

ORIENTEERING

WORLD

2016



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IOF Athlete of the year Tove Alexandersson won two gold medals at the European Ski Orienteering Championships in Obertilliach, Austria. Photo: Donatas Lazauskas



Iryna Kullkova, Ukraine at PreO day 1 at the World Trail Orienteering Championships in Strömstad, Sweden. Photo: Joaquim Margarido

A word from the President

When I was elected President of the IOF in August, I said that “To spread and develop orienteering in the world is one main target for the IOF.” After my first four months in office, it is time to look back at the orienteering year of 2016.

The first World Orienteering Day took place on 11th May this year and was a great success, achieving and surpassing our goals of spreading orienteering and engaging youth. This could not have happened, however, without a lot of hard work from many people. So firstly, thank you to each and every one of you who organised and participated in a World Orienteering Day event. The success of this great achievement is ours to share.

The international reach of the World Orienteering Day project has made it a really powerful tool to show orienteering as a global sport. World Orienteering Day is noted and supported by the International Olympic Committee, and our World Orienteering Day activities are well aligned with the key objective of IOC Olympic Agenda 2020: engaging youth through sport. In 2016, we showed the world just how much passion and initiative can be found in orienteers all over the world, and in 2017 we have the chance to prove it again, and share orienteering with even more people.

One of this year’s most significant changes to the IOF came at the General Assembly

in August, when we took the bold step of reducing our membership from 80 Member Federations to 70. This is an extraordinary step in the world of sport, and one which was met with a positive response from the IOC and other International Federations. Many International Federations have a number of members who do not actively participate in the sport, but our message was that we don’t count flags, we count active members! We now have a total of 70 IOF members, including 65 members and 5 provisional members, and we have made sure that they are all actively developing orienteering. Furthermore we are already putting structures in place with the aim of bringing IOF membership back up to 80 by 2020. In order to reach this target, the key will be cooperation between the IOF, the IOF Regional and Youth Development Commission, Regional Coordinators, Regional and Sub-regional bodies and Member Federations.

As I look ahead to 2017, I see great opportunities for continuing to develop and spread orienteering. As a part of our global and youth development work, the IOF will work to build on the World Orienteering Day success of last year. Development of orienteering will also come in the form of developing our High-Level Events towards the highest quality. I am looking forward to a year of successful events, great sporting achievements and many new orienteers welcomed to our great orienteering family.



Leho Haldna

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IOF President

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World Orienteering Day

May 11th 2016 was a great great success worldwide



The biggest event was held at Hunan University in China. The race was entered by 2 462 participants.

A record-breaking event in China

A very successful event was held at the “thousand-year-old academy” Hunan University in China. The race was entered by 2462 participants with an age span of 4 to 60 years. Over 30 local and national media from newspapers, TV and radio to online media made reports on the event and the total audiences reached over

1.2 million people. The event resulted in several “firsts” for China. It was the first orienteering event enjoyed by over 2000 runners in the 30-year history of Chinese orienteering, the first orienteering event reported on by over 30 media and the first full live coverage of orienteering in China.

252 927 participants

Female participants **52%**

Young participants (0-23 years) **86%**

Participants under 12 years **47%**

2013 locations

81 registered countries and territories

worldorienteeringday.com

had **126 420** page views in April and May

61,5% of the visitors are younger than 34

20% of the visitors live in Asia

#worldorienteeringday

More than 800 photos with #worldorienteeringday on Instagram

Some of the non-IOF members taking part:

Iceland, Haiti, Oman, Bosnia Hercegovina, Afghanistan, Guatemala, Algeria and Costa Rica

World Orienteering Day 2016 stories



A lot of children participating in World Orienteering Day in Greece. Argentina is one of the South American IOF members celebrating WOD (below).



Text: Henrik Rindom Knudsen

From North to South

The 2013 events were spread all over the world. The northernmost event was held at Høgtun School in the very northern part of Norway. They battled for the title of the northernmost event with another Norwegian event held in Kirkenes and events held in the Russian city Talnakh.

The southernmost event was held in Invercargill in the southern part of New Zealand. As well as other events in New Zealand, events in Hobart, Australia were the closest opponents for southernmost event. Both Argentina and Chile have territories south of New Zealand, but both countries' events were placed further north than Invercargill. An event in Antarctica would of course have beaten them all.

The first

The first ever World Orienteering Day event was held in Canberra in the eastern part of Australia. 15-year-old Noah Poland was up early to organise the event. Here is his report:

– I was really excited when I heard about World Orienteering Day. So I searched for what events were on in my city. As it turned out, the events that were on clashed with other commitments.

So I began thinking, how can I still be involved in WOD? Then the thought came, perhaps Australia could organise the first WOD event ever?

If we were to beat New Zealand and New Caledonia, how would we do it?

So I set up an event and invited all the orienteers I knew for a mass start at 6:15am, only expecting to get one or two people showing interest. But it was a success! Within a week, about ten people said that they were coming.

In the dark, the first competitors were arriving!

After a great event with winning times of 16 minutes, finish sprints and a great bit of fun, I packed up the club banner, walked to the bus stop and caught the bus to school.

Score event in Hungary

In Budapest, a score event successfully introduced orienteering to 141 boys and 142 girls. A park was the venue where the students had to find as many controls as possible within 20 minutes. The one who collected the most was the winner. In the event of a tie, the time would decide. 14 classes had their own mass-start during the day, with the three first in each class awarded with WOD diplomas.



21 children participated in the World Orienteering Day event in Boane, Mozambique. In the Indonesian capital Jakarta maze orienteering was tested at WOD (below).

Also for non-members

The IOF currently has 70 full or provisional members. With 81 countries and territories participating in WOD 2016, the IOF family has potential to grow even bigger.



Maze in Indonesia

In the Indonesian capital Jakarta, the orienteering club MUBLOC used WOD to have multiple sets of orienteering activities. At Budi Luhur University, the club organized workshops about orienteering in general and about how to make orienteering maps. The participants had the opportunity to do orienteering in practice in two different formats. A short course in two artificial labyrinths in front of the university offered good challenges. Additionally, an ordinary sprint course was set around the university. The event attracted 135 of Indonesia's 766 WOD participants.

Competition in Africa

Out of the African countries, Egypt attracted the most participants. With 2886 participants, they were far ahead of South Africa, which had second most with 1124. Comparing the number of events, it was a tie between Egypt and South Africa, both with 14 events.

Turkey was outstanding

With almost 20 percent of all World Orienteering Day participants, Turkey was outstanding in the participation rate and involvement of schools.

When finalizing the official event calendar for the Turkish Orienteering Federation back in August 2015, WOD was put down as one of the officially recognised orienteering activities.

A lot of promotion activities went in to the School Sports Championships. All schools on the podium were asked whether they had registered for WOD yet.

The WOD website was closely monitored and any activity was advertised on the Federation's Facebook page, thus creating an atmosphere of excitement throughout the country.

During the seminar on course planning for younger age groups, a short session on WOD awareness was given, targeting all coaches involved with ages 14 and younger.

Local municipalities were contacted. Etimesgut Municipality of Ankara agreed to provide the transportation of over 1000 children in the region, to Göksupark some 15 km away, where WOD was held as a huge o-festival.



Maja Alm, Denmark, stormed round the varied and tricky sprint at the World Orienteering Championships to take the gold medal for the second year in succession. Photo: Donatas Lazuskas



Foot Orienteering in 2016: Kyburz and Alexandersson dominate

Matthias Kyburz won the Sprint and the Middle distance at the European Championships in Jeseník, Czech Republic. Photo: Donatas Lazauskas

Text: Clive Allen

It's a good few years ago now since Switzerland established itself as a leading orienteering nation on a par with the best in Scandinavia, with the phenomenal Simone Niggli heading a long list of both men and women Swiss athletes competing at the highest peak of orienteering performance.

Since Niggli's retirement from elite competition, her mantle as leading world athlete passed first to Judith Wyder and then last year to Daniel Hubmann, both Swiss. Now it is Matthias Kyburz who has come to the fore, but the longer-term future seems secure too; Simona Aebbersold, Joey Hadorn and Thomas Curiger, all from Switzerland, were the dominant personalities in this year's Junior World Championships.

Fantastic year for Matthias Kyburz

It has been a quite fantastic year for 26-year-old Matthias Kyburz. He became known first as a Sprint specialist, but he has now developed into a superb performer in all formats of Foot Orienteering. World and European Champion at Middle distance, European Sprint Champion and four gold medals at the World Military Championships are the height of his achievements this year, backed up by silver medals in World Championships (WOC) Sprint and Relay and, not least, overall victory in the World Cup for the third time. "When I won gold at both the European and World

Championships in 2012 and also the World Cup overall, I thought that was once in a life-time," he remarked. "Now I have done it again. It's fantastic!"

What about the future? "I am missing a medal on the Long distance at both European and World Championships. These medals are my main goal now," he says.

Among the men, no-one has yet won gold in all five formats. Thierry Gueorgiou (France) and Daniel Hubmann have won all



except the Sprint Relay. Kyburz is missing only the Long. Next year he again has the chance to be the first ever, in Foot or Ski Orienteering, to achieve gold in all formats. The Sprint Relay was of course included for the first time only in 2014; Simone Niggli, who won all the gold medals at three WOC's, didn't have the chance to get a Sprint Relay gold before she retired.

Matthias Kyburz clearly loves to compete at top level. He is the only athlete in both the men's and women's top twenty in the final World Cup standings to have competed

in all ten World Cup races, which include all the European and World Championship individual finals. He finished with 5 wins and 2 second places and a points total that was a massive 307 points clear of his nearest rival, Daniel Hubmann – who achieved the rare distinction of 3 bronze individual medals at WOC. Olav Lundanes, Norway took third place after a fine year that included WOC golds in Long and Relay.

