Tomas works 70% of the time as a construction engineer and project leader. There is currently some reorganisation going on in his work place and it may not, in future, be possible to combine his job with hard training. If that happens, he may decide to finish his elite level ski orienteering career.

When do you make the decision?

– I will get to know more regarding my future job at the end of March. Therefore, I hope to make the decision by the

end of April, he says.

In April, he'll go to Mallorca on a holiday trip, but that will naturally not keep him away from training. He intends to participate in some biking competitions later this year and he looks forward to being able to do some biking at Mallorca.

How was it to go back home to Sweden after the event?

– It was, of course, very nice, although I had caught a cold and I was therefore not able to participate in the Vasaloppet ski race, as I had planned. But I felt so good about having been successful in so many competitions that I wasn't too "disappointed" about being sick, Tomas smiles.

– My parents and my girlfriend, a representative of the Borlänge municipality, and people from the club came to Borlänge railway station to meet me when I arrived back home after the event. The following day, several people at work congratulated me. A team from a TV channel came to my house and made a feature on me. I also got a lot of flowers, says Tomas.

Stine wins all

BY ERIK BORG

In February this year, Stine Hjermsstad Kirkevik won the overall World Cup in ski orienteering. She also took a European Championship gold and she has now won everything that can be won in ski orienteering. This may have been 29-year-old Stine's last season as an elite ski orienteer.

Before the final World Cup round and the European Championships in Ivanovo, 300 km north of Moscow, Russia, Stine had already won all other major titles.

– I am particularly pleased about the win in the overall World Cup competition as it was my main goal for this season, says Stine.

The Norwegian ski orienteer achieved her goal and it is possible that she won't continue her elite career.

– I would need to be 100 % motivated to continue my career, and I don't yet know what my decision will be. I would also need to work less in order to continue to be successful at the international level. Until the end of last year, I worked on an 80 % basis. I didn't have as much time for my family or for training as I would have liked.

– As I have won the overall World Cup and the European Championship title, I have won all the major international ski orienteering events. In all likelihood, the trend would be downwards if I were to continue my career. On the other hand, ski orienteering is so much fun and I enjoy both the hard training and the competitions. It would also be a challenge to beat the Russian ski orienteers on their home ground in the World Championships in Russia next year and, to have a chance to do that I would probably need to work less. Tommy and I wouldn't mind having a bigger family, and I would certainly also enjoy having time for other things in life. I will take the decision within the next two months, she says.

Stine's husband Tommy Olsen (39), who has also been among the world's best ski orienteers, is definitely going to finish his

career at the end of this season. Their son, Simen, is now three years old.

What have all the victories given you?

– It has given me a lot of satisfaction to know that I am able to master the physical, mental, and orienteering technical requirements of the major events. Being able to master yourself is very important for motivation and it helps you through all the hours of hard training. To be on the top podium in ski orienteering means that many different components must fall into place.

– I have overcome difficulties on the way to the top. I have learned from my mistakes and been stronger afterwards, which is a very valuable asset in life. It is awesome to have won a World Championship in all the different event formats, the overall World Cup, and to have won European Championship and Nordic Championship gold, but on the other hand it makes me feel that my elite career has already given me everything I can expect it to give. This, indeed, is the main reason why I don't

know if I am motivated enough to continue any longer.

What are the reasons for your success?

– I think that I have a talent for endurance sport, and ski orienteering suits me well because of its nature. It requires the ability to make quick decisions and it does not require as much detailed navigation as foot orienteering. I also have a strong upper body that is a clear advantage. When I was a junior, I didn't train much, so I then needed to train hard for some years in order to be stable at a high level. I had to work particularly hard to develop my physical strength and my technique while learning to become more focussed during competition. I also needed to become more self-reliant, and to find the correct balance between excitement and concentration in competition. I believe that it is important not to make training too complicated, but to work systematically in the same way over a longer period and I believe that it will then yield the desired result, concludes Stine.



Stine Hjermsstad Kirkevik celebrating her gold medal with champagne.

PHOTO: ERIK BORG

New World Elite Events Programme

BY CLIVE ALLEN

The new World Cup, eagerly awaited by the many nations that find the present model too costly and some of the existing contributory events too low key, will be launched in 2007, and the programme of races has recently been published. Consisting of four sprint, four middle distance (one including MicrO) and two long distance races, the programme is based around the World Championships in Ukraine and other existing high-quality competitions in Finland, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland.

Background

For three years now there has been extensive discussion in IOF circles, individual federations and amongst elite orienteers and their coaches concerning the annual IOF elite events programme.

The need for reappraisal has arisen partly in connection with the move to having a World Championships (WOC) every year. The first model to be used in this context has been to have two World Cup rounds, one before and one after WOC, but many nations have complained that the extra costs of sending runners to WOC on an annual basis has made the whole World Cup format too expensive and the overall annual programme too arduous.

But there have also been other factors. The World Cup events, organised just for the elite classes, have not been able to meet the standards for media coverage, arena production, numbers of spectators, value of prizes etc. which WOC and some other major events can achieve. And although it



PHOTO: PIRJO VALJANEN

was a good idea to have World Cup rounds in as many different countries as possible, it has been found difficult to transfer expertise from experienced to less experienced organisers, and there have always been serious financial restraints too.

