



From USA
**The 2018/19
 Season Re-cap**

Written by AXCS National Director J.D. Downing

For a change, much of the nation and the greater Northern Hemisphere enjoyed good to great snow conditions (at least from mid-winter on) this past season and that allowed the race calendar to proceed with refreshingly little drama compared to much of the past decade.

To the highlights.....

NM2019 Rocky Mountain High

The 2019 AXCS National Masters held in conjunction with the traditional Alley Loop Nordic Marathon weekend in Crested Butte, Colorado promised big fun from the start -- and delivered in spades.

For any member not able to attend this year, please make a mental note to bucket list the Alley Loop at some point in the coming years. Yes, I grant you that racing at 9000 feet is uncomfortable for even moderate altitude skiers like myself. Sure, there will be a level of "what the heck am I doing" for low landers. But trust me, the fun and beauty of this event and location will more than make up for the temporary lack of oxygen.

Just take the start line. There's former AXCS Board member Murray Banks cracking jokes on a snowed-in main drag pointing to a literal start line formed with rubber chickens. Yep, that's right. Rubber chickens mark the start of this ASM event. If you can't have fun after you see that, you are taking this sport far too seriously.

The course itself is mostly gently rolling terrain through adjacent meadows mixed with passes through downtown Crested Butte using mostly snowed-in alleys that make the race morning just as goofy as it sounds like. There's a few climbs along the way that'll provide enough racing challenge to make diehards happy while enough distance options to make any age/ability comfortable. Make your plans to do this one at some point folks!

The Saturday, February 2 NM2019 freestyle Alley Loop races went off on a crystal clear and quite frigid morn-

ing that warmed nicely by mid-day. Happy masters from across the nation joined the traditional Rocky Mountain gang as well as surprisingly large contingent of USCSA college skiers for a great day.

Because the weather gods love to bring on the weather for classic races, the Sunday, February 3 classic events had several inches of fresh snow and some blustery winds added to the altitude mix. A hardy gang of NM skiers braved the conditions on a fun rolling terrain course entirely separate of the Alley Loop trails.

Complete results for both events are currently linked from the main index page of xcskiworld.com.

Many thanks to the Crested Butte Nordic Center, Murray and Jane Banks, the Southwest Nordic gang, and all the other volunteers/sponsors that contributed to the success of the NM2019!

MWC2019 Nordic Invasion Complete

188 USA skiers and just under 250 total people. That was the final head count on the unbelievably large USA contingent that invaded Beitostolen Norway this March.

Not only did Beitostolen offer up generally outstanding skiing on both the race courses as well as life-altering day tour routes, but just about half the USA contingent double-down on the trip by enjoying a literally perfect day with the 2019 Norwegian Birkebeiner on March 23. Aside from a fresh snow dump on the distance classic day (see aforementioned NM notes about weather gods attitude towards classic events) and resulting softer-than-wished skiing on the distance skate day -- it was nearly a perfect trip in terms of skiing.

With a big USA contingent, you'd expect some big results and that is exactly what was delivered particularly amongst a stellar USA women's crew. The overall USA team collected a grand total of 44 individual age group medals plus 6 relay medals including a gold in the women's F4 relay category which combined F5 and F6 ages.

Season Re-Cap continued from page 14.

It's also worth mentioning that this trip marked an anniversary of sorts as 2019 marked the fifteenth MWC event since AXCS assumed complete responsibility for USA representation within the World Masters Association including annual non-profit trip packages to all European-hosted MWC events. The location of the change-over from former USA National Director Richard Hunt to myself took place at the MWC2004 held in Lillehammer, Norway -- so the finish line of the Birken held a special significance. Hopefully AXCS can keep up the MWC momentum for many years yet to come.

You can find all the results on-line at both MWC2019.com and birken.no/en.

The Minneapolis Pay-off

A year ago in the Spring Digest I broke down how hosting the MWC2018, despite a lower-than-hoped-for turnout, proved to be a vital catalyst in the big picture development of Theodore Wirth Park's XC ski event infrastructure.

The hope was always that T-Wirth would someday be able to leverage that development to host additional big-time events in America's biggest urban concentration of ski energy. Well, "someday" turns out to be a whole lot closer folks -- like just 11 months away!

On March 17, 2020 a bonafide full throttle FIS World Cup sprint event is coming to no other than Theodore Wirth Park in Minneapolis. The same exact trails that the MWC2018 helped build will allow USA superstars like Jessie, Sadie, Sophie, etc. to have the first chance a real World Cup with a legitimately full international field since your's truly was part of the USA nation's group contingent in the December 1989 World Cup weekend at Mountain Dell Golf Course outside Salt Lake City, Utah.

This is going to be an incredible event and one well worth catching in person if you are anywhere close to the Twin Cities or at least watching on television. Just imagining the grin on Jessie Diggins face as the Minnesota-native gets a World Cup race on home snow gives a guy chills. Note also for MWC2020 skiers it's not crazy to think about routing your flights home for a short Twin Cities stopover!

Here's to a great season everyone and a sincere hope we'll have plenty of snow to enjoy next season as well. Stay safe and well this spring/summer! -- End --

page 15

2019 U.S. Masters XC Team

The honorary 2019 U.S. Masters XC Ski Team presented by Podiumwear has been announced based on the results of top overall age/gender category performances in the best two of two races at the 2019 AXCS National Masters held in early February for the first time in Crested Butte, Colorado.

Official Masters Uniform Sponsor **Podiumwear** will once again be supplying all team athletes with distinctive 2019 U.S. Masters Team awards.



2019 U.S. Masters Women's Team

- F2 -- Lindsey Bengtson**
- F3 -- Sanna Sevanto**
- F4 -- Cindi Hillemeier**
- F5 -- Emily Lovett**
- F6 -- Joan Swift**
- F7 -- Katie Meyer**
- F8 -- Caroline Tiernan**
- F9 -- Sharon Crawford**

2019 U.S. Masters Men's Team

- M3 -- Matthew Klick & Brian Smith (tie)**
- M4 -- Jason Travis**
- M5 -- Thomas Cooke**
- M6 -- Barry Makarewicz**
- M7 -- Odd-Aage Bersvendsen**
- M8 -- John Hedberg**
- M9 -- Van Jacobson**
- M10 -- Bob Gray**
- M11 -- Tim Carter**