Tove Alexandersson – World Cup winner for third year running

The women's podiums were dominated this year by the Swedish athlete Tove Alexandersson, who at last won gold at WOC and got a top-three placing in all of the eight World Cup races she ran in – more on this in a separate article. She topped the final World Cup rankings for the third year in succession, this time by a relatively small margin ahead of Judith Wyder, with Denmark's Maja Alm finishing third. Judith Wyder showed that she had recovered well from her back problems in 2015, winning the European Sprint title and three more World Cup races.

Maja Alm is World Sprint Champion and also won gold in the WOC Sprint Relay, both a repeat of last year. And she provided one of the memorable moments of this year's WOC: starting out fourth on the final leg of the Women's Relay, her exceptional speed took her quickly up to bronze medal position with Natalia Gemperle, Russia and Merja Rantanen, Finland somewhat ahead. Two legs from the end, Alm took a diffi-



It was total Swiss dominance at the Junior World Orienteering Championships on home ground. Switzerland won 10 of the 18 individual medals and also both men's and women's relay. Photos: Malin Fuhr

cult-to-see longer but faster route choice on the other side of a stream, a decisive moment in the race that took her ahead of Rantanen and into Silver medal position for Denmark, behind Russia. Wonderful to follow on the arena big screen and on TV and the internet with the aid of GPS! Huge excitement in the arena!

Harbour-side Sprint arena for World Championships

WOC was well organised in superb terrain near the west Swedish coast centred on Strömstad, not far from the border with Norway. In fact one route choice on the men's Long course took the competitors actually into Norway! All the Sprints were held within Strömstad with the two finals using a wonderfully scenic arena beside the picturesque harbour. There was a bird's-eye view from nearby cliffs enjoyed by a TV camera and quite a few spectators. The Middle race too had a unique arena, with two huge satellite dishes dominating the site.

TV coverage used more cameras and cables than ever before, under the capable control of Karel Jonak and his Czech crew. Record lengths of cabling were used by the TV crew for the Long race, with one run of almost 10 km! The running cameraman was frequently in action and got some wonderful shots of top competitors deep in the forest, and the production cleverly mixed live pictures and GPS tracking. A record number of countries took live coverage or highlights, and pay-to-view web-TV (IOF LiveCenter) again proved very popular.



Other names worthy of mention include the Norwegian Anne Margrethe Hausken Nordberg, who was bronze medalist in the WOC Long race at the age of 40. Up-and-coming Canadian Emily Kemp was fourth in both European and World Championship Middle races, young Tim Robertson from New Zealand is steadily moving up the Sprint rankings with two good Championship performances, and 24-year-old Swede Martin Regborn enjoyed an exceptional European Championships: bronze at Long distance and fourth in both Sprint and Relay.

The European Championships held in late May were in the very capable hands of

the Czech Republic, whilst Poland hosted three days of exciting racing at the beginning of the World Cup season and Switzerland as usual was the venue for a memorable World Cup Final.

Swiss juniors excel – 10 out of 18 individual medals

This year's Swiss dominance was emphasised even more strongly at the Junior World Championships where, on home ground it should be said, Switzerland won 10 of the 18 individual medals and also both men's and women's relays. The Scandinavian individual medal tally was 6.

Top-flight results for newer o-nations



With Anastasia Denisova's bronze medal in the Sprint, Belarus became the 19th country that has won a WOC medal.

Text: Henrik Rindom Knudsen
Photos: Malin Fuhr

Nowadays it is more the rule than the exception that some runners from smaller orienteering nations will achieve great success at WOC, and 2016 was not an exception. Emily Kemp and Anastasia Denisova are fine examples of runners from smaller orienteering nations teasing those from the bigger ones.

More nations are starting to provide runners at absolute top level. In the women's Middle distance at WOC 2016, the top eight places were taken by athletes from eight different nations. Older nations such as the Scandinavian countries were represented among these, but also more untraditional orienteering nations such as Belarus and Canada.

Canada has previously had a few runners who have made it to the top ten at WOC, but no-one as good as Emily Kemp, who came fourth in the Middle distance and eighth in the Long. Returning to Canada shortly after WOC, Emily Kemp noticed that her results had resounded in the Canadian orienteering community:

– It was incredible to see how my performances at international level had touched so many people. They are the part of my orienteering family that saw me go off to my first JWOC in 2008. They were so happy and excited to see me reaching those goals, Emily Kemp says.

An inspiration for youngsters

Before this year's WOC, Belarus had never achieved a top 10 position. That was thoroughly changed with Anastasia Denisova's incredible performances, when she surprisingly won the bronze medal in the Sprint, and came sixth in the Long distance and eighth in the Middle.

She hopes that the young orienteers in Belarus will get some inspiration from her after her performance at this year's WOC:

– I hope this will be motivational for our youngsters. It is important to show them it is possible. I have lived in Belarus until a year ago and I have managed to do well, so it is not impossible. You just need to work really hard, Anastasia Denisova says.

Because orienteering is a non-Olympic sport, there is not much financial support as a Belarusian athlete. You have to pay your own entry fees, transport costs and living expenses. A noticeable example is clothing: – I have one Belarusian t-shirt. It is from 2012. It was my first one and my only one so far, says Anastasia Denisova, who hopes her performances can attract some sponsors and governmental funding for the national federation.

Believe in the talents

Emily Kemp moved from Canada to France in 2010 and has lived in Finland since 2014. She doesn't think it is impossible to reach the top without living in a classic orienteering nation, but it does provide some advantages:



Canadian Emily Kemp fought for a medal to the end on Middle distance. She finished in 4th place and the best ever WOC result for Canada.

– You have more opportunities to compete against the world elite. This makes it so that the start list at WOC is much less terrifying, because I have run against all the same runners many times before. In my junior years I would show up a week before JWOC and discover the terrain, whereas now I can have multiple training camps leading up to WOC and know exactly what to expect for the competition, Emily Kemp says.

When asked what advice she would give smaller orienteering federations about how they best can bring up and support talents, Emily Kemp thinks much can be achieved by believing in the talents:

– I think the most important thing is to help the talents to believe that everything is possible, and to challenge them to always reach higher. By believing in them, then they can believe in themselves, despite the obstacles that will come up along the way, Emily Kemp says.

Anastasia Denisova agrees with Emily Kemp. Believing in the talents is important, but it also comes down to the athletes themselves:

– Every orienteer has the opportunity to become a World Champion. They just need to prioritise their time. And train really, really hard, Anastasia Denisova says.

orienteering.org had 7065

unique visitors on August 23 for the WOC Middle distance.

WOC was available to television viewers in **91** countries and territories, a record number.

17 hours of live coverage from WOC

20 kilometres of cable were used on an average day. The longest distance was 10 km from the arena to the control at the Norwegian border during the Long distance.

The Relay was the most popular broadcast in the IOF LiveCenter with 3003 viewers.

The national TV-channel NRK reached **324 000** Norwegians during the Long distance when Olav Lundanes won gold.



Russia won its first ever Relay gold medal on the women's side with Anastasia Rudnaya, Svetlana Mironova and Natalia Gemperle in the team.



TV coverage from the Sprint in Strömstad

- **47** nations
- Jerker Lysell, Sweden, had a kilometre time of **3.31** when he won the men's Sprint final.
- The men's Long distance was **15.5** kilometres, which is exactly the same as the previous year in Scotland. The longest course ever at a WOC was in 2013 in Finland where it was 19.8 km.
- When the Sprint relay was added to the WOC programme in 2014, **Denmark** came second. The two following years have led to victories.

Medals

Sweden 3 gold 2 bronze
Norway 2 gold 2 silver 1 bronze
Denmark 2 gold 1 silver
Switzerland 1 gold 4 silver 3 bronze
Russia 1 gold 1 silver 1 bronze
France 1 silver
Belarus 1 bronze
Finland 1 bronze



Lars Hol Moholdt won three gold medals at the European Ski Orienteering Championships in Austria. Photo: Donatas Lazauskas

Lars Hol Moholdt:

– I hadn't dreamt of having such a successful Championship!

Text: Erik Borg

Lars Hol Moholdt enjoyed some remarkably good days in Austria last winter. Now the Norwegian is on the road to becoming better than ever.

Gold, gold and gold again. Lars Hol Moholdt stepped up to the top of the podium in all the individual races at the European Ski Orienteering Championships in Austria.

– I hadn't expected such results at all, Lars smiles.

Had an extra advantage

The 31-year-old athlete, together with most of the Norwegian team, prepared for the main races last winter with a week in Anterselva in Italy. Training at 1600 metres above sea level was good preparation for the European Championships, which took place at high altitude.

– I have quite a lot of experience of being at high altitude. Not all of the others felt as well as me physically. I felt like I had an extra gear, he smiles.

The start of the success

Two years ago, on home ground in Norway, Moholdt reached the top in an international Championship for the first time when he won the Long distance at the World Ski Orienteering Championships.

– I hadn't done so well in previous Championships. I had never given up believing that I could win, but it was so good when I finally succeeded.

The win gave him some self-confidence, which has only increased since his fantastic results in the European Championships last winter.



It was two times Sweden on top in the Ski Orienteering World Cup with Erik Rost and Tove Alexandersson. Photo: Mårten Lång

Doesn't expect the same this season

This winter the European Championships will take place in Finland, where Lars spends most of the year together with Tiia Tallila. But the Championships on his "second home ground" aren't the main goal of the winter.

– When a winter includes the World Ski Orienteering Championships, there isn't anything bigger than that.

Is the goal this winter

a record number of golds – four golds?

Lars laughs: – It will really be something different this winter. I had an advantage last winter through being so comfortable with the high altitude. Of course I want to

go fast, and victory is the goal when I start. My goal for the World Championships is one gold.

What about the European Championships?

– The last time both ESOC and WSOC were held in the same season was two years ago, and they were so close together that I concentrated on WSOC. Now it will be a bit different, as there's one month between the Championships, so there is time to go hard for both.

