WOMEN ON THE RISE
WHO WILL RISE TO THE TOP?

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For the past two seasons running, the women’s BMW IBU Total Score title winner was decided on the last day of the season in the very last competition of the season. It was literally a matter of seconds between the first and the second that made the difference in the end.

Dorothea Wierer and Lisa Vittozzi, friends and teammates first, but also the two Italian superstars with the same ambition but very opposite characters, entered the last week of the 2018/2019 season in Oslo-Holmenkollen, Norway, shoulder to shoulder. Both carried 852 points and both were trying to cope with the sudden realisation that they could join the most respected list of winners in biathlon, for winning the Total Score title means consistency, and consistency means greatness. Neither of them performed anywhere near the very high standards they showed week in, week out throughout the season. Yet Wierer managed the challenge better, with Vittozzi later admitting that she behaved differently throughout the week, not looking for the solitude which normally helps her stay focused and charged, but allowing the situation and the environment to distract her, allowing noise to enter her mind. She completely lost her otherwise fabulous shooting composure.

They are both approaching the 2019/2020 season knowing Italy will be expecting them to perform well and outperform others at the IBU World Championships in Antholz-Anterselva. Wierer doesn’t really know whether she will stop after this season, but that is normal for Wierer, for she planned to stop doing biathlon at the age of 18, and at 23, and a few more times. She stayed, and kept getting better and more popular, and now she is one of the biggest sporting stars in a country obsessed with calcio and Giro d’Italia. Vittozzi knows what she wants to do; she wants to win the Total Score title and then keep winning it. She wants to be just like Martin Fourcade has been for the past decade: consistent at a level others can’t repeatedly reach.

Very much looking to disrupt the Italian duo will be Hanna Oeberg of Sweden, Olympic and World Champion in the Individual, who won the most precious medals before winning her first ever BMW IBU World Cup competition in Oslo-Holmenkollen at the end of last season. Oeberg, who is obviously building a career top-down, will also aim to be the best at the end of the 2019/2020 season and complete the unique triple: biathlon’s grand slam, really, of winning Olympic gold, IBU World Championships gold and the BMW IBU Total Score title. Denise Herrmann will be thinking about winning the title too; she is just less sure than the rest of the best about how her shooting will look on any given day. If she gets that right consistently enough, she certainly has a shot too. Kaisa Makarainen of Finland has won the Total Score title three times, which speaks for itself. But what about Marte Olsbu Roeiseland of Norway or Paulina Fialkova of Slovakia? What about Ingrid Landmark Tandrevold, who showed glimpses of brilliance that seemed sustainable over a longer period of time? There might, of course, be another lady rising to the top. After all, as athletes like to say, this is biathlon.

Women on the rise

For the past two seasons running, the women’s BMW IBU Total Score title winner was decided on the last day of the season in the very last competition of the season. It was literally a matter of seconds between the first and the second that made the difference in the end.

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Your
BIATHLONWORLD Team
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BIATHLON ARGABLY ONE OF THE MOST DIFFICULT SPORTS TO DIRECT

Daniel Osterauer - Infront

IBU LEGENDS

Wolfgang Pichler - GER 104
Three Decades Of Innovation, Experience
and Success

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Développée en collaboration avec Martin Fourcade, la gamme X-IUM offre un niveau de performance, de puissance et de réactivité à la hauteur des exigences du quintuple champion Olympique
**BMW IBU WORLD CUP BIATHLON 1**

**ÖSTERSUND SWE**

29.11. - 08.12.2019

**Technical Delegate**
Michal ZICHACEK - CZE

**IBU Referees**
- Robert ZWAHLEN - SUI
- Jaana PITKÄNEN - FIN
- Bruce JARVIS - CAN
- Radovan SIMOCKO - SVK

**Prize Money**
592,000,00 €

**SATURDAY 30.11.2019**
13:10 SINGLE MIXED RELAY
15:00 MIXED RELAY

**SUNDAY 01.12.2019**
12:30 SPRINT MEN
15:30 SPRINT WOMEN

**WEDNESDAY 04.12.2019**
16:15 INDIVIDUAL MEN

**THURSDAY 05.12.2019**
16:20 INDIVIDUAL WOMEN

**SATURDAY 07.12.2019**
17:30 RELAY MEN

**SUNDAY 08.12.2019**
15:30 RELAY WOMEN

---

**BMW IBU WORLD CUP BIATHLON 2**

**HOCHFILZEN AUT**


**Technical Delegate**
Tommy HÖGLUND - SWE

**IBU Referees**
- Robert ZWAHLEN - SUI
- Lorenz LEITGEB - ITA
- Ivan MELIKHOV - RUS
- Alois REITER - GER

**Prize Money**
472,000,00 €

**FRIDAY 13.12.2019**
11:30 SPRINT WOMEN
14:20 SPRINT MEN

**SATURDAY 14.12.2019**
11:30 RELAY WOMEN
14:55 PURSUIT MEN

**SUNDAY 15.12.2019**
12:00 PURSUIT WOMEN
14:15 RELAY MEN

---

**BMW IBU WORLD CUP BIATHLON 3**

**ANNECY - LE GRAND BORNAND FRA**


**Technical Delegate**
Tracy LAMB - USA

**IBU Referees**
- Robert ZWAHLEN - SUI
- Vlastimil JAKES - CZE
- Pascal MORCET - CAN
- Max SAENGER - USA

**Prize Money**
468,000,00 €

**THURSDAY 19.12.2019**
14:15 SPRING MEn

**FRIDAY 20.12.2019**
14:15 SPRINT WOMEN

**SATURDAY 21.12.2019**
12:00 PURSUIT MEN
15:00 PURSUIT WOMEN

**SUNDAY 22.12.2019**
12:10 MASS START MEN
14:15 MASS START WOMEN
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<th>Sjusjøen NOR</th>
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<td>01.12.2019</td>
<td>10:00</td>
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<td></td>
<td>12:30</td>
<td>PURSUIT WOMEN</td>
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Technical Delegate: Christophe Vassallo - FRA
IBU Referees: Janis Berzins - LAT

Prize Money: 55,200,00 €

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<td>SUPER SPRINT WOMEN (F)</td>
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<td>15:30</td>
<td>SUPER SPRINT MEN (F)</td>
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<td>MASS START 60 MEN</td>
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Technical Delegate: Sergey Prosvirnin - RUS
IBU Referees: Janis Berzins - LAT
Mathias Mächler - SUI

Prize Money: 55,200,00 €

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<td>SHORT INDIVIDUAL WOMEN</td>
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<td>SPRINT WOMEN</td>
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<td><strong>SATURDAY</strong></td>
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<td>SINGLE MIXED RELAY W+M</td>
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<td>12:30</td>
<td>MIXED RELAY W+M</td>
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Technical Delegate: Hans Peter Olsen - NOR
IBU Referees: Janis Berzins - LAT
Lachezar Iliev - BUL

Prize Money: 60,500,00 €
Niklas Carlsson brings substantial experience in managing successful organisations and delivering world-class international events. Before he headed the Organising Committee for Are 2019, the 44-year-old served as Secretary General of the Swedish Ski Federation from 2011-2014. He joined the National Federation from the International Ski Federation (FIS), where he worked as Event and Sponsoring Manager for three years. He also sat on the board of Falun 2015, the company for the FIS Nordic World Ski Championships, and the board of World Championships Region, a company co-owned by Are 2019 and Oestersund 2019 responsible for promoting the World Championships in the region. He is very much looking forward to leading the implementation of the designed changes in biathlon.

**BIATHLONWORLD** What was your perception of the IBU and biathlon in general before you started thinking about taking over as the IBU’s SG?

**NIKLAS CARLSSON** I was very much aware that it is a sport with very, very good TV ratings and a very loyal fan base. That is what every sports organisation strives for. When I started to look deeper into the substance of the organisation, I realised that the International Biathlon Union has a very sound commercial base, but also that it is in the middle of a very important transformational phase, where a new strategy - the first of its kind at that - is being put together, where a new constitution has been prepared and written, and a biathlon integrity unit (BIU) established.

**BW** You have worked extensively in the alpine-ski environment; how do you feel that biathlon differs from other sports, especially other winter sports?

**NC** In the fascinating uniqueness of combining an endurance sport with shooting, an element that needs 100% focus, where the smallest mistake makes a huge impact at any given second during the competition. I can’t recall any other sport with such
NIKLAS CARLSSON has joined the IBU a year after historic elections, during which we followed another season of great sport. As the biathletes shone in the arenas, the IBU Executive Board and administration prepared transformational changes in the headquarters.

intrinsic uncertainty. It really makes biathlon something special.

BW You have entered the IBU after a period of rather unpleasant turmoil, in the middle of a very intense process of change and progress. How do you put these two things in perspective and how do you perceive the process of change?

NC I have to congratulate the IBU Executive Board for everything that has been accomplished in such a short time. Putting together a strategic plan with valuable input from all the stakeholders, writing a new constitution with the help of so many experts from various fields, and establishing the BIU are all monumental tasks that were prepared simultaneously. The magnitude will be far-reaching and hopefully very positive for the further organic
development of the sport. These changes will give biathlon and the IBU clear guidance for excelling in good governance, applying the strictest regulations and sanctions with regard to the fight against doping, and structural leverage for the further commercial growth of the sport. Having said that, I feel that I am starting with excellent timing; after the Extraordinary Congress, we started to work on implementing all the very important strategic decisions that were made. Now it is up to us in the biathlon family to show that we walk the talk. We need to go from planning to action, and I like that.

BW Biathlon is a unique sport in the sense that it has an intrinsic drama to it; how do you feel it is set up for the constantly changing landscape of fan and viewer demands, and changes in media concepts?

NC I think we are spot on in what today’s fans want. You don’t know how our competitions will end before the finish line is crossed; you cannot predict anything, and I think that’s what makes it exciting. However, the challenge is to attract the future generation, along with their needs and interests. The timespan to get the youngsters’ attention is really short. I think thanks to the good cooperation with the EBU, we are available on most of the important platforms, but I do think we can do more regarding content, to continue to search for the stories behind the result. I think everything referring to OTT content will become more and more important.

BW What defines a modern International Sports Federation?

NC Good governance, transparency, gender equality, sustainability, and a lot of passion.

BW Where do you see the most room for improvement (in any department within the IBU and biathlon)?

NC That is difficult for me to say at this stage, as I am still learning a lot about everything related to biathlon and the IBU. Still, with the passion and know-how in the biathlon family, I feel there is a strong will to work for perpetual improvement all the time, and with the strategy in place, I think we will get direction on what to work on.

BW In which areas do you feel you can apply your knowledge and experience best?

NC I have a quite broad experience in winter sports, so I think that’s my biggest asset, to see and understand all the areas that have an impact, from the local coach in a biathlon club to the work on gender balance.

BW Sustainability and the movement for a ‘greener’ world are gaining momentum (again); where do you see areas where biathlon and sports in general can implement such ideas, and with what practices can they do so?

NC I think this must become a natural part of everyone’s agenda in the future. We have a responsibility to make sure that we value our decisions and try to find more sustainable solutions. With technology developing at a tremendous speed, there will be many chances (and challenges) to spot and to apply new solutions.
FOCUSED ON ADVENTURE

ALPINE PRO

alpinepro.com
A full year ago, Olle Dahlin of Sweden was elected President of the International Biathlon Union by an overwhelming majority. In the year that has followed, Dahlin has shown that, while mild-mannered, he has the strength of character needed to reform the organisation and restore the reputation of the fast-growing and highly popular sport of biathlon.

