

PRESS RELEASE
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IFSS 2009 Winter World Championships

by Sally O' Sullivan Bair

DAAQUAM, (QUEBEC) CANADA – The IFSS 2009 Winter World Championships are over, and competitors, crews and fans are home now warming their toes after temperatures averaging in the minus twenties Celsius. Over 300 teams representing sixteen countries plied the trails for the top honors. The events extended over nine days from January 17th through the 25th in the snow-covered area of Saint Just-de-Bretenières.

The Norwegians swept the medals count, taking home eighteen (seven golds, seven silvers, four bronzes). The winningest competitor was 24-year-old Andreas Fossness of Norway, who captured golds in every one of the five Nordic events he entered.

Sixty-seven year-old (yes, that's 67!) Rudi Ropertz of Germany grabbed the gold in both the Sprint 8-Dog and Unlimited classes. In the Unlimited class, he stayed out in front all three days but almost lost his position on the second day's run due to problems in the starting chute and on the trail. Klaus Starflinger of Germany took home the silver in the Unlimited, staging a come-from-behind coup in ninth place after the first day's run. **Laurent Gonsolin of France garnered the bronze medal.**

Ropertz managed a victory over Norway's Hege Ingebrigtsen's strong team in coming from behind in the 8-Dog Sprint class. Canada's Melanie Bellerive took the bronze. Kati Dagenais of Canada rolled to a three-minute win over silver medalist Niklas Dirland of Sweden in the Sprint 6-Dog class, and Norway's Hege Ingebrigtsen earned another medal with a bronze.

In the Sprint 4-Dog class, the competition was close, with the USA's sixteen year-old Sadie Theriault eking out a three-second win over Norway's Hege Ingebrigtsen, who was racing four dogs from her silver medal, 8-dog team. Stephanie Dwyer of the USA collected the bronze.

IFSS also awards medals to the outstanding teams of purebred Nordic dogs. Taking the gold medal was France's Didier Ozel. The silver medal was awarded to Kathleen Henry-Kilbreath of Canada. Both mushers competed in the Sprint 4-Dog class.

In the Nordic classes, little could compare to the strength of the Norwegians. In the Men's 1-Dog Skijoring, Norway took home all the honors, with Andreas Fosness reaping the gold, Trond Are Hoel the silver, and Yngve Hoel the bronze. In the Women's 1-Dog Skijoring Ninan Karlsen of Norway skied to a twenty-three second victory over silver medalist and teammate Solveig Aaseby. Finland's Marika Tiiperi received the bronze.

Andreas Fossnes captured another gold in the Men's 1-Dog Pulka, with teammate Trond Are Hoel coming in with the silver and Sweden's Mikael Petterson taking the bronze. In the Women's 1-Dog Pulka, it was Finland's Marika Tiiperi who managed a nine-second victory over Norway's Solveig Asseby, with Tiiperi's teammate Maija Nivala garnering the bronze medal.

In Womens's 2-Dog Skijoring, Norway's Solveig Aaseby took the gold. Maija Nivala of Finland won the silver, and Jana Porubska of Czech Republic the bronze. In the Nordic Combined (a combination of pulka and skijoring), Norway's Andreas Fossnes claimed yet another gold, Mikael Petterson of Sweden took the silver, and Yngve Hoel of Norway the bronze. Ninan Karlsen of Norway won the gold in the Women's Nordic Combined, Finland's Maija Nivala the silver, and Norway's Solveig Aaseby the bronze. The Nordic Mixed Relay was won by Norway, with Sweden taking the silver and the Czech Republic team the bronze.

In the junior classes, France's Anthony Gonsolin took home the gold medal in the 4-Dog Sprint, with teammate Quentin Soulier wining the silver and Alex Downey (USA) the bronze. In the Junior Men's 1-Dog Skijoring, Jake Robinson of the USA captured the gold medal, Juan Pablo Lovece of Argentina earned the silver, and Dillon Gast (USA) took the bronze. Sadie Theriault (USA) ran away with the gold in the Women's 1-Dog Skijoring class, with a six-minute lead over Canada's Léonie Morin-Doré, who grabbed the silver. Rosalie Morin-Doré took the bronze.

As part of the junior division, IFSS holds a Friendship class for the youngest competitors. This consisted of a Sprint 2-3 Dog event, and the first place Friendship trophy went to USA's Lily Stewart. The second place trophy was awarded to Aisling Shepherd of the USA.

The Mid Distance category held two events, the 8-12 Dog class and the 6-Dog class. Janvier Beaudoin of Canada pedaled to a win in the 8-12 Dog class, with a total time of 7:39:55:05 over a total distance of 166k. Fellow Canadian Sylvain Voyer grabbed the silver, and Canadian René Marchildon took home the bronze. In the 6-Dog Mid Distance, a total of 120k over the three-day event, Anny Malo of Canada eked out a minute's win over fellow competitor and Canadian teammate Diane Marquis with a total time of 4:29:48:70. Ghislain Bolduc, also from Canada, earned the bronze.

The World Championships closed with an impressive display of fireworks that honored the hard work and athleticism of the competitors and their dogs. IFSS congratulates all the contestants and thanks the Daaquam organizing committee, headed by Max Vidal, for their superb effort in staging this major event. IFSS also owes a debt of gratitude to the able race marshals, Steinar Johansen of Norway, who presided over the Nordic events, and Harris Dunlap (USA), who officiated the Nome (sled) events. An expanded story with pictures and competitor interviews will be forthcoming at www.sleddogsport.com. Stay tuned!

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