In 2017 the European Championships will take place in Imatra, Finland, which is close to Russia, and the World Championships will take place in Krasnoyarsk in the middle of Siberia.



Russia with Andrey Lamov and Alena Trapeznikova won the Mixed sprint relay at the European Ski Orienteering Championships. Photos: Tom Hollowell

– Three of the best Russian men, Kirill Veselov, Andrey Grigoriev, Vladimir Barchukov are from Krasnoyarsk. For them and their team-mates, the World Championships on home ground will be an exceptional goal. The Russian men are also ready for a fight, after not doing so well as they had hoped in some other international championships, the Norwegian thinks.

Moholdt expects Andrey Lamov and the ever-young Eduard Khrennikov (Photo) to do well as always.

– Stanimir Belomazhev from Bulgaria and Erik Rost, last year's World Cup winner, will of course also do well.

Aiming for a new level

Are you on the same level as last winter?

– I am working to be on a higher level. You need all the time you can get to do better, he says.

In preparation for this season, the Norwegian has been working a lot on being faster at skiing on the smaller tracks. Since early November there has been a lot of opportunity for good training on snow both in Finland, where Lars started the season at the beginning of December, and at home in Norway.

Khrennikov at the top since 2002

Erik Rost had a superb start to the World Cup last winter when he won all the races



in the first round in Germany, and went on to win the World Cup overall ahead of Moholdt. Eduard Khrennikov was third. Khrennikov's first WSOC gold was won 14½ years ago, in Bulgaria in 2002. The Russian has seven individual gold medals so far.

At WSOC four years ago, Peter Arneson won four gold medals, winning all the individual races as well as the Sprint Relay in Kazakhstan. After not going so hard for

the sport for a while, he is now speeding up again. The men who have been in the business for a long time are expected to take most of the medals at WSOC, but new names like Tuomas Kotro, who won a medal at the Student World Orienteering Championships, and Yuri Yazykou from Belarus are two to look out for.

Mariya Kechkina:

Sudden gold flow

Text: Erik Borg

Photo: Tom Hollowell

Before the European Ski Orienteering Championships in Austria last season, Mariya Kechkina had won no individual international medals. In the Alps she was crowned the Queen of the Championships.

Firstly, Kechkina took bronze in the Sprint on the Monday. Two days later she won her first international individual title on the Middle distance. On the Friday, the Russian was on the top of the podium again after the Long distance. Previously, a fourth place at the Middle distance in Kazakhstan in 2013 was her best individual performance from five European Championships and three World Championships. In the Relay, she was in the winning team at ESOC in Norway in 2011. In Austria Russia's first team, with Mariya on one of the legs, also finished first but was disqualified.

What helped you perform so well in Austria?

– Last winter I prepared for the European Championships more carefully than in the previous year. Before the Championships there was a special training session in the Austrian mountains. So I think the main reasons for success were smart preparations and a good functional state of my body, Mariya says, before adding:

– The main thing is a great desire to do well.

How has the success last winter changed you?

– I was very glad that my long-term training gave such results, but I don't feel that anything has changed after last season. I have continued training as usual.

Lives in winter district

The 30-year-old Russian is from Perm in the Urals. The climate is suitable for winter orienteering.

– I do both summer and winter orienteering, but mostly SkiO. I usually practise orienteering in summer for my technical skills. Until I was 20 years old I went for both sports. Eduard Khrennikov is my coach, and when choosing between the two alternatives we agreed to choose SkiO. But I love FootO very much too.

When and how did you realise that you are so talented?

– Talented? I don't think so! I know some people who are really talented in orienteering. Last season I managed the psychological



Mariya Kechkina took a big step forward last winter. Now the World Championships on home ground await her.

challenges. I don't know how the new season will develop for me.

How have you improved your level since last winter?

– It's very difficult to say, but during the preparations I have paid more attention to psychological aspects of my approach.

How far ahead are you looking in your future plans?

– I don't know how many years I will train and take part in competitions. I want to achieve more success and good results. I hope that I will be able to do so.

Mariya and her husband Den have a son, Andrew, who is five years old.

– I love my son very much and want to spend more time with my family, but it's hard as I am often away from home for long periods of time. I really miss my family when I am away. Luckily I can sometimes go to training camps together with my family.

WSOC on home ground

The upcoming World Ski Orienteering Championships will take place in Russia, but there is some distance between Perm and Krasnoyarsk.

– Russia is a big country and the distance from Perm to Krasnoyarsk is 2744 kilometres! It's a long distance for most countries, but isn't much in Russia. If you travel by train it takes two days, but if you go by plane it takes two to three hours.

I will take part in SkiO competitions in Krasnoyarsk for the first time. Even though it's quite far from Perm it's still in Russia and it will be home ground. When competitions take place on home ground there is additional support, but it also adds an additional psychological stress. Many friends, relatives and those who love the sport of orienteering will watch and support us, and therefore we will try to produce the best possible results.



Anton Foliforov had an amazing year winning all three individual gold medals at the World MTB Orienteering Championships. Photo: Donatas Lazauskas

The Foliforov Year



Emily Benham and Anton Foliforov celebrating their victories in the MTBO World Cup. Photo: Donatas Lazauskas

Text: Joaquim Margarido

Anton Foliforov won all three individual gold medals at the World MTB Orienteering Championships. This was the stand-out highlight of the 2016 MTBO season. And Foliforov also won the MTBO World Cup for the fourth year in a row.

Any assessment of the 2016 international MTB Orienteering season ends up with the Russian Anton Foliforov as an inescapable key figure. He made his debut in the most important event of the international calendar in 2005, and just five years later he won his first individual gold medal in the Long distance race at the World MTB Orienteering Championships in Portugal. Now he has nine individual titles and two with the Russian team, and Foliforov is being spoken of as the best MTBO athlete of all time by everyone involved in this exciting discipline, with the 2016 season being the highlight of his career.

But the season has also thrown other big names on the MTB orienteering scene into the limelight, in particular Emily Benham from Great Britain, the world champion in the Long distance and Sprint, winner of the World Cup and leader in the IOF World Rankings along with Foliforov. In the final round of the World Cup held in Lithuania,

attention was focussed on the Estonian Lauri Malsroos, thanks to two victories and a second place in the three stages. Six other athletes achieved wins in the MTB Orienteering World Cup season, namely the Swiss Simon Braendli, the French Gaëlle Barlet, the Russian Olga Shipilova Vinogradova, the Finn Marika Hara and the Czechs Krystof Bogar and Martina Tichovska.

Kick-off in France

With winter giving way to a changeable spring, the first races of the season in early March were held in Portugal and Turkey. Races in Denmark were another important attraction in April but it was in May at Guebwiller in France that a hundred or so athletes began to pedal really seriously, in the first round of the 2016 World Cup. Simon Braendli and Emily Benham achieved “the muddiest wins” of their careers in the Long distance stage that opened the round. Second-placed on this first stage, Anton Foliforov managed to win the Middle distance race on the second day, while Benham was again the strongest in the women’s class although sharing the highest place on the podium with Gaëlle Barlet, both recording the same time. After an exciting duel with the Russian team, France achieved a tasty home victory in the Mixed Relay that ended the round.

New heights for MTBO in Iberia



Estonian Lauri Malsroos took two World Cup victories and was second in the overall World Cup. Photos: Joaquim Margarido



Daive Machado's bronze at the Long distance at WMTBOC was the first medal ever for the Iberian countries.

Twenty-two nations at World Championships in Portugal

The most important event of the season, the World MTB Orienteering Championships, took place in central Portugal at the beginning of July, bringing together 78 male and 53 female athletes representing 22 countries. Still tasting the triumphs of the previous round, Anton Foliforov and Emily Benham were the fastest in the Sprint that opened the Championships, and repeated this result in the epic Long distance in temperatures near to 40 degrees Celsius. Olga Shipilova Vinogradova's victory in the Middle distance, another win for the 'flying' Foliforov and also the silver medal for the young Czech Vojtech Ludvik were the most significant moments of a third exciting day. The Czech Team ended its time in Portugal in the best possible way by winning the men's relay, and they took top place on the podium along with Finland, winners of the women's relay for the 8th time in 14 editions of the World MTB Orienteering Championships.

The battle in Lithuania

At the end of September, the forests of Lithuania with their impressive autumnal colours hosted the final round of the World Cup. The men's title was already won by Foliforov, but the women's was still open: would Emily Benham manage to hold her advantage over her most direct opponent, the French Gaëlle Barlet? The British rider settled that question on the first stage, win-



Four gold medals out of four possible was the outstanding result for Veronika Kubínová, Czech Republic, after the Junior World MTBO Championships.

ning the Long distance and putting Barlet out of reach. The Estonian Lauri Malsroos was the winner of the men's race and repeated the feat in the next stage, a quite technical Middle distance. Here, the winner in the women's class was the Finn Marika Hara. The last stage, a challenging Sprint held in the suburbs of the city of Kaunas, brought a double Czech victory with Krystof Bogar and Martina Tichovska being the fastest.

No change in World Cup

The 2016 World Cup ended up having the same winners as in 2015, with Anton Foliforov taking the title after four wins and

a second place in the two opening rounds and Emily Benham securing her triumph in the first stage of the final round. Gaëlle Barlet never backed down and the good results achieved in Lithuania allowed her to keep second position, while Martina Tichovska's victory in the last stage was decisive for achieving third place. Also decisive were the two victories and a second place achieved by Lauri Malsroos in the final round, which gave him second place in the final World Cup standings, and he was followed by Krystof Bogar, who in the best possible way finished a season that marked his return to top competition after a three-year break.

Text and photos: Joaquim Margarido

Portugal and Spain have been active MTBO nations for a while. However, the Iberian countries have never before made it to the medals in a World MTBO Championships (WMTBOC). This summer Daive Machado changed that for Portugal, and Angel Garcia Garcia (Spain) came close.