The Extraordinary IBU Congress on October 19, 2019 cemented its commitment to implementing the highest standards in good governance and transparency as it approved the new IBU Constitution, including the new Integrity Code and Biathlon Integrity Unit. The new Constitution and all other documents brought to the Congress were unanimously approved. This included the introduction of a three-term limit for the IBU President and Executive Board members and a stringent vetting process for all IBU officials.

“Over the last 12 months we have spoken a lot about change. We have spoken about the urgent need for change to ensure that our athletes and all our stakeholders are protected. We have spoken about how we must change to protect our integrity and build trust. While we have made many changes along the way, today is the day that that change becomes a reality. With the approval of our new Constitution, aligned with international best practice, we have entered a new era for biathlon. There is no turning back. Transparency and integrity must be at the heart of everything we do,” said Dahlin.

“The IBU’s new Constitution is at the cutting edge of best practice. The changes place the IBU at the forefront of good governance and send out a message to the world that the IBU is ready to be transparent and accountable. Everyone can have confidence that any potential issues will be dealt with by a strong independent body. This puts the IBU in the lead of sports governance and sets an example for others to follow,” added Jonathan.
Taylor QC, Chair of the External Review Commission (ERC) that helped draft the new Constitution.

The Extraordinary IBU Congress on October 20, 2019 also unanimously approved Target 26 - a first-of-its-kind strategic plan that establishes a clear roadmap for the federation to build on biathlon’s strong foundations and maximise its huge global potential. Target 26 is a truly collaborative plan, developed from conversations with athletes, National Federations and all biathlon stakeholders in order to understand their key challenges and perspectives. The strategic plan focuses on hitting five key targets to ensure that biathlon continues to grow and develop in accordance with changes in society and technology.

“It has been an honour to serve as President of the IBU for the last year, but I am even more excited about what lies ahead,” said President Dahlin with confidence. “I am fortunate to be part of a very committed and talented Executive Board. However, over the last year we have made sure that our future is directed not just by one President or one Executive Board, but also by our National Associations and our fantastic athletes. Target 26 unites biathlon behind a common direction. It is a strategic plan which has emerged from the most comprehensive stakeholder-engagement process in our federation’s history.”

The IBU INTEGRITY CODE reinforces the existing ethics code and the Anti-Doping Rules, ensuring that not only are protections put in place, but also greater power is given to investigating and sanctioning breaches of the Code. The independent Biathlon Integrity Unit (BIU), which also secured unanimous approval at the Extraordinary IBU Congress, will be responsible for investigating and prosecuting such cases and will centrally manage all integrity-related matters. As a further important check and balance, all ‘judicial’ decisions will be made entirely independently of the IBU and of the BIU. Allegations by the BIU of anti-doping rule violations will be adjudicated by the new Anti-Doping Division of the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) and allegations by the BIU of non-doping violations will be adjudicated by the CAS Ordinary Division.

The new High Performance Liquid Paraffin: a top class TOKO innovation at World Cup level!
DEAR IBU MEMBERS,

Biathlon faces an exciting future. Over recent years, the sport of biathlon has developed significantly, becoming one of the most exciting and popular winter sports. We have developed new competition formats, produced cutting-edge, well-rounded events, and continued to reform our organisation to ensure the sport has a stronger platform than ever.

And yet, much more is possible for our great sport. Over the past year, we have undertaken a thorough and detailed analysis of the areas in which our sport can improve. We have involved all of our stakeholders in this process, including our Member Federations, staff, commercial partners, media, fans, organising committees, coaches and of course our athletes, the heart of our sport.

Now, the result of all our analyses, discussions and considerations is here - our new Strategic Plan: Target 26. Target 26 sets out to unite the sport behind a common direction. It outlines the key areas where we can, and must, improve - providing an anticipated timeline for how such areas can be improved over the next two Olympic Cycles, culminating in the Olympic Games of 2026.

But in order to make substantial success by 2026, we must act now. Biathlon enjoys an extremely strong core of support within certain regions, and this should not be taken for granted. That said, more can be done to make our sport more attractive to the youth, the future of our sport, and to a more international base. Protecting our core while growing to a more international, younger demographic - these are the key guiding principles behind Target 26.

As we look to implement this strategy, we must also continue to work together. The ‘Biathlon Family’ is more than words - it is about the incredible commitment of our athletes, the passion of our fans, and the sincere engagement of all of our stakeholders.

Only with this family working together can we truly progress our great sport. With Target 26, we have the ideal platform to focus, hit our targets and move forward together. Let’s get to work!

Salzburg, October 2019

OLLE DAHLIN
IBU President
WHY TARGET 26?

BUILDING UPON OUR FOUNDATION:
The IBU has made great strides since its founding in 1993 and has achieved impressive successes in a variety of areas. Such successes have created a great foundation for the sport to build upon, and this foundation must now be utilised.

Now, with more than 25 years of history, the IBU has the ideal opportunity to create a breakthrough in performance in some selected areas, led by this strategic plan. Progress made in other areas will of course continue in our daily business, but the areas included in Target 26 demand extra focus and a special push to ensure that biathlon continues to grow and develop.

ALIGNING WITH OUR BIATHLON FAMILY:
Through a comprehensive outreach programmes and analysis – the most comprehensive in the IBU’s history – five key targets have been identified which must be hit if biathlon is to ensure an even brighter future. These targets have all originated from speaking to our stakeholders and understanding their key challenges and perspectives on the future opportunities for our sport.

By keeping these targets in mind - for all meetings that we conduct, for all events we deliver, for all agreements we make - we can ensure that we make the most of the opportunities that are presented to our sport, encouraging lasting success for all members of our proud Biathlon Family.

PROVIDING A FRAMEWORK FOR FUTURE SUCCESS:
Ongoing changes in society and technology mean that our sport must continue to adapt to stay relevant in the modern world. Importantly, Target 26 offers the ideal timescale for these opportunities to be translated into true, long-lasting benefits for biathlon.

Throughout each of the key areas we have, objectives and actions have been identified that will be realised by 2022, an important milestone on the road to 2026, or by 2026 itself. Such actions typically aim to provide an overarching direction, rather than bind actions by pre-determined results. This approach enables a number of detailed reviews to commence, ensuring that progress is carefully considered and continues to involve all stakeholders.
FIVE TARGETS FOR 2026

Target 26 focuses on five distinct targets. Only by hitting each of these five targets can the IBU ensure that the sport progresses in a sustainable, dynamic way, enabling the next generations of athletes to be provided with the best possible platform to perform:

**EMPOWERING OUR FEDERATIONS**

When our Member Federations develop, so does biathlon.

Whether it be providing resources for young athletes and coaches, or attracting new people to biathlon, our Member Federations play a crucial role in the development of our sport across the world and must be provided with the tools they need.

**ENHANCING OUR EVENTS**

Events are a cornerstone of biathlon, offering incredible exposure to the sport and unparalleled drama.

With relatively few occasions to showcase the best of the sport, our events must provide the optimal experience for all involved.
EXTENDING OUR REACH

Biathlon is a sport that can be practiced across the globe, even in snow-free countries.

As the IBU, we have a responsibility to develop the sport internationally and ensure that the sport does not become over-dependent on its core markets for revenues.

UPGRADING OUR GOVERNANCE

As a relatively young federation of a sport with a long tradition, the IBU has made great strides in a short time.

As we look to the future, the IBU has the opportunity to become one of the most modern, progressive and well-governed International Sport Federations, serving as a model for best practice and providing the framework for future success.

INNOVATING OUR FUTURE

Sport is developing fast. New technologies and changes in society present both challenges and opportunities for International Federations to adapt to and prosper from.

Biathlon has a history of constant innovation and progress, and this must be continued to ensure our future development and sustainable future.
Clarify the structure, mission, values and objectives of the Biathlon Academy, with a distinct IBU department set up to oversee its development.

Develop Biathlon Academy programmes and initiatives; including the level and type of support.

Establish a certification programme for coaches (and potentially other positions serving in the federation) to support Member Federations in their daily work and development process.

Assess the performance of the Biathlon Academy programmes on a constant basis to keep it on the highest level.

Expand the offering of the Biathlon Academy programmes in order to address the needs of the main recipients of the Biathlon Academy services.

Having access to elite resources relating to on and off field performance, the IBU are well-placed to provide a powerful system of centralised support focused on the development of our members. The Biathlon Academy will provide tailor-made support to current and retired athletes to ensure that they can perform at their best and transition to life after their sporting careers, to coaches to encourage their professionalisation, and to leaders of Member Federations to give them the necessary tools to make the best decisions for the development of their organisation and the sport.

**OBJECTIVE 1**

**CREATE THE BIATHLON ACADEMY TO PROVIDE PRACTICAL SUPPORT FOR MEMBER FEDERATIONS, ATHLETES AND COACHES**

2019 2020 2021 2022 2023 2024 2025 2026

- Clarify the structure, mission, values and objectives of the Biathlon Academy, with a distinct IBU department set up to oversee its development.
- Develop Biathlon Academy programmes and initiatives; including the level and type of support.
- Establish a certification programme for coaches (and potentially other positions serving in the federation) to support Member Federations in their daily work and development process.
- Assess the performance of the Biathlon Academy programmes on a constant basis to keep it on the highest level.
- Expand the offering of the Biathlon Academy programmes in order to address the needs of the main recipients of the Biathlon Academy services.
OBJECTIVE 2

ESTABLISH A MORE EFFECTIVE SYSTEM OF FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR ALL MEMBER FEDERATIONS

Every country is different, each with its own unique set of circumstances and biathlon needs. Through its financial support, the IBU must ensure that all Member Federations feel well-supported to grow the sport in their country, rewarding proactivity and a commitment to impact.

2019 2020 2021 2022

- Conduct a full review on the current IBU financial support system, with an outline of areas to improve.
- Develop more effective regulations for the distribution of financial support, focusing on creating strong, sustainable impact, with clear follow-up systems to ensure the responsible use of such support.
- Explore and communicate additional funding opportunities for Member Federations from third party sources.

2023 2024 2025 2026

- Assess and review the performance of the new system of financial support to ensure all proactive Member Federations benefit from it.
- Update and adapt the financial support system to ensure it retains optimum effectiveness.
- Establish personnel resources to facilitate and oversee third party financing, to support Member Federations.

OBJECTIVE 3

ENHANCE YOUTH PARTICIPATION AND ACCESSIBLE PATHWAYS FOR YOUNG ATHLETES

The youth are our future. With so much competition for the attention and interest of the youth, we must collectively raise our efforts to work alongside Member Federations and support them to attract young people from around the world to biathlon and keep them in the sport.

2019 2020 2021 2022

- Conduct a full analysis into the existing competition formats offered to young athletes, making sure the sport as accessible as possible.
- Enhance efforts to promote the sport to young people across the world, included expanded use of digital and social media platforms.
- Establish, in collaboration with the Member Federations, a clear database of youth participation, producing an analysis on youth participation in biathlon.