In August 2003 the IOF Council set up an Events Programme Group (EPG) which consulted widely and had input from 29 member federations along with 61 runners and coaches representing 23 nations. The EPG final report made a lot of recommendations, including placing considerable weight on developing further the concept of Regional Championships, which would be a key part of the future world-wide programme.

The IOF Foot-O Commission (FOC) worked from the report to produce a full proposal which was first presented at the Presidents' Conference in Japan last August and then published by IOF in November last year. The new World Cup comprises individual competitions only and is seen to provide several key benefits.

A prestigious series of events

By building on already existing, high profile competitions, the new World Cup aims to achieve considerably higher media attention than the present model. The names Jukola, O-Festivalen, O-Ringen and PostFinance Sprint are already very well-known in the orienteering world and these competitions already attract a high proportion of the world's elite and good press and TV coverage.

TV coverage, professional arena production at the standards set at recent WOC's, and prize money are in the future obligatory features for each participant competition. One of the aims of the new World Cup is to spread these standards and the associated expertise to more and more countries.

The athletes will certainly benefit, not

2007 World Cup programme

Date	Type of Competition	Event	Country
14 June	Sprint	Jukola	Finland
22 June	Middle with MicrO	O-Festivalen	Norway
23 July	Long	O-Ringen	Sweden
24 July	Middle	O-Ringen	Sweden
25 July	Sprint	O-Ringen	Sweden
22 August	Middle	WOC	Ukraine
25 August	Long	WOC	Ukraine
26 August	Sprint	WOC	Ukraine
6 October	Middle	PostFinance Sprint	Switzerland
7 October	Sprint	PostFinance Sprint	Switzerland

only from the increased media attention but also from an event schedule that fits in more readily with the natural season peaks and with a final that is a natural climax to the season. The all-important costs of taking part will be much reduced, leading to fuller representation from more nations and therefore a higher quality field.

Special invitations for each competition will go to at least the best 3 men and 3 women in the world, with all expenses paid by the competition hosts. There will also be money prizes for the top place-getters in the final World Cup standings.

More open entry

It is intended that entry will be far more open than it is now, i.e. it will not be solely by national team selection. Runners will be able to qualify as individuals, through their position in the World Rankings or by a direct qualification method, and will then be designated by country. There will however be some limitation on the numbers that can participate from any particular country. Details of how this will work will be published in the Special Rules for the 2007 World Cup later this year.

Development of regional championships a priority

The European Championships held every other year will most likely be included in future World Cup programmes. Development of other existing and projected regional championships in other major regions of the world to a quality level consistent with World Cup status is a major priority for IOF in its long-term strategy for the spread of orienteering and eventual Olympics inclusion. The World Games, held every four years, can also be a focal point for the new World Cup.

IOF's other big task now in connection with the World Cup is to get national TV transmissions sent to other countries, so that the whole World Cup can be followed in all the most active orienteering nations.

The World Cup programmes for 2008 and 2009 will be finalised and published by 30 June and 31 December 2006 respectively.

Sweden - better prepared this year for the World Championships

BY ERIK BORG

Göran Andersson has only good words to say about this winter. This year's long and hard winter has made it possible to build up the runners' basic training more than usual, and when they come to Denmark the Swedish team will be better prepared than before last year's World Championships (WOC).

– Snow is a good medium for building up strength and condition, says Göran.

The winter has been much longer than normal in many countries, not least in Sweden. Many activities have been cancelled, including the first senior championship events and also a training camp in Denmark in the middle of March, but Head Coach Andersson is not worried. It's a very long time until this season's biggest challenge, WOC in Denmark.

But the very white winter has also had its plusses. The period for basic training has been lengthened and so there has been the opportunity to do more than in a normal year with less snow.

What the Swedish trainer sees as less satisfactory than the hard winter is the Swedish closed season. In order that animals can get some peace, there is a longer break from competition in large parts of Sweden in the spring.

– Once the snow has disappeared, the closed season starts, says Göran in frustration.

Not snow the whole winter

With regard to the national squad's activities overall, it isn't just snow that has ruled what has been done during the winter. The national team has not had a training camp this year in a more southerly climate, but many clubs have. Recently, groups of national squad runners have driven some distance to train on clear ground.

– A trip like that can be motivational. It hasn't a lot of meaning technically, but is very uplifting mentally, says Göran. Because there hasn't been an official

camp in southern Europe, runners have had some economic support for driving to snow-free terrain.

Whilst most have been very active on skis home in Sweden, there are some in the Swedish team who prefer to run even when there is snow.

Short and intense camps

The Swedish team had a longer training camp prior to WOC in Japan. It was too little, says Göran. The runners were not really technically or mentally prepared for what was to come. In the case of Denmark there is no great travelling distance to speak of, compared to Japan, and there will be more and shorter camps for both women and men, who will share the same camps. In all there will be 4 or 5 camps in Denmark, each of 5 to 6 days. The camps are so much shorter so as to get the greatest possible value from each camp. Apart from the camps, many have competed and trained a lot in Denmark, as it is so close.

The goal for WOC in Denmark is two gold medals for Sweden. Last year there was just Emil Wingstedt's sprint gold, whilst the haul was three on home ground in Västerås.

Promising son

The Swedish national coach in orienteering has a very talented ski orienteer in the family. His son Calle Grape was fourth in the sprint race in this year's Junior World Championships in ski orienteering.



The Swedish national coach Göran Andersson enjoying the hot weather at WOC in Japan.

PHOTO: ERIK BORG