Home ground was surely an extra motivation for Daive Machado in fulfilling a part of his long-term dream. He used all of his strength and fitness to achieve bronze medal position in the Long distance race, finishing just 44 seconds down on winner Anton Foliforov.

– I have tried to reach a medal for many years, so it was good finally to succeed. I do not think it will bring any new support in the form of material or financial help. However, it adds something to my motivation to do more and do better, Daive Machado says.

Hard and focused training

The way to the medal required hard and focused training, but having a full time job requires structure in daily life.

– MTBO cannot be a profession, so I have a normal job. It results in me having to train before or after work, he says.

The physical training is important to Daive Machado, who does a lot of riding on road and mountain bikes. His strength is

the physical part, so the more physically demanding a competition is, the better, and Long distance is his favourite. Besides MTBO, he competes in Marathon and MTB Cross-country, where physical training is a key. It all results in less focus on the technical aspect.

– I mainly focus on the technical skills when on camps with the Portuguese national MTBO team. I am fully aware that more technical training would improve my chances of good results in MTBO, but it is not possible at the moment, he says.

Angel Garcia Garcia from Spain came fifth in the sprint at this year's World Championships. It was through Adventure Racing that he first made contact with Orienteering. MTB Orienteering has emerged as an extension of his growing interest for the sport; being able to combine mountain-biking with orienteering challenges is a perfect "two-in-one" solution for him. His first WMTBOC was just two years ago.

An unexpected result

Angel's result this year surpasses by far anything he has achieved before.

– I didn't expect it at all! During the race, I took the risky but wise decisions I had to, and it went well. My joy couldn't have been greater, because this is the Spanish Orienteering Federation's best result ever in the World Championships.

MTB Orienteering is a discipline that is both exciting and demanding, in which



Angel Garcia Garcia came fifth in the Sprint at WMTBOC.

athlete and bike need to combine perfectly in the pursuit of excellence. Angel remarks that:

– the most difficult part is to identify the thin line between pushing at full speed and slowing down, so as always to be well-orientated and be able to navigate on the limits.

Angel highlights the good technical work in the Spanish team. The future of MTBO in Spain seems promising and Angel sums it up in two words: "growing" and "improving."

The 2016 Trail Orienteering season

The two most prestigious TrailO events in 2016, the European Championships and the World Championships, provided both novelties and surprises. We had the first use of an electronic validation system at the European Championships, the first ever participation of an African country in the World Championships and the new TrailO Relay format, which replaced the Team Competition. Among the surprises were the increasing number of young competitors enjoying success in this discipline, and Slovakia and Italy taking the European and World titles respectively in the TrailO Relay and successfully challenging the general Scandinavian dominance.

A study in concentration: Trail orienteers at a control point on day 2 of the PreO at the World Trail Orienteering Championships in Strömstad, Sweden.
Photo: Joaquim Margarido



Both of the top events, the European Championships at Jeseník in the Czech Republic and the World Championships at Strömstad in Sweden, caught the attention of all TrailO addicts and brought to the forefront a new group of young athletes who are already beginning to make their mark. Jorge Valente, Spain, Johanne Biering and Karoline Saxtorph Schulz, both from Denmark, Tereza Miklusova, Slovakia, Iva Lovrec, Croatia and Daniel Locker, Czech Republic are young athletes with great potential who are taking their first steps in this discipline.

At the age of 19, Iva Lovrec was fourth in the TempO Final in the World Championships, while Karoline Saxtorph Schulz, just 15 years old, was the best Danish competitor in PreO in the Open Class. And what about Daniel Locker? Second placed in his TempO qualifying heat, he finished the final in twelfth place, ahead of many of TrailO's greatest names. And all this at the age of 13!

New format and new technology

At the end of May in Jeseník, Czech Republic, the European Championships brought the great novelty of an electronic validation system, used for the first time in international competition with the approval of the IOF. Although there is much still to be refined, the speed of publication of the results and the chance to follow the progress of the competition online were great steps forward in the presentation of the event.

The other great novelty was in the competition programme, and it had a very positive impact. Replacing the Team Competition that has been held since 2004, the TrailO Relay proved to be a thrilling new format. It has a fascinating strategic component and brings fresh dynamism to this discipline. The final results saw Remo Madella, Michele Cera and Alessio Tenani take the European title in the Open Class for Italy, while in the Paralympic Class the favourites Sweden were the winners, the team consisting of Inga Gunnarsson, Michael Johansson and Ola Jansson.

In the TempO competition there was a tight fight between the Czech Pavel Kurfürst and the Norwegian Martin Jullum, with the penultimate task at the last station proving fatal to Jullum's hopes. In the end, just eight seconds separated the two contenders, with Kurfürst achieving the first-ever gold medal for the Czech Republic in a European TrailO Championships.

Sweden dominated the PreO competition, winning four out of the six medals. In the Paralympic Class Ola Jansson got a clear win over Michael Johansson, with the Ukrainian Vladislav Vovk - World Champion in 2015 - having to settle for the bronze medal. In the Open Class Stig Gerdman was the winner with his team-mate Jens Andersson finishing in third place. Sec-



Pinja Mäkinen from Finland in the nice terrain at the World Trail Orienteering Championships in Strömstad, Sweden.

ond-placed Martin Jullum finished with the same points total as the winner, but getting four of the six timed control tasks wrong resulted in him missing his goal of the gold medal, in the year in which he announced his farewell to top competition.

Swedes dominated at home

The month of August was heading towards its end when the 'cream' of world Trail Orienteering assembled in Strömstad, Sweden. The Europeans were joined by competitors from Hong Kong, Japan, the United States and, for the first time in the history of the Championships, also an African country, Egypt. Using the same competition plan as at the European Championships, 114 athletes fought for the world titles in PreO, TempO and TrailO Relay.



Michael Johansson, Sweden, had a great year with the victory at the World Trail Orienteering Championships on home ground as highlight.

Kicking-off the Championships, the TempO competition had as its great winner the

Norwegian Lars Jakob Waaler. After a weak performance in his qualifying heat, he was the fastest and most accurate of the 36 finalists, reaching his first gold medal ever in the World Championships in 13 attempts; he has competed in every World TrailO Championships up to now. The Swede Marit Wiksell and the Finn Pinja Mäkinen took the silver and bronze medals respectively.

Ten years after winning the world title in Finland, Martin Fredholm managed to get a tasty home victory in the PreO Open Class. After eight competitors had achieved a full points score at the end of the first day, Fredholm showed his 'nerves of steel' on the day of reckoning, being the only competitor in this super-elite group to repeat a clean race. In the Paralympic Class Michael Johansson was able to pull back a two-point disadvantage from the Russian Pavel Shmatov, both finishing the competition with the same score, but with the best performance on the timed controls earning Johansson his second world title in the last three years.

Kept for the last day, the TrailO Relay had 18 Open and 9 Paralympic teams competing for the medals. Repeating the excellent performance that earned them the European title, Inga Gunnarsson, Ola Jansson and Michael Johansson were the big winners in the Paralympic Class, beating the Ukrainians and Finns, second and third ranked respectively. The big surprises were in the Open Class, with the Nordic favourites well beaten by the extraordinary performances of Marián Mikluš, Dušan Furucz and Ján Furucz, who gave Slovakia the first gold medal in its history. Portugal's second place was also historic, its best ever Orienteering result in a World Championships.



"I was so proud to be part of the Egyptian TrailO Team and so excited to attend a top-level event like WTOC", says Ahmed Shabaan in the Egyptian TrailO team.

Egypt – newcomers on the TrailO map

Text and photo: Joaquim Margarido

Egypt made history last summer. For the first time ever an African country took part in the World Trail Orienteering Championships (WTOC), and Ahmed Shabaan - along with Tamer Mehanna, Aytham Ahmed and Mohamed Abdelbaky - was one of 'the magnificent four' in the unforgettable Swedish journey. He tells us his story.

Ahmed Abd El Latif Shabaan was born in Shobra El Khima, Kalyobia, Egypt, 23 years ago. For many years he was a successful sportsman in Martial Arts, getting the bronze medal in the Youth World Championships in 2012. Graduating from the Egyptian Military Academy in 2015, Ahmed became part of the Army's Special Forces and lost a leg whilst on a mission. The accident didn't prevent him from continuing his sporting career, however, and he started training hard again.

– I felt the need to encourage not only myself, but everyone in an identical situation, he says.

How did you discover Trail Orienteering?

– Tamer Mehanna, the pioneer of Egyptian Orienteering, has supported me from the beginning of my sporting career and also after my accident. He asked me to try Orienteering, and especially TrailO. He showed me the basics and started to teach me

about maps, control descriptions, symbols, everything. I really liked it and I saw it as a way towards becoming a hero again. I became so interested in participating in WTOC that a new life started for me, really.

An unforgettable week

So Ahmed headed to Strömstad in August, and his first ever TrailO event couldn't have been more exciting. The memories he keeps from those days are still fresh:

– Wow! I was so proud to be part of the Egyptian TrailO Team and so excited to attend a top-level event like WTOC. It was a really fantastic experience and I learned a lot from it. Some of my strongest feelings are about the courses in the forest, something we're not used to in Egypt. The hardest part was when the kites were really close to each other, making it quite confusing and difficult to choose the right one, Ahmed recalls.

When Ahmed started learning TrailO, he thought it would be easy. Step by step, however, he found how demanding and difficult TrailO can be, requiring hours and hours of training and experience. So not reaching the top placings in the Paralympic class wasn't unexpected:

– I believe that my results were very good, considering it was my first participation ever in an official TrailO event. On the second day, I managed to get 18 right answers out of 24 and I think it was a super result for someone who only had three

months of training, he says.