2023 2024 2025 2026

- Realign competition and race formats, if needed, for young biathlon athletes.
- Provide yearly reports to Member Federations on the status of youth participation in biathlon, providing a knowledge-sharing platform for Members to learn from one another.
In such a competitive environment, IBU events must be of a consistently high quality, and continually improving. All organisational aspects to be considered prior to the event must be dealt with in an efficient manner, with the IBU offering hands-on support and facilitating knowledge-sharing.

- Conduct an initial review into the need for greater IBU involvement in offering Organising Committees additional on-the-ground support and resources.
- Increase knowledge-exchange programme between Organising Committees, including all functions of the Committees.
- Further develop a clear system for awarding events, using transparent and quantifiable measurement criteria. Organising Committees and Member Federations will be asked to show clear signs of improvement year-on-year.

- Establish a new framework for working alongside Organising Committees, with a clear division of responsibilities.
- Review the measurement criteria for awarding events, realigning such criteria if applicable.
OBJECTIVE

**IMPROVE FAN EXPERIENCE AT IBU EVENTS**

Biathlon benefits from an extremely loyal, committed fanbase. While the strong traditions of biathlon should not be threatened, additional efforts to improve the atmosphere at events must be made to ensure that the strong fanbase of today can become even stronger in the future.

2019 2020 2021 2022 2023 2024 2025 2026

- Conduct a full analysis of the current fan experience at IBU events, with close liaisons and joint projects alongside IBU fan groups.
- Establish a working system between IBU, OCs and fan groups to identify action plans to attract and engage more young people to events, including the optimisation of new technologies.
- Design and implement a support system for fans, designed to facilitate issues such as accommodation, ticketing and transport.

OBJECTIVE

**ENHANCE THE EXPERIENCE OF ATHLETES AND THEIR SUPPORT TEAMS AT IBU EVENTS**

Athletes are at the heart of biathlon. IBU events must be clearly designed to in a way that optimises the experience of all athletes, ensuring that they and their team members can perform to their best level at competitions.

2019 2020 2021 2022 2023 2024 2025 2026

- Continue to integrate the Athletes’ Committee into the IBU events calendar planning with a full review.
- Work alongside OCs to identify and enact necessary actions designed to raise standards of athlete experience at events, including transport, accommodation and on-site facilities.
- Implement a strict enforcement of the smoking ban at the venue, with designated smoking areas.

- Present a renewed calendar with clear and well-defined principles, based on the review.
- Implement and measure initiatives targeted towards enhancing athlete experience at events.
With the world becoming increasingly digital, the IBU has a tremendous opportunity to fully connect the sport with new, international, relatively untapped markets and audiences. The IBU has made important steps in this regard, and with ongoing changes in the digital landscape, must make sure it continues to remain ahead of the curve.

**OBJECTIVE 1**

**ESTABLISH A FULLY INTEGRATED IBU DIGITAL ECOSYSTEM**

- Establish an innovative digital and social media strategy, identifying key platforms, messaging and priority markets.
- Implement an upgrading of the IBU website, ensuring it offers a one-stop shop for biathlon followers by integrating event websites and offering possibilities for partner activations.
- Develop a centrally-owned IBU mobile app, providing insightful updates on the sport, including latest news from the IBU.
- Implement the digital and social media strategy, with annual reports presenting clear, measurable results.
- Conduct market research on the renewed IBU website and IBU app, making adjustments to the platforms where necessary.
Establish a strategy for biathlon coverage to be expanded in traditional and new markets, both on television and online streaming platforms.

Host regular international IBU events outside of the traditional central European venues.

Establish a strategy for the implementation of regional IBU events, focused on developing biathlon.

Develop the framework for international sponsorship agreements which promote the sport internationally, alongside the IBU marketing partner.

Conduct a full review of potential athlete activities that have touchpoints across the world.

Work alongside existing fan groups to help spread the growth of national biathlon fan groups across the world.

The beauty of biathlon is in the competitions themselves. As much as IBU platforms can share insight and encourage interest, nothing can truly attract new fans like our events. As such, our events must be as visible as possible, featuring athletes from across the world.

Implement the strategy for increased televised biathlon coverage.

Conduct a review into the IBU events held away from the traditional central European venues, to ensure sustainable progress is being made.

Conduct a new review into the qualification criteria systems for all IBU events, including the Olympic Games.

Implement and improve long-term international sponsorship agreements, focused on those regions deemed especially important to biathlon’s future.

Implement a series of athlete activations, in close cooperation with Member Federations, in and around IBU events, raising athlete profiles and encouraging fan interest.

Establish a complete network of national fan groups, with regular IBU communication and activations.
OBJECTIVE 1

STRENGTHEN IBU GOVERNING PRINCIPLES AND REGULATIONS

The IBU sets the framework for biathlon, providing the rules and regulations through which the sport operates. To ensure that biathlon’s future lives up to its potential, the IBU must continue to upgrade its governing principles and policies.

2019 2020 2021 2022 2023 2024 2025 2026

- Establish a modern, progressive IBU Constitution, providing clear divisions of responsibility and the framework for future growth.
- Conduct a full review into the mechanisms to create gender equality across all IBU levels, designing and sharing gender equality tools and programmes for all Member Federations.
- Complete the establishment of the operationally independent Biathlon Integrity Unit, to manage all integrity-related matters concerning biathlon.
- Conduct a review into the new constitution, proposing amendments to Members if applicable.
- Implement a core standard of gender equality across all IBU levels, to be defined following the review.
- Continue to develop and review the anti-doping structure and systems within the IBU, in coordination with the Biathlon Integrity Unit.
### OBJECTIVE 2
**EXPAND THE INVOLVEMENT OF BIATHLON IN INTERNATIONAL AND NATIONAL SPORTING AFFAIRS**

The international sports world is increasingly interconnected. In order for biathlon to fully learn from and contribute towards widespread national and international sports development, the IBU must be proactive in increasing its own involvement in international sport, and facilitating opportunities for individuals from the biathlon family to involve themselves in sport on a variety of sporting and political levels.

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<tr>
<td>Item</td>
<td>Establish a system for monitoring potential opportunities for IBU leaders and Biathlon Family members to be included in international cross-sporting organisations and committees.</td>
<td>Develop a framework of systematised support for individuals from the Biathlon Family to gain election/nomination to positions within national and international sporting bodies and political regulatory bodies.</td>
<td>Conduct a full analysis into potential hosting opportunities of cross-sport events, including specialised Seminars and Workshops.</td>
<td>Review the system for identifying opportunities for greater involvement, adjusting where appropriate.</td>
<td>Host at least one annual cross-sport Seminar or Workshop, offering knowledge sharing opportunities to other International Federations</td>
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### OBJECTIVE 3
**INCREASE ENGAGEMENT OF ALL STAKEHOLDERS IN IBU DECISION-MAKING**

Biathlon is fortunate to benefit from a wide range of stakeholders, all playing an important role in the development of the sport. The IBU must be seen to grow in-line with stakeholder expectations and take the views of stakeholders on board.

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<td>Item</td>
<td>Establish an action plan for increasing transparency with all stakeholders regarding IBU leadership decisions and decision-making processes.</td>
<td>Establish a system that creates additional opportunities for stakeholder input in IBU decision-making processes.</td>
<td>Identify and conduct a series of joint projects for IBU leadership to work alongside stakeholder groups to tackle specific issues.</td>
<td>Implement the action plan for increased transparency across all stakeholders, amending the plan if applicable.</td>
<td>Conduct regular feedback sessions with all stakeholders on the direction of the sport and future ambitions.</td>
<td>Review the success of joint IBU-stakeholder projects, adjusting the strategy where necessary.</td>
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OBJECTIVE

DEVELOP ‘STREET BIATHLON’ AS A UNIQUE BIATHLON DISCIPLINE

With few countries able to rely on quality snow for long periods of time, biathlon must also provide competitive alternatives off the snow. The inauguration of street biathlon, offers an accessible, urban variation of biathlon, and an evolution from the existing summer biathlon. Its development should not affect the core of our sport: biathlon on snow. Rather, both disciplines should develop in parallel; with street biathlon helping to increase the total impact of biathlon worldwide - by testing new ideas and attracting a new demographic to the sport.

2019 2020 2021 2022

- Conduct a feasibility study for street biathlon and develop a strategy focused on attracting a distinct, youthful audience, and detailing potential venues as well as rules and regulations.
- Conduct a review into existing procedures regarding shooting and event safety, establishing a forum for new, innovative ideas to be included in ‘street biathlon’.
- Establish and implement international street biathlon events, taking place in populous, urban environments.

2023 2024 2025 2026

- Conduct an analysis into the development of ‘street biathlon’, reviewing and renewing the strategy if applicable.
- Establish a system for innovative ideas included in ‘street biathlon’ to be included in winter biathlon, if applicable.
OBJECTIVE 2

DEVELOP CAPABILITIES TO PLACE THE IBU AT THE HEART OF DEVELOPMENTS IN THE DIGITAL AND VIRTUAL WORLD

The impact of technological developments on the world of sports has been tremendous in recent years. The growth of esports and virtual gaming platforms has in particular been prolific. For biathlon to truly engage with a diverse, young population, it must make a genuine effort to establish exactly where to be present on these platforms and develop the capabilities accordingly.

2019 2020 2021 2022 2023 2024 2025 2026

- Conduct a full analysis and testing period into the potential of e-Biathlon and gamification experiences, ranging from a designed console game to integrated elements in an IBU-owned app.
- Support and share a full analysis on the potential of new technology to enhance the performance of athletes and coaches.
- Establish a clear strategy to build institutional capacities and dedications to monitor, understand and act on technological trends that can better promote the sport.

OBJECTIVE 3

ESTABLISH BIATHLON AS A LEADER IN PROMOTING SUSTAINABILITY IN SPORT

Sustainability is an increasingly important and relevant issue in sports – and no sport is more affected by climate change than biathlon. The IBU must take a strong stance on becoming an increasingly sustainable and environmentally-friendly sport, becoming a thought leader among International Federations.

2019 2020 2021 2022 2023 2024 2025 2026

- Conduct a full review of areas to be improved from a sustainability viewpoint, including transport, ventilation in wax rooms, disposal of waste and energy solutions.
- Establish sustainability initiatives targeted to decrease the footprint of IBU events.
- Establish a mechanism for identifying opportunities to promote sustainability within biathlon and international sport.

- Develop e-Biathlon and/or other gamification tools should they be considered advantageous in the prior analysis.
- Implement the strategy for institutional capacities, including the recruitment of key personnel, if applicable.
EMPOWERING OUR FEDERATIONS

- Create the Biathlon Academy to provide practical support to Member Federations, athletes and coaches
- Establish a more effective system of financial support for all Member Federations
- Enhance youth participation and accessible pathways for young athletes

ENHANCING OUR EVENTS

- Increase the consistency of IBU event standards
- Improve fan experience at IBU events
- Enhance the experience of athletes and their support teams at IBU events

EXTENDING OUR REACH

- Establish a fully integrated IBU digital ecosystem
- Increase opportunities to showcase elite biathlon internationally
- Enhance internationally-viable promotion efforts

UPGRADING OUR GOVERNANCE

- Strengthen IBU governing principles and regulations
- Expand the involvement of biathlon in international and national sporting affairs
- Increase engagement of all stakeholders in IBU decision-making

INNOVATING OUR FUTURE

- Develop ‘street biathlon’ as a unique biathlon discipline
- Develop capabilities to place the IBU at the heart of developments in the digital and virtual world
- Establish biathlon as a leader in promoting sustainability in sport
HITTING OUR TARGETS

Target 26 outlines a number of specific goals and key objectives. By 2026, it is our vision that biathlon will have achieved practical, tangible improvements in all of these areas.

Entrenched in the Strategic Plan is the important milestone of 2022, by which time the IBU will have completed a number of actions - paving the way for established success by 2026. Indeed, Target 26 outlines five Targets, each with three objectives, which in turn have three actions to complete by 2022.

In order to tackle all 45 of these actions in an efficient and effective manner, the IBU will work according to a project-orientated approach, with each of the 45 actions - or projects - having a clearly defined time-frame and operational set-up, all aimed to compliment the existing, ongoing activities of the IBU.

LEADING THE STRATEGY  The IBU Executive Board, led by the President, Vice-President and Secretary General will have overall responsibility for the implementation of Target 26, providing key oversight of all activities and ensure that progress remains on-track.

LEADING EACH PILLAR  Responsibility for leading the direction of each Target will lie with an individual IBU EB Member. This Board Member will set up the organisational framework for the activities and regularly report back to the IBU Executive Board to provide timely updates.

EXECUTING EACH PILLAR  While the working structure of each Target will vary - depending on the actions to be completed - the IBU administration will be supporting throughout with the management and coordination of activities under each Target - each lead by a IBU staff member.

THANK YOU TO OUR BIATHLON FAMILY

Target 26 is the result of the most comprehensive and all-inclusive outreach programme the IBU has ever committed to.

All stakeholders within our sports have been repeatedly asked their opinions and suggestions for the future of biathlon. This includes:

- Athletes and Coaches
- Member Federations
- Sponsors & Contractors
- Staff
- Media
- IBU Committee Members
- Fans
- IBU Supplying Partners
- Organising Committees

- Technical Delegates
- Broadcasters

By conducting a series of surveys, focus group meetings, one-to-one meetings and calls, and rounds of feedback, the IBU has had the opportunity of getting the unique perspectives of all of the above groups, and has never had such a complete understanding of its sport and its full potential as a result.

For the active engagement of all members of our biathlon family, we would like to say a sincere thank you. The time that has been taken to provide opinions is greatly appreciated and has been invaluable. With Target 26, biathlon has a clear direction for the future, and that is thanks to our family. And we don’t want it to stop there.

As is specifically mentioned in the strategy, we want a process of continuing engagement with our stakeholders, up until 2026 and beyond. Indeed, it is only with this engagement that we can continue to strive. This is our family. This is our biathlon.

To stay updated on Target 26 please visit www.biathlonworld.com/target26

And to keep in contact with any questions or ideas, please don’t hesitate to contact target26@ibu.at
The 2019-20 BMW IBU WORLD CUP SEASON is around the corner. The big questions are: who will rule over the men’s and women’s competitions, which team will dominate and who will end the season with big Crystal Globes in their trophy cases?
LOOKING BACK

DORO LEADS THE LADIES

1. Dorothea Wierer finally claimed the big Crystal Globe. It was not a runaway, but she held her nerves and body together to get her first win at home in Antholz-Anterselva, her first individual IBU World Championships (IBU WCH) Gold medal and the ultimate prize, a huge breakthrough for her and for Italy.

2. Lisa Vittozzi and Marte Olsbu Røiseland were the breakout stars. Vittozzi showed maturity beyond her 24 years with decisive shooting, while the Norwegian won three times, propelled by fast last loop skiing.

3. The even younger 23-year-old Hanna Oeberg confirmed her rising star status by backing up her Olympic 15 km Individual title with her first IBU WCH Gold and anchored her team to Relay Silver in a pressure-packed home IBU WCH in Östersund.

4. Big stars and multiple Olympic Gold medalists Anastasiya Kuzmina and Laura Dahlmeier left the sport, opening the door for the Vittozzi/Oeberg generation. 2018 World Cup Total Score titlist Kaisa Mäkäräinen slipped to 7th while battling numerous problems but is set for another crack at medals and crystal.

5. The German women’s 5-year domination of the Nations Cup ended despite Denise Herrmann’s big breakthrough with three IBU WCH medals, with Dahlmeier struggling and Maren Hammerschmidt out for the season.

LOOKING BACK

JOHANNES RULES OVER THE MEN

1. Johannes Thingnes Boe fulfilled the long-awaited promise of a huge season with 16 victories and his first BMW IBU World Cup Total Score title, but at times still struggled on the shooting range.

2. The breakout men’s star was Quentin Fillon Maillet, who regained his shooting touch and claimed his first two career victories, two IBU WCH medals and seven podiums in four-stage competitions.

3. Alexander Loginov had a career-best season, buoyed by early season results and winning his first-ever individual IBU WCH medal.

4. Veterans remained at the top with 32-year-old Arnd Peiffer taking the IBU WCH 20 km Individual Gold medal, his first-ever podium in the individual competition, following his 2018 Olympic Sprint Gold. 36-year-old Simon Eder hit a sterling 91% of his shots and finished 8th in the World Cup Total Score.

5. Martin Fourcade, the top man for the last seven years, had an uncharacteristically bad season, struggling to find his form on the tracks, usually a strong point.
**COMPETITION AND VENUES**

**MEN’S 20 KM INDIVIDUAL**

The season opener in Östersund will bring the circuit back into its routine, kicking off with a 20 km individual, the traditional shooter’s competition. The tracks feature a difficult opening uphill and a long technical then flat range approach; the shooting range is always tricky. The second 20 km is at Pokljuka, with fairly easy tracks and a long flat approach; there is another tricky range here, especially with mid-afternoon starts accompanied by big shadows on the range. The Antholz IBU WCH will be the biggest challenge. Despite everyone getting in plenty of altitude training this past summer, the thin air at the Südtirol Arena will come into play in the third and fourth shooting stages, with penalties likely to abound. The most skilled shooters with skiing pedigrees will claim most of the top spots; clean or one-penalty shooting will be crucial. Think Johannes and Fourcade for their balanced approach; and Jakov Fak as a top shot who can ski alongside either of them, but who also has long-term training at fairly high-altitude Pokljuka.

**WOMEN’S 15 KM INDIVIDUAL**

There are a lot of crack shots in the women’s fields, but the odds fall to Olympic and IBU World Champion Oeberg, brilliant on the range and strong on the tracks. She will be shooting for an Östersund repeat in the season opener. Vittozzi is on her heels, with plenty of altitude training and shooting skill; she has a big chance at her home IBU WCH. Young Marketa
Davidova has the ski speed; her slower shooting style makes her a player in this shooting-centric competition.

**MEN’S SPRINTS: ALWAYS A BATTLE**

In most cases, venues make less of a difference in the sprint than in other disciplines. In a sprint, it is simply ski fast, then shoot quick and clean. In Östersund, it is critical to be strong enough to handle the opening uphill; in Hochfilzen, it is about the quick uptick into the range with little rest; Oberhof demands attention with the long cruise into the range, then unpredictable fog, rain or snow while shooting. Ruhpolding is the easiest place to shoot whereas everyone suffers in the standing at Antholz. Clean shooting anywhere can guarantee one thing: a top-20 finish and a pass into the pursuit. At every venue, maintaining ski speed is the crucial factor. Johannes and Martin have mastered the sprints in recent years. Next, think Tarjei Boe, Olympic Sprint Champion Peiffer and Loginov, whose only WC win was in the Oberhof sprint.

**WOMEN’S SPRINT TOSS-UP**

No woman dominated the sprints last season. That could be the case again. Logic says that Herrmann will open strong in Östersund, where she has won three times and has confidence on the tracks. Mäkäräinen has the best track record with 32 career sprint podiums, one everywhere except Nove Mesto and Oslo. The Finn is always fast, but her shooting can be suspect. After these two, there is Røiseland, whose strong last loop resume makes her a threat.

**MEN’S PURSUITS: CHASING THAT FAST GUY**

The sprint winner is in the best and worst spot by leading the pursuit, with the initial confidence in having the lead but the pressure of holding that position. Most pursuits come down to the final standing stage where the athlete with nerves of steel or very fast skis frequently prevails. The season-opening Östersund pursuit, the first head-to-head competition of the season, can be an interesting one. The sprint winner, unless he is named Fourcade, will often not take the pursuit. Hochfilzen presents challenges with its tough range approach, possibly wet, snowy conditions and that brutal uphill finish. Le Grand Bornand should be Fourcade country, but Johannes has taken the sprint/pursuit double there twice, with huge winning margins. The Norwegian feels at home with the twisting, not too tough tracks. Pokljuka will be an easy warm-up for Antholz at a moderate altitude. Last year, the red-haired wonder took 5 of the first 6 pursuits, and then only one after that, never shooting clean.
Antholz will be the pursuit test of the season; a fast downhill to the stadium with a steep, short uphill just before the range. Pidruchnyi won the IBU WCH title last season; the Norwegian won the pursuit there the last two seasons. The French team always does well in Antholz pursuits, with 2nd, 3rd, 4th, and 5th place last season; think Fillon Maillet.

The third trimester starts in Nove Mesto, with harder and again tricky winds; the next week is the biting cold in Kontiolahti with the brutally steep “Wall” sapping strength. Oslo, with a fairly easy loop, makes for generally good shooting and fairly tight competitions. The winner is usually the person who has reserve power and energy left for the final loop after a long season.

**WOMEN’S PURSUITS: KAISA AND DENISE**

Herrmann loves Östersund, as it fits her skiing style…so does Kaisa; each won two pursuits last season, the only women to do so. Doro won in Antholz; Vittozzi in Oberhof; Røiseland had her first career win in Nove Mesto. This will be a toss-up like in the sprints. The altitude/strength credentials go to the Italians, with the Finn, who spent more training time than ever in thin air, just behind. Any pursuit last-stage shooting battle goes to Wierer and Vittozzi, who close targets in the blink of an eye. If it is a ski race in the last loops, think Mäkäräinen, the veteran, and Herrmann.
MEN’S MASS STARTS
The ultimate competition, the mass start, commands endurance, fast tempo, tactics, good shooting and nerves of steel. Good prone shooting is the key to a mass start win. Two clean stages add confidence, leveling the competition for the standing stages that few escape without at least one penalty loop visit. Antholz winner Fillon Maillet was the only man to consistently challenge Johannes in the mass last year. The three mass starts before Antholz are very different from the one in the Italian venue. Le Grand Bornand and Pokljuka are actually pretty easy courses, but Pokljuka is a harder place to shoot in, with wind and shadows on the targets. In both cases, the field of 30 can easily hold together for two loops. Oberhof is a different animal, with wild weather conditions always to be expected and tracks that are frequently technically challenging, i.e. with icy turns.

Antholz, with the final IBU WCH Gold medal on the line, will be a true test. The conditions can be fast and perfect like last season or buried in fresh snow like the previous year; the latter will put some athletes off their game. The big names could easily be overshadowed in the last standing stage; last year Dominik Windisch came away from the pack to claim Gold. Tactics will prevail…and it will likely come down to the final standing stage.