Now he feels able to share his acquired experience, and is inviting other Egyptians to learn more about TrailO.

Towards the Olympics

More motivated than ever, Ahmed Shabaan wants to keep on going on the front line, at a time when Orienteering is growing exponentially in Egypt and TrailO is part of the process.

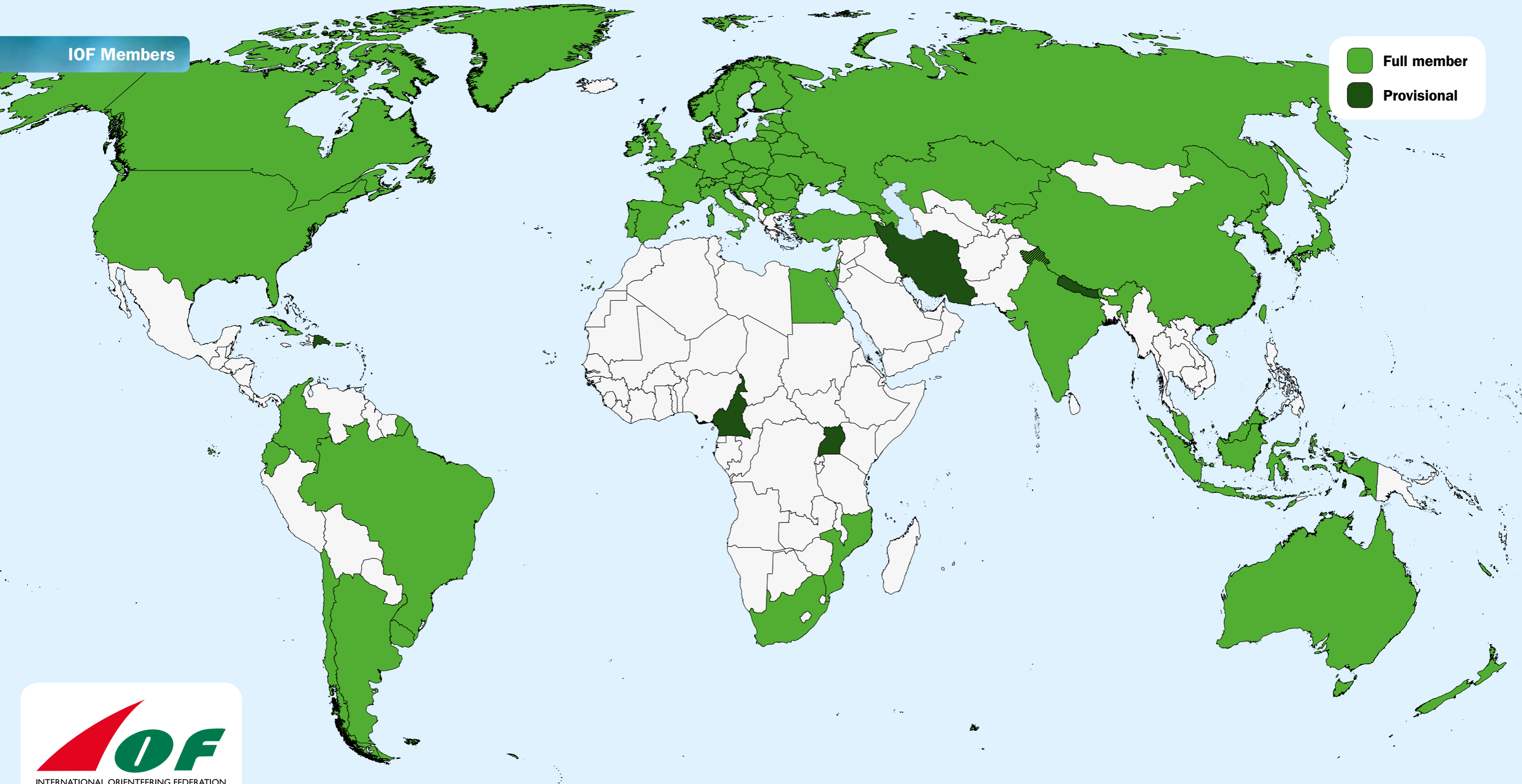
– We are starting to build our TrailO National Team and we will be at the "Egypt International Orienteering Championship 2017" events, which will take place in Sharm El-Sheikh. We hope to have a TrailO event in the Mediterranean Orienteering Championships in Alexandria in February 2018, Ahmed says.

As for himself, the goal is to keep on improving his TrailO skills while looking forward to another great occasion, the next World Trail Orienteering Championships:

– We'll meet in Lithuania, Ahmed assures.

Ahmed's last words are both an invitation and a wish:

– I would like to see all orienteering-lovers come to Egypt to participate and support us in our events, and help Tamer Mehanna and the Egyptian Orienteering Federation in making our wonderful Orienteering into a really global sport, on its way towards the Olympics, he concludes.



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* = Provisional members

Asian Championships debut for Iranian women



With a team consisting of six women, Iran participated in the Asian Orienteering Championships for the second time.

Text: Henrik Rindom Knudsen
Photos: Private

Eight different nations took part in the fifth Asian Orienteering Championships (AsOC) held in late July 2016 and organised by Chinese Taipei. Most of the traditional Asian orienteering nations participated, with Japan dominating the relays winning both the men's and women's. In the Sprint Relay, China won a tight battle with Hong Kong placing second and Kazakhstan third.

However, newer nations such as Indonesia and Iran tried to challenge the older ones. With a team consisting of six women, Iran participated in AsOC for the second time. The first time was back in 2014 in Kazakhstan when the Iranian men's team made a great debut taking third place in the Relay, beaten only by Japan and Kazakhstan.

Orienteering activities in Iran have been going on since the early nineties, with participation in the World Military Orienteering Championships since 1992. In 2012 the Iranian Orienteering association was founded and the year after adopted as provisional IOF member.

The Iranian women's team could not live



up to the men's relay result from 2014, but the week offered good experience for future events.

Back home in Iran, training and competitions are consistently going on and together with orienteering projects in both schools and universities, Nader Zarbalizadeh from the Iranian Orienteering Associa-

tion is optimistic about the coming years:

– The future of Iranian Orienteering is bright and vivid. There is enthusiasm among the organisers and athletes and I am sure that we will have considerable progress in international competitions in the near future.

Inspiring WOC Clinics

WOC Clinic helps smaller nations on their way

Text: Henrik Rindom Knudsen
Photo: Malin Fuhr

In some countries the sport of orienteering has a long history. In others it has just started. In conjunction with the World Orienteering Championships (WOC) in Strömstad and Tanum, people from nine smaller orienteering nations gathered to participate in a WOC Clinic.

The programme consisted of a mixture of lectures, practicing orienteering skills and participating in the Championships. The group met three days before WOC started to prepare for the competitions. The Swedish landscape was new to most of the participants, so the days before WOC consisted of training sessions to get a feeling for the terrain.

Most of the runners made their debut in a World Championship in the Sprint Qualification and followed it up with the Middle distance. Besides the focus on racing and analysing training, the clinic included lectures on World Orienteering Day and TrailO.

Overall, the clinic is held to support and help small and emerging nations during the WOC. Without, it would be difficult for the nations to participate in WOC as they do not have the management resources to send a team. Instead the WOC Clinic offers the participants the feeling of being a team with a mixture of different backgrounds and cultures.

Great gathering of young leaders

Text: Henrik Rindom Knudsen

In conjunction with the World Orienteering Championships in Sweden, young leaders gathered to participate in the camp "2NULL16". Four days full of exchange of experiences, great nature, fun training and special challenges were scheduled.

Fifteen young leaders are trying to focus on both eating their dinner of home-made spaghetti Bolognese and listening to a Power Point presentation about the development of orienteering in Latin America.

How do you introduce orienteering in a country with very little or no activity?, someone in the group asks during the presentation.

José Ángel Nieto Poblete from Spain, IOF Regional Coordinator for Latin America, and Luiz Sergio Mendes from the Brazilian Orienteering Federation explain the



Countries attending the WOC Clinic:

- Argentina
- Barbados
- Chile
- Cyprus
- Egypt
- Korea
- Montenegro
- Serbia
- Uruguay

Nepal and Cameroun were entered as well, but could not get visas in time.

New inspiration to take back home

Chad Calliste from Barbados participated in the WOC Clinic for the third time, with previous experience from WOC Clinics in France 2011 and Canada 2013. For him, the WOC Clinic is a great opportunity to travel outside the Caribbean island for new impressions. Each time he has returned with a lot of new ideas.

Chad Calliste finds the WOC Clinics very useful, and in his opinion even more lectures could be scheduled:

– It is nice to compete in WOC, but I

would have wished for even more time to learn new things in the time away from the competitions, he says.

Barbados became a full member of the IOF in 2010 but is still in a development phase. Most of the Barbadian orienteers do not travel outside Barbados for orienteering, as is the case for many of the smaller orienteering nations. The WOC Clinic is a way to give the most dedicated orienteers new inspiration they can take back home, so that orienteering can grow all over the world.

importance of perseverance and belief in the project. The young leaders, from five different countries, concentrate on the presentation which is just one feature in the four-day long camp.

The camp has been held in recent years for young leaders from Nordic countries. This year the camp was expanded, with participants from outside the Nordic region represented by Portugal, Turkey and Serbia.

Ricardo Esteves Ferreira from Portugal is a coach in his local club and had the opportunity to join the camp. He listened to the presentation about orienteering in South America as well:

– It is sad to hear about countries that are so poor, but it gives a new perspective on the situation back home in Portugal. We often complain about our situation compared to some of the other European countries. After the presentation, I can tell we have relatively good conditions, Ricardo



Fifteen young leaders from different countries attended the camp for young leaders.

Esteves Ferreira says.