WOMEN’S MASS STARTS: CONSISTENT SHOOTING PREVAILS
Wierer and Oeberg went 1-2 in the Women’s Mass Start Total Score last season, with the Italian’s IBU WCH title and the Swedish star’s Oslo win; they hit 85% and 86% of their shots respectively over the season. Wierer shot clean just twice all season, both times in the opening week; Oeberg four times. Wierer shoots fast; Oeberg is maybe not as fast on the range but consistently good. Give Le Grand Bornand to Oeberg; Pokljuka goes to Wierer because she has a good track record on the Slovenian tracks and shoots well there. Oberhof is a toss-up, maybe with a surprise winner like IBU WCH Silver medalist Ekaterina Yurlova-Percht. Antholz, with enormous pressure on the Italians, will be a daunting experience. Vitozzi has ice in her veins and may take her first title there, but by that stage in the season, Oeberg’s track power, instinct to win on big stages and equal shooting will be in the mix.

DEEPEST TEAMS TAKE RELAYS
Relays can change the look of the podium, but the reality is that the powerful, deep teams will prevail. The individual venues matter less; team rosters are more important, with an emphasis on minimal spare rounds and zero penalties, especially in the first two legs. The top men’s relay player is Norway, looking pretty fine with Johannes, Tarjei, Vetle Sjaastad Christiansen and Lars Helge Birke. They won in Ruhpolding for the fifth consecutive year and closed the season with two more wins as well as the IBU WCH title. Germany adds strength with Simon Schmnp’s return, who seems to be back after no injuries, no illness and some good fall competitions. Erik Lesser, Arnd Peiffer and Benedikt Doll make this team a steady foursome, but not as fearsome as Norway.
**FRENCH POTENTIAL**

France with a revived Fourcade, Fillon Maillet, Guigonnat and Simon Desthieux have the potential to put Norway to the test; having Emilien Jacquelin as a reserve improves their chances. Beyond these three powers, the Austrians are always in the mix, but have few strong reserves beyond Simon Eder, Dominik Landertinger, Julian Eberhard, and rising star Felix Leitner. Russia proved to be in the mix again with its WCH Bronze last year, while Olympic Champion Sweden can be there with their steady shooting. Italy remains the wild card.

**WOMEN’S RELAY: THINK NORWAY**

Norway ended the season at the top, carried to IBU WCH Gold by Ingrid Landmark Tandrevold and Røiseland’s shooting and the irrepressible, unpredictable Tiril Eckhoff’s ski prowess. They look like the best of the women’s teams but have to avoid penalties. Germany remains solid but will miss Laura Dahlmeier’s anchor leg after her retirement. Herrmann has the anchor leg ski speed but still needs better shooting. Anna Weidel could add solid shooting and Maren Hammer-schmidt returning to top form after starting the season at the IBU Cup gives the Germans a steady team, with several roster options. Sweden is solid on the range; Mona Brorsson’s rise last year adds to their confidence, making them a threat in every relay. France is the women’s wild card. With Anais Chevalier out on maternity leave, their success may hinge on improved shooting under Franck Badiou and Anais Bescond’s return after injury. Sharpshooter Julia Simon had a great fall season, as did Justine Braisaz, so they could be in the podium mix all season. Italy with their two big names proved they can win last year in Hochfilzen. However, their frequent stumbles due to penalties have to disappear or else Doro and Lisa’s efforts will be in vain.

**MIXED RELAYS: THE USUAL SUSpects**

Norway has the upper hand in both the single mixed and mixed relays; they have no problem putting together outstanding teams. Germany has the same situation but can get into trouble with spare rounds at times. France is the team that can win with depth and quality; see the Pokljuka mixed relay last season. Italy continues to prove its skill in the mixed competitions, but frequently loses time with spare rounds. Sweden has the shooting skill but is a little weaker on the men’s side of the ledger. After them, every other team is probably fighting for the minor places.

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WHO IS ON THE WATCH LIST FOR THE BIGGEST PRIZES, THE CRYSTAL GLOBES?

THE LADIES’ WORLD CUP TOTAL SCORE
Is it Lisa or Doro or someone else? As it was for much of last season, there is no clear-cut favorite to win the World Cup Total Score. No woman has won the title in consecutive years since Magdalena Forsberg won six in a row from 1996-2002. Since then, Magdalena Neuner and Kaisa Mäkäräinen have won three titles each, but not in consecutive seasons.

RØISELAND, OEBERG, MÄKÄRÄINEN IN THE HUNT
Several women would prefer to think that this season will be something more than a two-woman show. Olsbu Røiseland, fourth last year, improved her shooting, found another gear on the tracks, won three times and gained confidence under the guidance of Coach Patrick Öberg. Still, her shooting does not quite match up to the Italian duo. Although she had a good summer and success at the Norwegian Championships, a hip injury put her out for part of October.

Oeberg, fifth in the Total Score last season and now the owner of two major titles, could be the top challenger. Former Swedish Coach Wolfgang Pichler described her as “very focused and always wanting to win.” She got better as the season progressed; at her home IBU WCH, Oeberg impressed: mixed relay.

DORO VS. LISA
Wierer started strong last season, hanging on to take the title, outdueling teammate Vittozzi by 22 points. The pair train side by side and neither one has had any significant setbacks this summer. A repeat is possible, but the focus for the Italian team is the IBU WCH in Antholz. Vittozzi was extremely impressive in summer competitions, especially with a dominating win at the Martin Fourcade Nordic Festival. Generally, Wierer is faster on the tracks, but Vittozzi is five years younger and getting faster. Vittozzi looked extremely confident and focused on the range in the summer; Wierer less so. Yet the top-ranked woman last season is a fighter; if she is healthy and focused on the range, never count Wierer out. Vittozzi did not hold up in the closing days of last season after wearing the Yellow Bib for a while. Still, cool as a cucumber and outwardly emotionless, she proved last season that Crystal is in her future. In a mid-October interview with Fondoitalia.com, she said, “I am never satisfied, even if I win. I am always trying to improve, to get what I want.” A slight edge for the big Crystal Globe goes to Vittozzi.
5th (one spare), sprint 4th, pursuit 5th, 15 km 1st, single mix 3rd, relay 2nd, mass start 4th and a convincing mass start win in Oslo to end her season.

Mäkäräinen will probably make a run for Crystal, although she was down last year in a problem-filled season: “It was not just one or two things. It was more like ten! It started in the summer; every week in the winter, it was something different. This summer was filled with altitude training, competitions and “focusing on strength,” especially focusing on shooting adjustments. I always want to improve my shooting.” That commitment combined with her still devastating ski speed makes the Finnish veteran a contender.

THE MEN: REPEAT FOR JOHANNES OR MARTIN’S RETURN?

Johannes Thingnes Boe has the upper hand as the defending titleholder. However, as he said in an interview late last season, “In a normal season, I would expect that I would have eight wins and Martin eight wins.” Fourcade’s disappointing year drove his comeback summer. The two met twice, at Sandnes and the Fourcade Festival. Johannes prevailed in Norway with Fourcade coming in second, unable to catch his younger rival on the last loop. In France, the host was relentless, burying the Norwegian, who struggled on the range on a very hot day. Despite getting fourth place, Johannes admitted, “The shape is coming; I am getting more fit.”

The top-ranked man last season shot a career-best 93% in prone, but had some huge blips in standing, ending at 78%. Yet, he was faster on the tracks, burying the field at times. Fourcade with his trou-
bles on the track was steady on the range at 89%; 91% in prone and 87% in standing. With Fourcade struggling, the Norwegian was only challenged occasionally, which helped pave his path to Crystal.

LOGINOV, FILLON MAILLET, DESTHIEUX AND PEIFFER CHASING

There are a hundred other men out there who would like to win the big prize, but just a few who actually have a chance.

Loginov finished second with just seven podiums, including a single win, with his shooting coming in at a respectable 83%. He was strongest early on, picking up five of his podiums by January 10, when he won in Oberhof. After that, he was never the same, save his sprint Silver in Östersund. It will be hard for the Russian to finish second this season, but he still cannot be counted out.

Fillon Maillet and Desthieux, after personal-best seasons, have to be considered valid candidates for the top spots. Fillon Maillet is better on the shooting range and in the four-stage competitions, while Desthieux shines on the tracks and excels in the sprints. The one other man who has potential is the low-key Arnd Peiffer. Peiffer, a threat in every sprint, is simply steady and also claimed a very nice 89% shooting score last season. The German veteran has 33 career podiums, 16 of which have been in sprints.

TWO AND TWO

The bottom line: for the men, it still looks like a two-man show; for the ladies, a two-woman tussle.

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The season of not unexpected transitions in the German women’s biathlon team saw two major things happening: the decision of the mightily successful Laura Dahlmeier to call it a career at the still very tender age of 25, and the emergence of Denise Herrmann not only as the strongest of the German women biathletes, but also the one with the potential to try to win the BMW IBU Total Score title.

**BIATHLON WORLD** Why did you switch to biathlon?

**DENISE HERRMANN** I have had a lot of questions in this direction. I switched from cross-country skiing in my mid twenties, therefore relatively late in my sporting career. The last season has been only my fourth in biathlon. The greatest challenge was, of course, to learn how to shoot and then to apply that knowledge at the competitions. But I never regretted the decision; I am actually very happy about it.

**BW** What fascinated you the most about biathlon?

**DH** The whole sport is crazy, you come to the shooting range with a very high heart rate and then you need to calm down at once while the spectators are shouting. It is all about finding moments of inner peace and absolute focus while the whole situation around you is pure stress.

**BW** How did the rhythm of your skiing change after your switch, for in biathlon you need to push and stop, while in cross-country it was pushing straight on?

**DH** The biggest change is the extra weight of the rifle - it weighs around four kilos - because you feel the pressure of the rifle’s weight in your legs. You feel the difference a lot when you compare how you feel on the skis when it is skiing training only and when you ski with the rifle on your back. I also adapted my speed coming into the shooting range; I have realised that I can push harder and enter the shooting range with a higher heart rate for the standing shooting and that I need to slow down earlier when entering the shooting range for the prone shooting. All in all, I wouldn’t say that skiing technique as such changes much, but you need to adapt to shooting ‘stops’ and the weight of the rifle.

**BW** What do you think when you are approaching the shooting range?

**DH** I am trying to be as relaxed as possible, which sounds much easier than it is, and especially so if your last shooting was not particularly good. I have learnt that just concentrating on my shooting technique works the best for me.

**BW** How would you describe your relationship with the spare round?

**DH** Hm, in Relay, you know you have
DENISE HERRMANN of Germany started the last season below her expectations and then finished on a high note with a gold medal in the Pursuit at the IBU World Championships in Oestersund, Sweden.
more of them available, but it is still much more comforting to start clearing the targets straightaway.

**BW** The women’s field is full of contenders for the podium. How do you go about your business knowing you have so many direct competitors?

**THE WOMEN’S FIELD HAS REALLY BECOME EXTREMELY COMPETITIVE. THERE ARE SO MANY OF US WHO ARE CAPABLE OF WINNING ON ANY GIVEN DAY. AT THE SAME TIME, THAT IS A VERY GOOD THING, FOR IT MAKES ALL OF US STRIVE FOR MORE EVERY SINGLE DAY.**

And it is very good for the fans. I know I am among the fastest, if not the fastest, on the skis and I know if I shoot well, I have a very good chance for the flowers, podium and even the win. Being aware of this motivates me to train harder, to work on details in the summer, to always look for ways to improve myself. Having so many strong competitors also makes me think more, depending on who I am facing directly in the competition. I know, for example, that Dorothea Wierer will shoot much faster and I therefore need to push even harder on the skis to keep up with her. You learn to observe others and become aware of their strengths and weaknesses.

**BW** You are part of the German team, a very strong group of very skilled and highly motivated athletes. How does that affect your approach?

**DH** We are indeed a very strong group of biathletes and that means additional motivation for everybody. We have at least four women athletes who can compete for the podium in every competition. Being one of these four means I know even in training how well prepared I am and with what level of confidence I can approach the competition. When you have a bad training day on the German team, you know it, you feel it, you cannot deceive yourself. You can only get up the next day and try to do better. This kind of naturally competitive environment is helpful for all of us, no doubt about it.

**BW** How do you keep yourself motivated during the winter periods when the results might not be as good as you expected?

**DH** I started last season with great expectations and couldn’t find my form on the shooting range for quite a few weeks. There were sprint competitions where I had to fight really hard to make it to the pursuit at all, like at the BMW IBU World Cup in Oberhof, Germany. Then again, bad shooting days give me more motivation, for I know I can sustain my skiing form for a long(er) period of time and this is comforting for my confidence. With shooting, you know it can change any day, for skiing form, you need to work longer.

**BW** This is a somewhat difficult question: What do you think it takes to win the IBU Total Score title?

**DH** First of all, the most important thing: you need to stay healthy the whole winter. The second thing is as hard as staying healthy: being as consistent as possible day after day after day. While I was still active in cross-country skiing, I tried to be as consistent as possible, but to sustain a high level of performance over a longer period of time is even harder. Every week there are three competitions where you can get sick or injured. Besides that, there were seasons where in order to win the IBU Total Score title, one needed to be no worse than seventh in every single competition. That is a crazy high level to sustain.

**BW** Do you see yourself as a contender for the IBU Total Score title?

**DH** Yes. I was thinking about it before the last season already. I believed if I shoot
well enough, I can rely on my skiing. But then I had too many problems on the shooting range the first week already, and I somehow knew it won’t be possible. In order to win it all, many things need to click, and above all, one needs to react well enough in all circumstances, including windy conditions or icy slopes or whatever nature throws at you.

BW You obviously know how to win, for you won the gold medal in Pursuit at the IBU World Championships in Oestersund, Sweden 2019.

DH I have a medal from the cross-country World Championships in Relay. Winning a medal in the Individual competition is something very special, and I won three in Oestersund. It was a dream coming true, which I realised only after the end of the season when I had enough time to reflect on the past season. With such success, my expectations - and those around me - are even higher for the coming season. I am working extremely hard to fulfill them.
BW Why do you think Oestersund is so good to you and for you?
DH I love the tracks; they are hard and similar to those in the cross-country competitions, and that suits my style perfectly.

I ALSO LIKE THE LONG UPHILLS A LOT; THEY ENABLE ME TO MAKE A REAL TIME DIFFERENCE COMPARED TO THE REST OF THE FIELD. YOU EITHER WIN OR loose quite a lot of SECONDS ON THE UPHILL, AND THAT IS WHERE MY MAIN STRENGTH LIES.

BW Which other venue besides Oestersund do you particularly like, and why?
DH I love competing in Oslo-Holmenkollen and in Antholz-Anterselva. In Antholz, one needs to be careful about planning for the competition because of the high altitude. Also Oberhof, with all the difficult tracks. BW How cool or difficult is it to change your environment every week?
DH It depends on your experience with the venues. I know most of them from the cross-country part of my career. New tracks are always exciting; Annecy and Pokljuka were a novelty for me.

BW Do you see any women who could start to dominate like JT Boe did last season and Martin Fourcade seven seasons before that?
DH That is a good question. I can only say that for me to be in that state of constant flow of success, my shooting will need to be on a very high level for the whole season.

BW What about the final sprint? Do you keep yourself in your ideal mix?
DH When I switched to biathlon, I was expecting sprint to be my favourite competition; it turned out I prefer a proper, woman to woman battle, so I would choose the pursuit and then follow with the mass start.

BW Your favourite discipline?
DH Dorothea Wierer and Lisa Vittozzi are both fast shooters, whereas I am a very slow one. I would take Wierer’s style in prone, Vittozzi in standing.

BW Have you changed anything in your preparations compared to the last season?
DH In the last 100 meters, Tiril Eckhoff can battle me; I would still keep me though. I think I didn’t have a proper finish battle for the past few years, and having been a sprinter in cross-country skiing, I do miss that part of the race when everybody goes all in.

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After the season is before the new season. I already started planning for the new season in April. With my coaching team, we have set up a direction of training and we are following it. I have a new rifle and we will see how successful this decision will turn out to be. I have worked on some details in my skiing.

Giulio Gasparin, Jaka Lucu
IBU Photo Pool
DENISE HERRMANN - GER  IBU CHAMPIONS
Back in January 2015, then 23-year-old Quentin Fillon Maillet picked up his first-ever World Cup podium, finishing second, just edged out by Simon Schempp in a thrilling, photo-finish Ruhpolding Mass Start. The promise of victories and multiple podiums seemed to be just around the corner for the young French biathlete.

Yet, even though there was progress, the victories never came; the podiums continued at a slow pace and his steady 87% shooting in 2016/2017 dropped to 81% over the next two seasons. Then mid-way through last season, Fillon Maillet grabbed his first IBU World Cup win in the Antholz-Anterselva Mass Start, challenging and topping Johannes Thingnes Boe, then added win number two in the Soldier Hollow Pursuit, closing out the year with nine podiums and an outstanding third in the BMW IBU World Cup Total Score. The promise was being fulfilled after overcoming obstacles in the stadium and in his personal life.

**SMALL THINGS ADD UP**

To get to the stratosphere of the ‘Top 3’ men in biathlon, Fillon Maillet admitted that it was all the small things that added up.

“I did not do anything special, but I did change the position of how I was holding my rifle. I had not noticed it in the two previous years (when his shooting was declining), but last summer I found this problem and changed it. Then I found a good feeling on the shooting range. Additionally, I had good progress in skiing; those were the keys.”

At the same time, he got stronger mentally. “I went into the season with the attitude that I had everything to win and nothing to lose. I was happy to ski every day, making my passion my job. With that attitude I was able to get some good results.”
QUENTIN FILLON MAILLET - FRA  IBU CHAMPIONS

QUENTIN FILLON MAILLET
I did not do anything special, but I did change the position of how I was holding my rifle. I had not noticed it in the two previous years (when his shooting was declining), but last summer I found this problem and changed it. Then I found a good feeling on the shooting range.”

**INSPIRED BY GIRLFRIEND’S CANCER BATTLE**

Another piece of the mental puzzle came from his girlfriend, who fought and won a battle with cancer. That situation weighed heavily on Fillon Maillet in the previous season. “When you have problems, you think and stress a lot about them. I was very concerned about my girlfriend. This was a huge problem. After she was better, I realised that things like biathlon troubles are small problems and nothing to worry about. She gave me some strength because she fought so hard every day for six months. That was a huge inspiration for me.”

That inspiration brought that elusive first IBU World Cup win over the almost unstoppable Johannes, who had dominated the sprint and pursuit that week.
end in Italy. “I did challenge Johannes that day to get my victory. But also, it was just my day; I had a very good feeling on my skis, I felt strong and confident on the shooting range. I was not thinking too much about the results. It was just a great day, but I felt that way much of the time last season. I will have this feeling for the next winter.”

Of course, the two wins last season were not planned. “I never expected to win, but I always hoped I would win. I really never knew if I would win a competition at the World Cup level. It is the same with the Globes. I do not know if I can win one, but I will fight and try to win one.”

**MARTIN’S INFLUENCE**

Last season when his teammate and seven-time BMW IBU World Cup Total Score winner Martin Fourcade had an off-year, Fillon Maillet stepped out from his teammate’s shadow for the first time. He has great respect for Fourcade and aspires to be like him. “Martin created a new biathlon. He found the perfect solution for both shooting and skiing; he thinks about everything that it takes to win…and outside biathlon he is a great businessman. That is a great inspiration for me. But that is also a problem for him. The media always talks about him when he crashes or does not win. For me it is a good thing. They do not talk to me or about me too much. I can go my own way…under the radar!”

After years with Fourcade, Fillon Maillet has picked up one thing from his more famous teammate. “He is very much a professional. Martin has a calendar and knows exactly what he will do each day for training, sponsors, and media; very disciplined. This has been a big influence.”

Despite last year’s success, the number three man in biathlon strives for further improvement in every aspect of biathlon. He spent a week in Italy with French
shooting coach Patrick Favre. “Shooting is not like physical training where you can do a loop and compare times. In shooting it might be this or that that is wrong, so it was good to have some one-on-one time to look at specific things.”

He reiterated that the physical training under new coach Vincent Vittoz last year also helped improve results. “His (cross-country) training is not much more or harder, but it is more specific. Last summer, I did not know if his training would be better than (former coach) Stephan Bouthiaux’s, but in the season I was better on the skis. So, it helped me.”

**TRY TO GIVE MY BEST**

With his newfound confidence, inspiration, and solid training, Quentin Fillon Maillet comes to the new season with the possibility to fight for the big Crystal Globe and the number one ranking. Still, he feels no pressure. “Like last season, I will try to give my best. I do not think too much about this. I never think I must win the race. I know I must shoot well and ski fast; it is very simple. Of course, in Antholz-Anterselva, I thought about the win in the last shooting. My legs were shaking the same as with the other athletes when they are in this position.”

As for the new season, Fillon Maillet showed good form when he won the sprint and pursuit at the French Summer Championships in mid-September, but at the same time, he emphasised, “I am not ready now (in September), but in November, I will be!”
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ITALIANS REFLECT ON THE IMPACT OF THE ELITE TEAM

The past season has been extraordinary for the Italian biathlon team: Dorothea Wierer became the first Italian to lift the IBU Total Score Crystal Globe, finishing ahead of her teammate Lisa Vittozzi, who took the Individual Globe. But the numbers were striking throughout the season: the “azzurri” stepped on the podium at least once per World Cup stage and conquered 5 medals at the IBU World Championships (including two historic gold medals in the Mass Starts), ending the season with 21 podium placements.

Surprisingly, a little more than a year ago, the team was going through some major changes, with Patrick Favre and Patrick Oberegger, two of the long-time coaches, leaving.

A BLESSING IN DISGUISE

“Last year the team had to replace two coaches, two physiotherapists and two skiers who left all at once for various reasons. It was a sudden change for a group that had been consistently similar, work and logistics-wise,” explained Fabrizio Curtaz, Technical Director of the Italian team: “This proved to be an incentive to be more focused and even cynical about our work, focusing on goals strictly related to it. We opted to create a very small group, with only four high-profile athletes, whose level was similar. This choice allowed us to raise the level of training for each athlete, which allowed coaches to deal with situations much better.”

One of the new members on the team, Andrea Zattoni, came from cross country after completing a biathlon coach diploma just a few months before the call from the national team.

“I still remember the first training day with the team, when I talked to the athletes and said: ‘I am not here to revolutionise your training regimes or stress your lives. You are coming from a great 2017/2018 season, so I’d be more than satisfied if we can repeat those successes’. Things did not quite go the same, especially for the girls, as we exceeded expectations.

“The first thing I saw, and still see today, is that they all have just so much will to push their limits by working hard. For a coach, this is the most satisfying thing. I think the saying ‘hard work always pays off’ is not too false, after all.”