After Ricardo Esteves Ferreira returned to Portugal, he made a presentation about his trip for the young runners in the area. His hope was to transmit his experiences to these young runners and be an inspiration for other young people to take up the responsibility of being a leader.

Melanie Serguiev: a very active young lady



Melanie with friends at the Junior World Orienteering Championships in Switzerland.

Text and photos: Erik Borg

Melanie K. Serguiev is still only 20 years old, but she already has a lot of experience both in competing for the national team and in passing on her knowledge to young people.

The American has been teaching orienteering for a few years now.

– I find myself working with school groups from ages 5-25 two to five times a year. It started back in 2012 and I really like it.

– At the end of the day, you come out with more knowledge yourself. Also you are teaching, in my opinion, life-long skills to a big range of people. Maps are everywhere, so you might as well get to know how to read one, the young American says.

Do any of those who you teach start taking part in orienteering events?

– Not that I know of, but it doesn't surprise me that they haven't, since we don't have that many races and events here in the States.

Why are you hooked on orienteering?

– I love the sport because it keeps your mind and body completely immersed in activity. You can't experience boredom when orienteering; it's both physically and mentally demanding. Everyone has good races, everyone has bad races. The community that surrounds this sport is unlike any other! Anyone could post on the chat website "Attack Point" asking for a place to stay in Europe, and would receive over 50 replies saying that there's a room for them. It's the "Sport of a Lifetime".

Very active the whole year

In competition Melanie Serguiev is doing very well. She has taken part in two Junior

World Championships, in Bulgaria and Norway, and two Junior World SkiO Championships, in Norway and Austria.

– The best result was when I came first in the C-final at JWOC in 2015." Now senior age is waiting.

– My current goal is to get physically healthy again. In 2016 I have been having treatment on my hips and I have to rest for a while. Afterwards though, I think I'm going to focus more on ski orienteering. It's softer on the joints and such, but who knows what the future holds! I know for a fact that I won't stop orienteering altogether.

Serguiev lives in Craftsbury, a little town of 403 people in Vermont, USA and is studying Outdoor Education, with a double minor in Business and Wellness & Alternative Medicine. Currently she also has two jobs, one housekeeping at the Craftsbury Outdoor Centre, the other working for the non-profit organisation ARIS Solutions, assisting with people who have disabilities but want to live at home instead of in hospitals/nursing homes.

Father an experienced map-maker

Her father, Krum Sergiev, has been orienteering for his entire life. His Bulgarian relay team came second in the World SkiO Championships. He was hired as a cartographer to help make the 1993 World Championships map in Harriman Park, New York, and afterwards he kept getting hired to make more orienteering maps and also some Marathon maps. Eventually he ended up making a map for the Craftsbury outdoor ski centre and decided to stay there.

– I started to learn how to orienteer when I was 8. My dad ran an orienteering programme at Dartmouth College, so I'd help carry the controls while we set up the course, and I slowly learned that way, says Melanie Serguiev.

–It wasn't until the age of 12 that I ran a race, and that was the West Point A-Meet! I mispunched on the first day, and took 70 minutes on a single control on the second. There's a difference between a 'small trail' and a "rock wall" symbol! But on the third day, I got second place!

Double citizenship

So far she has competed only for USA.

– It has been amazing to represent the USA. The team started out in previous years as being small and almost looked down upon, but it has turned its image around. We got more serious with how often we met as a team, how much we trained (which included not only the physical stuff, but going to the worldof website and reading different maps every week on a group call), and in developing our communication skills. I was happy with the group dynamics that existed throughout the years from going to training camps and racing together. We felt like a family! It's an amazing feeling when your entire team can come together and feel comfortable with one another.

She has double citizenship and is now planning to compete for Bulgaria.

–The Bulgarian federation welcomed me with arms wide open! Unfortunately, due to a stress fracture that I had suffered during the US team trials, I was not allowed to participate at the 2016 JWOC.

Now she is looking forward to concentrating on winter sport.

– The plan is to stick with ski orienteering, and after my rest year race for Bulgaria, because the programme is very well developed there and with good athletes such as Stanimir Belomazhev and Antonia Grigorova.

World Masters Championships:

Double victory for 95-year-old Astrid



Photo: Eva Nordahl

There was Scandinavian dominance in the World Masters Championships in Estonia, organised in five-year age bands from 35 years old upwards, where 27 of the 49 gold medals awarded for the two formats, Sprint and Long, went to Scandinavians. Nine athletes here won both finals, including the oldest competitor, 95-year-old Astrid Andersson from Sweden.

The World Masters Ski Orienteering Championships was held in Germany and the World Masters MTB Orienteering Championships in Lithuania.

Chile hosted the first official South American Orienteering Championships

Text: Henrik Rindom Knutsen

Things are going fast for the Chilean Orienteering Federation. In August 2016, they became one of the latest full members of the IOF, and in late October, they hosted the first official South American Orienteering Championships (SAOC).

475 athletes from 13 countries took part in the SAOC making it the biggest event organized by the Chilean Orienteering Federation. The race brought together the best South American orienteers in three days of competition. The Sprint took place in the

streets of the city Valparaíso, a UNESCO World Heritage site, followed by Middle and Long in the National Reservation Lago Peñuelas.

The Brazilian runners dominated the championships with victories in all three individual races in both the men's and women's classes. South American Champions in Long distance are Leandro Pasturiza and Leticia da Silva, in the Middle distance Sidnaldo Farias and Francieli Chiles and in Sprint Francieli Chiles repeated her first place with Carlos Henrique Souza winning the men's.



The South American Junior and Youth Orienteering Championships in W/M20 elite and W/M18 elite were also organised in conjunction with the SAOC.



Tove Alexandersson: Finally World Champion

Text: Henrik Rindom Knudsen

2016 was the peak of Tove Alexandersson's orienteering career so far, which before this season was packed with merits, yet no gold medal at a World or European Championships (WOC, EOC). She crushed that history, becoming both World Champion and European Champion in Long and Middle distance. In addition, she spent the winter winning the world cup in SkiO overall and two gold medals in the European SkiO Championships.



Tove won the overall World Cup for the third year in a row. Photo: Remy Steinegger

100 metres before the finish line a silent smile appears on Tove Alexandersson's face. Listening to the speaker's words and the crowd of Swedish spectators cheering her, she realises she is on her way to fulfil the goal, the dream, for 2016. Becoming World Champion in both Middle and Long.

The moment she realised she had won the World Championship in the Long distance just two days after the victory in the Middle, is the moment that stands out the most for Tove Alexandersson, looking back at 2016. Winning a World Championship is obviously something special, even though it might be hard to pick out one moment with two gold medals at the European SkiO Championships, two golds in EOC, the two victories at WOC and overall world cup victories in both FootO and SkiO all in one season.

But not for Tove. She had many goals during the season, but they all led up to the World Championships on Swedish home ground in Strömstad-Tanum. She put asphalt running to one side, and moved to Halden for six months to get access to as similar terrain as possible. All with one thing in mind:

– I really wanted to win, she says very earnestly, in a voice that tells everything about the many times she previously had started at a WOC race as favourite, but at best made it into second.

The season starts on ski

As one of very few athletes, 24-year-old Tove Alexandersson competes on top level in both FootO and SkiO. In SkiO, she is five times World Champion and four times European Champion. The prestigious overall world cup, which only takes place every second year, was missing though. Tove's winning instinct was not satisfied with that,

and now that the SkiO and FootO did not overlap as in previous years, 2016 would be the year for an overall SkiO world cup victory:

– The two previous times I have finished second overall in the world cup, close behind the winner. So I was craving for the win this time, Tove says.

The plan was simple. With three world cup rounds, the last one also being the European SkiO Championships, it was all about doing stable races in all nine competitions. And that she did, finishing outside the top three only once and winning five times. However, it was no walk over:

– It was a very tough competition against Mariya Kechkina from Russia. She achieved top results at all events and so I had to perform well at every competition, Tove says.

The battle turned out in favour of Tove, who achieved her goal for the SkiO season in the form of the overall world cup victory, 20 points ahead of Mariya Kechkina. In addition, the European SkiO Championships led to medals in all five distances: gold in Sprint and Relay, silver in Middle, and bronze in Long and Sprint relay.

– Satisfying, as Tove describes the results.

A sign of what it could lead to

Just after the European SkiO Championships were over, Tove's focus went immediately from skiing to running. Two races were in her sights and nothing less than victory would count. The WOC Middle and the Long distance on home ground in Sweden:

– I dreamed about gold on Long and Middle before the season began. This year I really had the belief it would come true. I knew I had the capacity, Tove says.

To reach her big goal she took some drastic decisions. She decided to skip

the Sprint races at WOC, and six months before the championships she moved to Halden in Norway to train in as relevant forest terrain as possible.

Two months after her overall victory in the SkiO world cup, the FootO one started in Poland. Three weeks later this was followed by EOC in the Czech Republic. At the EOC Long distance, she got a feeling for what the orienteering season could lead to:

– Standing at the starting line at EOC Long distance, I felt stronger than I had for many years. I was fresh and injury free. I had a fantastic feeling and it was amazing to win, Tove says about her first gold medal at EOC.

Only three days later, her good shape continued, crushing the opponents at the EOC Middle distance with a two-minute win. In the months between EOC and WOC, Tove continued her good training flow and used O-Ringen as a last test before WOC:

– After EOC, I could train just as I wanted to. I ran O-Ringen to adjust the last technical details. My orienteering technique proved to be brilliant, which boosted my confidence before WOC. Looking at the results, it also went pretty well, Tove says with a laugh about her superior victory in the Swedish five-day event.

Mission completed – two times gold

Only victory counts when Tove Alexandersson starts a race and to achieve that, preparation is essential to her. Therefore, watching the WOC Sprint races from the TV did not make her hungry to run them. She knew she was not prepared to run those races.