NEW INPUT... WITH EASE

“From my side, I brought in some new exercises, especially on the strength conditioning training, and some key concepts on the skiing technique,” explained Zattoni, who admittedly learnt a lot this year next to Andreas Zingerle, who also coaches the Italian Elite Team. “I think it is something about me: I like to focus on simple concepts and exercises, because
if you find mistakes within a simple exercise, you can always find an adjustment to make it work. On the contrary, it becomes extremely hard if you find yourself in an overly complicated pattern.

“Our working concept last year and we are doing the same this year, with the great advantage of starting our program a month earlier.”

**Mixed teams still the Italian strength**

Contrary to many other national teams, the Italians had always worked with a mixed team of women and men together. The decision to create an Elite Team did not change this concept.

“The two men could confront themselves with two women who have been among the world’s best shooters, and it triggered their willingness to challenge and improve themselves, giving them higher motivation on a daily basis. Physically, they are all mature athletes and they know what to do to improve their training form,” explained Curtaz.

“But the benefits reached the rest of the World Cup team, the Squadra A, since they also could benefit from a smaller group with a much more similar level, both physically and at the range. This way, each of them could focus on their own goals without chasing Doro (Wierer), Lisa (Vittozzi) or Luky (Hofer) at the range or on the tracks. We noticed that this situation often led to overtraining or a loss in focus on the individual goals to follow.”

**Minor Changes Ahead of Antholz-Anterselva 2020**

It is often said that a winning strategy should not be changed, but it was a change that brought the Italians to success last season, and with the IBU World Championships on home ground, some things were bound to change.

“On the Elite team, we have had a change this summer,” explained Zattoni. “Dominik (Windisch) wanted to look for new input on his shooting, so he asked to train with the A team this summer, while Thomas (Bormolini) joined us. I think it’s always a good incentive when there is such a change, because the new item wants to show that he deserves his spot, while the others want to prove their status.”

But Curtaz emphasized the need to keep the big picture as similar as possible to the past season: “Having the IBU World Championships at home, in Antholz-Anterselva, will not really change our approach to the season: in biathlon you have to be ready from day one, because starting well from the first BMW
IBU World Cup competitions is the key. For sure, having the IBU World Championships in February rather than March like this past season is making us change the way we periodize work, because we want to reach the highest peak of form in Antholz-Anterselva. But the road is still long and we will have to adapt to everything that happens on the way.”

WHAT DOWNSIDE?

“I have to admit that after 14 months working with this team, I have yet to face any seriously difficult situation, and this is just a dream-like situation,” remarked Zattoni half-jokingly, but this gives an idea of the vibe within the team.

“I believe in most teams it would be very difficult to have the two strongest women in the world within the same group, but this is not the case for us, and it is mostly thanks to the two of them.

The whole team also helped to create a harmonious environment around them and, as a result, they push each other – as well as the rest of the team – to always higher standards without creating any friction.”

Giulio Gasparin
Art Idea: Alessia Agostinis
Christian Marzoni
My life is always the same, or, better, almost the same. After the season there were so many appointments and I ended up having little time to rest. I only had one week that I could call it holiday and starting the preparation again was pretty tough, but I did it.

I received a lot of messages, but the one that made me smile the most was from Alberto Tomba. But there were so many from other Italian winter sports athletes and also from so many biathletes from all over the world. It was really important for me, because it shows I have a good relationship with athletes from other teams too.

Obviously, because of all these commitments in spring, my trainings started a little slow, but now I am back in full regime and so far there have been no halts, so I’d say my season is moving on well, so fingers crossed it keeps on going like this.

Learning how to deal with all these new commitments caused some stress initially, but I definitely enjoyed being invited to so many cool events. If I have to pick one, I’d say it’s been going to the MotoGP in Mugello. It was amazing to find out that so many of them were following us during the past winter.
In winter, the attention of the Slovak sports community will be focused on skiers Petra Vlhova and Paulina Fialkova. In biathlon, it is up to Paulina Fialkova to collect victories following the end of Nastya Kuzmina’s athletic career. She knows it and she wants it. A native of Čierny Balog and a member of the Dukla Banská Bystrica Army Club, she has been on the podium seven times at the BMW World Cup level. She is waiting for her first triumph, as well as for medals from the World Championships or Olympic Winter Games. Biathlonworld Magazine spoke with Paulina Fialková about the state of her mind and soul, new plans and challenges.

BIATHLONWORLD Do you need to motivate yourself a lot during your training to remember your successes from the last two seasons?

PAULÍNA FIALKOVÁ “I have to, because if the training is really challenging, I have to look for motivation. It’s best to remember the feeling when I was in the top three. Of course, I also remember things that I feel bad about during my training and that I would like to improve. However, I do not know if they can be improved, as there will be moments when I cannot say how I would react under other circumstances. For example, when I squeezed the trigger during the individual race at the 2019 World Cup before the last shot. At that point I did not hit the target and the medal was gone. I’m trying to figure out what to do if this happens again.”

BW Do you also speak to your trainers Anna Murinová and Martin Bajičák about what else you need to do to get to the top?

PAULÍNA FIALKOVÁ from Slovakia is entering the new season with the old team of coaches and a new technician from Slovenia.
PF “We avoid this discussion. My coaches are trying to improve my performance gradually, one the shooting and the other the skiing. That’s why I believe there will be more attempts for the medals. But it depends on so many things!”

BW Do you often wonder what else you need to do to make it all work?

PF “I often wonder whether I did everything right and whether I should have done something differently at some point. Every time I come to the conclusion that a different path does not exist, I doubt that I’ve done anything wrong so far. Because in the moment that I decided to do these things, I thought it was right. I’ve been taught not to turn back, but just to believe in myself and to see it through during competitions. You can believe that I trained, because I have shown it many times. No stress.”

BW You have a coaching team you trust. But you are still most dependent on yourself, right?

PF “Although it can be really nice when my environment tries to influence me, in the end I had to answer the most important questions for myself. When I answered them, it was solved. I’ve come to the conclusion that I do not need a mental trainer to think about some things. I have people around me with whom I can talk about everything. When I have a problem, I ask for their opinion and we take care of things together, as a team or at home.”

BW You are going through an exciting phase of your life because you are an athlete who has made it into the world’s elite. How do you perceive it all around you?

PF “It all happens so fast ... Of course, I’m glad that I’ve been noticed by the sports world, but it’s a much harder time than when I hadn’t achieved such good results yet. I expect a lot of myself and I have even higher demands on everything that concerns my preparation. I try to work on the details and sometimes my ideas can’t be accomplished anymore. Then I wonder whether this or that won’t affect my performance if it could not be achieved in detail. But it’s the same with well-being. Well, what about a personal life? Do I still have one? But no, it’s doing fine, except that I’m constantly away. A big pity in my career is that we are always training abroad. We come home for a week. When I return to my hometown of Banska Bystrica for a week, I try to pretend that I live normally. But I realize that it will only take a while, it will not last forever, and then I will enjoy the ordinary things that annoy ordinary people.”
BW Which tactic will you choose for the next 2019/2020 season?
PF “I missed World Cup competitions in the US last year because I wanted to prepare for the World Championships in Sweden, and I did not get there that time. Now I am prepared to try to pull through the whole season if my health allows and my performance is adequate. There are no big moves here. I’m planning on all the World Cups, including the Antholz World Championships.”
BW How ready are you for that?
PF “I do not like to think about it because there are other competitors, too, and they should have their peace. I am a person who takes care of myself. I do not care if someone decides that I should have results. I want results and I will take care of it. I cannot say that I will always finish in the first six or ten. What happens if I don’t? I will be disappointed. Anything can happen. How many times did someone shoot somewhere, feel motivated and then try to sustain a level until it burned? I let it flow. The first race in late November will be important. I will compare myself to the competition and then see. I will take the appropriate precautions.”
BW It must have taken a lot of physical and mental strength for you to stay in the limelight last season. It was your first season with such success. In the end, you got sixth place in the overall World Cup deserve. What was the biggest moment of the season?
PF “Yes, this was my first time in such a situation where I was propelled into the limelight not from below, but somewhere in the middle. The hardest part was dealing with myself and not putting pressure on myself if I didn’t have to. Because I can avoid pressure from around me. But because of the pressure I exert on myself, it is much harder to let go. That’s why I want to go into the next season in a more relaxed way. In the sense that I’ll treat it with a sense of satisfaction if I do well. When things are going well, it’s cool and you shouldn’t think they’re going to go wrong. That happened in January 2019.”
BW Yes, in January 2019 you were only on the podium once, after the mass start in Ruhpolding.
PF “Yes, because I already felt mentally tired in January and could not control my pressure. Then came the failures at the shooting range and on the track.”
BW Do you watch your rivals prepare for the season?
PF “Everything is on social media today. I am in contact with Mäkäräinen. Once in a while with Vittozzi and Hojnisz. If I don’t count this year’s Fourcade race at the end of August, I had no one to compare with. I can compare myself with my sister Ivona in training. My expectations for the first World Cup are all the bigger for it. Last year I was able to check if I was doing well in the summer when I started at the 2018 Summer Biathlon World Championships. Although there was less competition there. This time I was not in Minsk 2019, so we’ll see.”
BW The Slovak team will also be joined by a new Slovenian waxman, Miha Plahutnik. Do you have any thoughts about that?
PF “He will help prepare skis not only for us, but also for all members of the Slovak team. We turned to him because we had good references for him. He was a cross-country skier, so our fitness trainer Martin Bajičáčák knows him.”
BW You are in a certain phase of your sports career. You already have a university degree and a livelihood, which is your advantage. Does it give you a sense of security for the future?
PF “University has not made me a good lawyer ever since I finished it during my career, but it has brought me so much in my life. Just because I recognized my limits. I was good at sports and school and discovered that my limits were not where I had thought before. I know I’m able to do everything I can, but I have to pursue it purposely.”
BW Can a sports career be enjoyed despite its difficulty?
PF “Someone could do it. Someone who is excited about an invitation to this or that opening, event or discussion, but it costs a lot of energy. I am not a person who longs to be in the limelight and showcase myself. I’ll be proud to get up on the podium steps and see my coaches and my team, my parents in front of me. Then I will be proud. The other thing is that people recognize me.”

BW Can you not go shopping without people recognizing you?

PF “It’s not so severe, even though they recognize me. But in Banská Bystrica, a relatively small town, I’ve gotten used to being near them. Because I’m on TV, I do not dare to go to a movie, a cafe or a restaurant. It hurts when people stare at me when I drive up in a car or look at what I order at a restaurant. This is already a violation of privacy.”

BW When you’re home, you want to be with your friends. What is that like?

PF “I would much rather be with them, even every week. I have two—if I do not count my sister, trainer Anna Murinová and my family—two friends outside sports. When we meet again, I like the fact that we can continue the debate from the point where we left off three weeks ago. As if we were together every day. We never talk about sports and that makes me very relaxed. We can go out for coffee and talk about their problems, their lives, and I just listen. Three hundred days a year just about sports … sometimes you want to talk about something else. I don’t want to lose the idea of being an ordinary person who wants to have friends, family, home furnishings, and so on.”

BW You are photogenic and pretty. How do you handle photography?