On the other hand, she was as prepared as anyone could be for the WOC Middle distance:

– I had planned to avoid pushing too hard at the beginning because I was in such good shape. But I did exactly what I had planned not to do, and went off at really high speed. I managed to keep up the high speed without any big mistakes, but only because I had got so used to the terrain in my preparations, she says.

Even though Tove did not stick exactly to her plan, she could happily make the classic Scandinavian roll at the finish line after “the toughest Middle distance I have ever done”. And at last; her fourth medal at a WOC Middle was the kind Tove likes the most. Gold.

Two days later, the challenge was different but the goal the same. There was even a little more at stake:

– Before WOC, I considered Middle and Long to be of the same value, but during the championships I became aware that the Long distance meant the most to me.

The Long distance started with a short leg to the first control followed by a 3-kilometre leg:

– I lost some time going straight on the long leg. I saw the option to go around to



Tove has had a fantastic season, starting already in the winter. Here at the European Ski Orienteering Championships where she won two gold medals. Photo: Stina Loman

the right but considered it way too far. The next part of the course went without error. At the spectator control I heard the speaker saying I was three seconds behind. I did not hear who I was behind, just that victory was within reach. It was a very special situation knowing I was so close to fulfilling my dream!

And then we are back to the highlight of the year:

– I am so proud that I could keep my concentration after the spectator control. It was a fantastic moment to run over the finish line knowing I was World Champion in both Middle and Long, she says with a big smile.

Training by herself together with others

It requires a lot of mental strength to continue from the spectator control with the knowledge that only three seconds separate you from victory. Tove proved she possesses that strength, which was founded in her junior years:

– When I was in the Swedish junior national team, the coach Anneli Östberg meant a lot for my progress. She gave me the basis of how to handle stress and nervousness during events, which has helped me perform at big competitions.

As for the physical and technical part, Tove takes care of her training all by herself:

– I have never had a physical or technical trainer. Since I was little, I have always been interested in and reflected on training. I am the one that knows me and my body the best.

It does not mean she does all her training alone. For instance, she mentions her training group for the past five years in Falun as important to her. But no-one dictates when and what to train. She is aware that she can improve with the help of others and is looking forward to next autumn, when the French legend Thierry Gueorgiou will become the o-technical coach for the Swedish national team.

A runner in the same category as Gueorgiou who has inspired Tove is the Swiss icon Simone Niggli-Luder:

– She has been the biggest inspiration to me. She was complete as an orienteer. I am happy that I had some years competing against her and saw her in action.

Attention and acknowledgement

In the last two years, Tove has had convincing overall victories in the FootO world cup. Even though the long 2016 season had begun to take its toll, Tove managed to secure her third win in a row in the last world cup round in Switzerland.

Her success is not only being noticed within the orienteering community. The media attention at the World Championships on home ground and nominations for several sport prizes in Sweden have made her name one which most Swedes have heard. The limelight does not blind her:

– Of course it is an acknowledgement of my achievements to get these nominations, but the publicity for the sport of orienteering that comes from it means just as much to me. I really do not need that much attention, Tove says with a laugh.

But she cannot run away from the attention as the big star of Swedish orienteering. People have expectations of her winning every time she starts a race, but the biggest pressure comes from herself.

A winner's instinct that cannot be satisfied

No wonder Tove describes 2016 as the best season in her career so far. Though it does have moments she would change if she could:

– At the EOC relay I went out in second position on the last leg and if I had not run to the wrong control at one point, we [the Swedish relay team] would have had victory within reach. I really fret about that, she says.

The mistake at the EOC relay touches a sore point for Tove Alexandersson, still missing victories in relays as part of the Swedish team. For her Swedish club, Stora Tuna OK, she has won the Swedish relay championships, but both the big relays Jukola and Tiomila are goals for the future.

The missing WOC relay title will not affect her preparations for next year. It is the Middle and Long distances that are in her heart. Possessing the World Champion title in both, she is considering taking up the Sprint again at WOC 2017 in Estonia.

Before thinking too much about WOC 2017, she has a SkiO season ahead during which she needs to defend two European Champion titles in Imatra, Finland, and two World Champion titles in Krasnoyarsk, Russia. As always, only one thing is on her mind. To win.

Einar Tommelstad, IOF Environment Commission:

– We have to examine our ecological footprint



"Basically, orienteering is very environmentally friendly in terms of infrastructure, facilities and equipment compared to other sports. I think the great majority of the people inside the orienteering community are fundamentally interested in environmental issues", says Einar Tommelstad. Photo: Malin Fuhr

Text: Henrik Rindom Knudsen

Without the natural environment, orienteering would lack an important element. Compared to many other sports, orienteering has a small impact on this environment. However we are still obliged to ask ourselves where we can do better. The revived Environment Commission will work on answers to that question.

Taking care of our natural environment and acting in a sustainable manner are deeply embedded in the IOF's values. To support organisers of events and the sport in general the Environment Commission has been revived, and tasked to strengthen orienteering as a sustainable activity.

Scientific research done by the IOF Environment Commission in 2010 concluded that "Orienteering, by its very nature, and by additional procedures of good practice, is a sport of low ecological impact." Chairman of the revived Environmental Commission Einar Tommelstad supports that conclusion, and points out that the mindset of most orienteers is quite special:

– Basically, orienteering is very environmentally friendly in terms of infrastructure, facilities and equipment compared to other sports. I think the great majority of the people inside the orienteering community are

fundamentally interested in environmental issues, Einar Tommelstad says.

A small impact

One can always improve, however, and with major events becoming larger in scale because of more complex TV and media coverage, it is a good time to consider possible improvements:

– Orienteering has a small impact from its starting point. But of course we are still obliged to ask where we can do better. When it comes to how we can be even greener, I think we have to examine our ecological footprint, especially concerning how much we travel, Einar Tommelstad says.

Sustainable events to preserve orienteering's playing field

Since the revival of the Environment Commission in the summer 2016, Einar Tommelstad and Eje Andersson have been the only two members, but from 2017 the Commission aims to count five to seven members. When the Commission membership is finalised, the different tasks will be divided among the members. During 2017 they will focus especially on two things:

– We will discuss whether we should apply a standard or a set of criteria for event organisers to follow. There exist several different standards, but it is not given that

a particular standard matches what we need, or the different IOF events, or other orienteering events. The second thing we will look into in 2017 is developing a promotional concept to further enhance the environmental sustainability of orienteering. We are a green sport in many respects, and we should be better at promoting this, Einar Tommelstad says.

Simultaneously with the specific goals for 2017, the Environment Commission will also work on more long-term issues. They will continue the work of previous Environment Commissions in collecting information about the most typical environmental topics, such as access to land and the effects of orienteering on vegetation and wildlife in different terrain.

Another task in the long term is to work on sustainability guidelines that can be adopted by organisers of both IOF and non-IOF events. At the highest level, the Commission will work on an IOF Sustainability Policy for adoption by the IOF Council:

– We need a sustainability policy with some measurable goals; otherwise we cannot document if and how we are improving, Einar Tommelstad says.

Adopting a policy at a high level is one thing, but as Einar Tommelstad points out, it will be worth nothing if the words are not put into practice. Therefore his biggest aim for the work in the Environment Commission is to make orienteers even more aware of securing the environment with sustainable events, so that we can preserve orienteering's playing field – the natural environment.



Einar Tommelstad. Photo: Erik Borg

Lizzie Ingham: The voice of the athletes



Text: Henrik Rindom Knudsen

Photo: Mårten Lång

Orienteering is in constant development. One of the more important voices when new decisions are made is that of the athletes. In 2013, Lizzie Ingham from New Zealand was a part of the revival of the FootO Athletes' Commission (AC). A general focus since has been to look into event quality:

– We have had some good initiatives, such as a checklist for organisers, which lists what athletes are looking for in a high quality event, and we have been involved in a lot of discussions regarding what shape WOC takes in the future, Lizzie Ingham says.

Each of the four orienteering disciplines has an Athletes' Commission consisting of

5-7 elite athletes, advising the IOF Council on matters concerning athletes. The ACs are founded to represent the athletes, and Lizzie Ingham thinks they are good channels for ideas or issues athletes want taken up within the IOF:

– A good example from this year, that shows we can help change, was a proposal from Jan Kocbach to the IOF for the GPS watch rules for WREs to be updated. He got in touch with us as a commission before pitching his idea to the IOF. We discussed the matter together, and wrote a letter of support to go with his proposal, which was successful, Lizzie Ingham says.

Initiative for survey

The six-person FootO AC feel that they have a good grip on athletes' opinions and priorities on most topics that come through. In

2016, one of the big topics in the AC was a discussion about the estimated winning time for the women's Long distance. It was a bit unclear what the female athletes actually wanted, so by initiative of the AC, a survey was conducted among female athletes:

– We noticed that although there were some strong opinions and chatter online, we were not actually hearing much from the female athletes about the topic. We felt pretty uncomfortable giving a response for all female athletes on such an important topic, so we set up a survey to get a broader representative view, Lizzie Ingham says.

452 athletes from 46 countries responded to the survey, and afterwards the data was summarised as clearly and objectively as possible to make it unbiased. The result did not give a clear consensus, but based on the opinion of the majority, the AC recommendation was to increase the winning time for the women's Long distance from 70-80 minutes to 80-85 minutes.

Normally the FootO Commission would propose rule changes, in this case about the winning times, to the IOF Council for decision. However, as there was a proposal to equalise the winning times for the men's and women's Long distances submitted by the Swedish Orienteering Federation to the General Assembly, it became a decision for all Member Federations. The General Assembly voted down the proposal with a clear majority, and so in the end there was no change to the Long distance winning times.

Diversity in the discussions

The FootO AC will experience a big change in its membership at the beginning of 2017 with only Ida Bobach and Lizzie Ingham remaining. Four will leave and four new members, Emily Kemp, Florian Howald, Gustav Bergman and Jan Petrzela, will join. Lizzie Ingham explains that diversity is very important for the AC:

– It is important that we try to represent the opinions of as broad a range of athletes as possible, in countries, ages, gender, distance specialities etc. It is good to have a mix of athletes on the commission, and to have a new face or two rotate through the commission each year, Lizzie Ingham says.

With future changes in major events, Lizzie Ingham anticipates the reshaped FootO AC will have plenty to do for the next year:

– The changing format of WOC and World Cups will be discussed a lot, for sure. As will the balance of media, sponsorship, event quality and all of the factors that make for successful high profile events. Hopefully we will see some more ideas coming in from the athlete community too!



Foot Orienteering

- 2017**
 **Oceania Orienteering Championships**
 New Zealand, Oceania, 14 Apr - 17 Apr
-  **World Masters Orienteering Championships**
 New Zealand, Oceania, 21 Apr - 30 Apr
-  **IOF Orienteering World Cup Round 1**
 Finland, Europe, 25 May - 28 May
-  **European Youth Orienteering Championships**
 Slovakia, Europe, 29 Jun - 2 Jul
-  **Nokian Tyres World Orienteering Championships**
 IOF Orienteering World Cup Round 2
 Estonia, Europe, 30 Jun - 8 Jul
-  **Junior World Orienteering Championships**
 Finland, Europe, 9 Jul - 16 Jul
-  **The World Games (Organised by IWGA)**
 Poland, Europe, 25 Jul - 27 Jul
-  **IOF Orienteering World Cup Round 3**
 Latvia, Europe, 25 Aug - 27 Aug
-  **IOF Orienteering World Cup Round 4**
 Switzerland, Europe, 29 Sep - 1 Oct
-  **Asian Junior and Youth Orienteering Championships**
 China
- 2018**
 **European Orienteering Championships**
IOF Orienteering World Cup Round 1
 Switzerland, Europe, 5 May - 13 May
-  **World Masters Orienteering Championships**
 Denmark, Europe, 6 Jul - 13 Jul
-  **Junior World Orienteering Championships**
 Hungary, Europe, 8 Jul - 15 Jul
-  **World Orienteering Championships**
IOF Orienteering World Cup Round 2
 Latvia, Europe, 4 Aug - 11 Aug
-  **IOF Orienteering World Cup Round 3**
Pre WOC 2019
 Norway, Europe, 31 Aug - 2 Sep
-  **South American Orienteering Championships**
South American Youth Orienteering Championships
 Uruguay, South America
-  **Asian Orienteering Championships**
 Hong Kong
-  **European Youth Orienteering Championships**
 Bulgaria, Europe
-  **North American Orienteering Championships**
 Canada, North America



Trail Orienteering

- 2017**
 **World Trail Orienteering Championships**
 Lithuania, Europe, 10 Jul - 15 Jul
- 2018**
 **World Trail Orienteering Championships**
 Latvia, Europe, 27 Jul - 5 Aug
-  **European Trail Orienteering Championships**
 Slovakia, Europe
- 2019**
 **World Trail Orienteering Championships**
 Portugal, Europe, 13 Jul - 19 Jul



- 2019**
 **World Masters Orienteering Championships**
 Latvia, Europe
-  **Junior World Orienteering Championships**
 Denmark, Europe
-  **World Orienteering Championships**
 Norway, Europe
-  **IOF Orienteering World Cup**
 3 Rounds



Ski Orienteering

- 2016 – 2017**
 **European Ski Orienteering Championships**
Junior World Ski Orienteering Championships
European Youth Ski Orienteering Championships
World Masters Ski Orienteering Championships
 Finland, Europe, 5 Feb - 12 Feb 2017
-  **World Ski Orienteering Championships**
 Russia, Asia, 6 Mar - 12 Mar 2017
- 2017 – 2018**
 **IOF Ski Orienteering World Cup Round 1**
 Finland, Europe, 28 Nov - 4 Dec 2017
-  **European Ski Orienteering Championships**
IOF Ski Orienteering World Cup Round 2
Junior World Ski Orienteering Championships
European Youth Ski Orienteering Championships
 Bulgaria, Europe, 3 Feb - 8 Feb 2018
-  **IOF Ski Orienteering World Cup Round 3**
World Masters Ski Orienteering Championships
 USA, North America, 4 Mar - 12 Mar 2018

Partner Events

- 2017**
 **World Military Winter Games**
 Russia, Europe, 22 Feb - 28 Feb
-  **World Schools Orienteering Championships**
 Italy, Europe, 22 Apr - 28 Apr
-  **World Military Orienteering Championships**
 Finland, Europe, 10 Jun - 16 Jun
- 2018**
 **World University Ski Orienteering Championships**
 Estonia, Europe, Feb 21 - Feb 25
-  **World University Orienteering Championships**
 Finland, Europe 17 Jul - 21 Jul
- 2019**
 **FISU Winter Universiade**
 Russia, Asia, 2 Mar - 12 Mar
-  **World Military Summer Games**
 China, Asia



MTB Orienteering

- 2017**
 **IOF MTB Orienteering World Cup Round 1**
 Austria, Europe, 2 Jun - 5 Jun
-  **European MTB Orienteering Championships**
IOF MTB Orienteering World Cup Round 2
European Youth & Junior MTB Orienteering Championships
World Masters MTB Orienteering Championships
 France, Europe, 29 Jul - 5 Aug
-  **World MTB Orienteering Championships**
IOF MTB Orienteering World Cup Round 3
Junior World MTB Orienteering Championships
 Lithuania, Europe, 20 Aug - 26 Aug
- 2018**
 **European MTB Orienteering Championships**
IOF MTB Orienteering World Cup Round 1
European Junior MTB Orienteering Championships
World Masters MTB Orienteering Championships
 Hungary, Europe, 15 Jun - 17 Jun
-  **World MTB Orienteering Championships**
IOF MTB Orienteering World Cup Round 2
Junior World MTB Orienteering Championships
European Youth MTB Orienteering Championships
 Austria, Europe, 4 Aug - 12 Aug
-  **IOF MTB Orienteering World Cup Round 3**
 Portugal, Europe, September
- 2019**
 **World MTB Orienteering Championships**
Junior World MTB Orienteering Championships
 Denmark, Europe

Meetings 2017

- IOF Council Meetings**
 19-22 January, Warsaw, Poland
 31 March – 1 April, Madrid, Spain
 30 June – 7 July, Tartu, Estonia
 13-14 October
- IOF Joint Meeting**
 19-22 January, Warsaw, Poland
 All IOF Commissions meet in a joint meeting.
- IOF Presidents' Conference**
 30 June – 7 July, Tartu, Estonia

Maria Silvia Viti: a life dedicated to sport



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Maria Silvia Viti at the prize-giving ceremony at the World Orienteering Championships 2016, giving world champion Tove Alexandersson her gold medal. Photo: Moa Gustafsson, WOC 2016.

Text: Erik Borg

Maria Silvia Viti only discovered orienteering as an adult. Now the Italian has had a central role in the work of the IOF for more than 16 years.

Viti was born in Toscana, but has lived in Rome almost all her life.

– My first contact with orienteering was in 1988, when a FISO (the Italian Orienteering Federation) instructor offered an orienteering course to my students," she says.

– I very soon realised the opportunity offered by this new sport for inter-disciplinary projects.

To help develop and support such projects, she went on to produce two videos dedicated to school orienteering activities, with the help of a post-production company.

– I also planned some European Comenius projects having orienteering as their main subject, with partnerships in several European countries. I also started a special experimental course, approved by the Ministry of Education, based on teaching cartography and orienteering.

Orienteering a big part in her life

Viti has been active in the IOF for 17 years now. The first six years were in the Environmental Commission, and for the last ten years Viti has been a member of the IOF Council.

Why do you spend so much time on administrative work for the sport?

– I have been dedicated to sport all my life. First as an athlete in artistic gymnastics, afterwards as teacher, trainer and club

manager, and Chairman of the National Orienteering Competition for Schools in Italy. Orienteering plays a big part in my life, and in serving the IOF for 17 years I have had the pleasure of visiting beautiful places all over the world, and meeting special people working hard to promote and expand our very special sport. I have seen young athletes competing with skill and dedication in many Junior World and European Youth Championships, and this is the best reward for me.

Focus on youth

In the last Council period she has been responsible for Youth Projects. Using her experience with European projects, she has encouraged the development of Erasmus Plus projects (the European Union's programme for education, training, youth and sport) and built the first version of the IOF's Youth Webpage, collecting materials, tutorials and examples of best practice.

– Now, thanks to the new Regional and Youth Development Commission, we are developing and strengthening this field with world-wide projects as part of World Orienteering Day, she says.

What do you see as the main task for IOF right now?

– As described in the IOF Strategic Plan, all the main tasks are inter-connected. Definitely regional development and youth promotion have a central role; however in order to support more work in this area it is also very important to find more financial resources. Also I would like to see stronger cooperation between National Federations and the IOF.

Italy's contribution

What can orienteering internationally learn and adapt from Italy and neighbouring countries?

– Italy has a strong tradition in working with schools, thanks to the agreement between the Ministry of Education and FISO. Recently, with the constitution of Sports High Schools, orienteering has been included in the curriculum as a compulsory sport in the first two years. Moreover FISO has a good system for validating new maps to ensure they are respecting the IOF mapping norms. FISO promoted the Confederation of Mediterranean Orienteering Federations (COMOF), a sub-Regional group, to develop orienteering in the Mediterranean Countries, and Egypt has recently joined the group.

Likes to run in championships

Like most orienteering organisers, Maria is also an active participant herself.

– I am a very slow runner, but I very much enjoy taking part in national championships in my class W65. In the past I have attended World Masters Championships in Italy, Austria, Denmark, Canada and Lithuania.



Maria Silvia Viti

She can be followed on twitter: @meryesse1

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