PF “Although part of my training and preparation is funded by the state and by the Dukla Army Club, I have to secure part of it through sponsors. They will not just do it, they want advertising. It is a pity that athletes in our country are not looked after to the extent that the resources mentioned above could offer you everything you need to devote yourself fully to your sport. When I come home from training camp to rest, I have to promote photos or events. Then I go back to training and the coach is annoyed that I have not rested. I would like to say though that we cannot cover all the preparation expenses without the help of sponsors. Sponsors earn my participation at events. I try to find a reasonable compromise among all this.”

Ivor Lehotan
IBU Photo Pool
Biathlon is the most popular winter sport in Ukraine. How did that happen?

Thanks to its talented athletes and their great achievements, biathlon has gained thousands of fans in Ukraine, with competition broadcasts attracting a huge audience to screens.

THE IMPETUS FOR BIATHLON DEVELOPMENT

Ukrainian biathlon has a history of high-profile victories, including gold medals at the Olympics and IBU World Championships, and disappointing seasons. There are many reasons for this, with one obstacle being the lack of those good training conditions familiar in Europe. In preparation for the season, the national team has the opportunity to train abroad most of the time, but the younger generation, only taking its first steps, works mainly in Ukrainian stadiums. Dmytro Podruchnyi,
who unexpectedly won the pursuit Gold medal at the IBU World Championships 2019 in Östersund, Sweden, believes that his victory will provide an additional impetus for the development of biathlon in Ukraine.

Pidruchnyi admits that for the moment the biathlon stadiums in his country are far from international standards. Nevertheless, he hopes that everything will change in the near future: “Of course, we want to have world-class facilities, because this will definitely help the development of biathlon, motivate more children to go into sports and allow international competitions to be held. We were promised a new biathlon stadium in the Carpathians, in the town of Bukovel, which will probably become one of the best in Europe.” With a smile on his face, he adds: “I hope that I will wait for this moment and still have a chance to compete there!”

“WE CAN BATTLE FOR MEDALS”

Undoubtedly, the modern material base plays a huge role in an athlete’s preparation, but in addition to the training conditions, it is also important to have talented and experienced biathletes who are able to share their knowledge, prompt discussions and become an example to follow.

When Pidruchnyi started doing biathlon, he had his own role model: “When I first joined the national team, I was lucky to train for a few years with Andriy Deryzemlya, who was an example in everything:

Olympic Relay Gold Medal
Sochi 2014

2.0 IS NOT JUST A NUMBER. THIS IS THE NEXT GENERATION OF WORLD CUP SKIS.
love for biathlon, dedication in training, incredible hard work. Like many beginners, I looked up to him; he taught me a lot, shared his experience, and I just tried to achieve the results that he showed. We were incredibly proud of his bronze medal at the World Championships, which he took in 2007 in Antholz, because it was the first WCH award for our men’s team. Moreover, he was able to impose a battle on the biathlon leaders, proving to us that through hard work, one day we will also be able to take the podium.”

Years later, Pidruchnyi stepped even further: he surpassed his teacher by winning the IBU World Championship Gold medal. The 28-year old Ukrainian hopes that his victory will significantly change the mood of the men’s team, including the youth, who witnessed that it is quite possible to battle the most powerful biathletes in the world.

“By my example, I showed that not only Norwegians, French, and Germans can stand on the podium, but so can we. Now we have many young and talented athletes; the men’s team has been rejuvenated over the past few years, so I think that such results are also a good motivation for them. New names on the team are important as they create some good rivalries. I really hope that Ukrainian biathletes will be able to compete not only for the individual medals but also show good results in relays.”

ONE TEAM

Dmytro’s wish is easy to understand because the Ukrainian women’s team could boast of high achievements much more often than the men could. In recent years, the ladies went home with medals in their hands from almost every main start. Nevertheless, the Olympic champion Valj Semerenko does not separate these awards for herself: “You cannot divide medals like this, into women’s and men’s, because we are one team. For example, when last year at the IBU World Championships we won a medal, the guys were glad for us - and when they won, we were incredibly happy for them.”

The support of teammates is always important, but these achievements from the women also provide an incentive for the guys to strive for more: “We always looked up to our girls. We were proud of
their results and this motivated us to achieve their level, to make our country proud of us as well. I think that this Gold medal from the last IBU World Championships is partially the result of inspiration from our women, who were always an example for us.”

**WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS 2020 IN ANTHOLZ-ANTERSELVA**

Last year, Pidruchnyi became the first male world champion in Ukraine, a seemingly unexpected victory, but for a country where the women’s team has collected all kinds of awards at different high-level events, it can hardly be called random. Dmytro is optimistic about the future and is looking forward to the World Championships 2020 in Antholz, hoping to repeat Deryzemlya’s triumph and defeat his title: “The track in Antholz is very significant for the men’s team, so I really want to continue the good tradition that began there in 2007.”

Semerenko has no lesser hopes for a strong performance from the women, adding with a laugh: “Of course, we are one team, but the girls are not going to give precedence in the medal standings to our guys!”

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Mariya Osolodkina
Christian Manzoni

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FROM THE IBU SUMMER BIATHLON WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS 2019
RAUBICHI - BLR

10 MOMENTS
IBU SUMMER BIATHLON WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS 2019 RAUBICHI - BLR

EVENTS

Giulio Gasparin, Mariya Osolodkina
 Christian Manzoni
WELCOME TO RAUBICHI Following their successful organization of the IBU Open European Championships last winter, Raubichi once again hosted a prime event in the world of biathlon, this time in the summer. Wide yet challenging roller tracks tested some of the top-class athletes who will be back on the same uphills soon, when first the IBU Cup and then the BMW IBU World Cup in 2022 will return to Minsk.
SUPER SPRINT, SUPER FUN! Many novelties took place in the biathlon stadium of the Belarusian capital: shorter distances and penalty loops were tried out in numerous competitions, but the novelty most fans were curious to watch was the Super Sprint. The format that had already been tested in the IBU Cup proved successful in its summer version too. Four exciting competitions thrilled spectators to the last metre with continuous changes in the lead and nail-biting finish line sprints.
A GOLDEN RETURN FOR LAPSHIN  The last time Timofei Lapshin competed in the IBU Summer World Championships, he did not sport his trademark moustache and the year on the calendar was 2010. He left that edition with a silver medal, so he was more than joyful when he took gold this time in the Super Sprint, the first competition on the program. His fast shooting, however, proved hard to beat on Saturday too, when he doubled the glory with a win in the Men’s 7.5km Sprint.
VALJ’S SUPER SWEET 16 On the first day of competitions in Raubichi, something pretty extraordinary happened at the finish of the women’s Super Sprint. Valj Semerenko came out on top of a 3-woman sprint for gold, closing ahead of Lucie Charvatova and Ekaterina Glazyrina. For the Ukrainian, this gold represented the 16\textsuperscript{th} medal she won at the Summer World Championships; the first one came in 2004, when she competed in the juniors in Osrblie … when it was still running and shooting!
CHU YUANMENG, THE STAR OF THE WEEK  Two golds and a silver speak for themselves, but there was a lot more that caught the eyes of fans and experts in Chu Yuanmeng’s performances in Raubichi. The 19-year-old demonstrated a great attitude, especially in the Junior Women’s 7.5km Pursuit, where she never showed any sign of nerves despite being, for the first time in her young career, the one being chased. You do not get hearty congratulations from Darya Domracheva if you do not have something special in you, after all…
For 2020, our fastest glide wax series has a wider range of waxes than ever. The HF sprays that debuted in our “Racing Service” collection, are now a part of our standard range in larger and more economical 150 ml packaging. Advanced liquid wax technology has also allowed us to broaden the HF wax series with the new HF41 “UHW”. The spray versions are very durable and also the most wax-containing liquid HF waxes on the market, and they do not need hot waxing to support their durability. The spray version also fills small imperfections in base material like hot wax, reconditions and replenishes.
HAPPY BIRTHDAY FROM ME TO MYSELF  Can you imagine a better way to celebrate your birthday than shooting a first-ever 20/20 in an international competition and claiming gold with it? This is how Martin Otcenas spent his thirty-second birthday in Minsk Raubichi and, needless to say, he was pretty thrilled about his win in the Men’s 10km Pursuit.
ZHANG’S V FOR VICTORY  The great work that the Chinese team is putting towards their home Olympics is already paying off, and even if Tobias Torgersen, in an interview with IBU TV, said that “we need to ‘hurry up slowly’”, it looks like results are not coming in so slowly. Zhang came back from being behind in the last two ranges and then sprinted in the last loop of the Women’s 7.5km Pursuit to claim a first-ever international win and put China on top of the medals table in Minsk.
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EVENTS  IBU SUMMER BIATHLON WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS 2019 RAUBI(Chi) - BLR
BELARUSIAN JUNIOR MEN DOMINANT  Three competitions, three gold medals. This is how good the weekend was for the Junior Men’s home team. Dzmitry Lazouski dominated the sprint and the pursuit with terrific ski speed, while Mikita Labastau joined him on the podium of the Junior Men’s 10km pursuit after claiming gold in the Super Sprint.
A NEW, BRIGHTER, PAGE FOR CHARVATOVA It was a memorable week in Belarus for Lucie Charvatova, who showed great form on her skis and confidence at the range to win silver in the Women’s Super Sprint and gold in the Sprint. These results had special meaning for the Czech woman, after a couple of difficult years: “I would have never hoped for a weekend like this. Maybe my secret wish was to leave Minsk with one medal, a bronze maybe, but then I got two… one of them being gold! It is so important for me, because the past two years I struggled so much; it has been painful. Now I feel much better and I hope these results are a good sign for a much better winter in front of me.”
RUSSIA FINISHES IN DOUBLE DIGITS Despite finishing third on the medals table, the Russian team won the most medals overall in the weekend in Minsk, proving once again to be one of the powerhouses of the sport. For a total of 12 times, Russian athletes stepped on the podium, with two golds coming from their women's team: Valeria Vasinetchova won the Junior Women's Super Sprint, while Ekaterina Glazyrina took the Women's 6km Sprint tied with Charvatova. Eduard Latypov, though failing to step onto the highest place on the podium, finished with three medals, the only man to do so at these IBU Summer World Championships.
After Laura Dahlmeier’s retirement, the 23-year-old biathlete from Kiefersfelden placed into the BMW IBU World Cup team again after the German Championships as the sixth athlete.

Anna Weidel is an all-rounder who enjoys playing football and mountain biking in her free time. After her first BMW IBU World Cup appearances last winter, she wants to prevail this time.

You can feel her passion. She enjoys her sport, she shows a happy smile most of the time, and she always spreads good cheer among the German biathletes. Anna Weidel is also ready to banter anytime and up for a good joke. She does not see competitive sports as a serious matter. “In everything I do, the fun in sports must not fall short,” says Weidel. That is also the reason why the 23-year-old biathlete who switched from cross-country skiing to biathlon at the age of 14 also likes to go hiking in the mountains to balance things out.

The native Tyrolean, who was born in Kufstein and graduated from high school there, is a true cross-border commuter. Her mother is Austrian and her father German, which is one reason why she also holds both nationalities. In sports, she decided early on to join the German Ski Federation (DSV), partly also because she began cross-country skiing at WSV Kiefersfelden and ventured her first steps.
on the track there. She started on alpine skis at the age of five. The question of changing federations did not arise.

“I tried many things, but cross-country skiing was the most fun,” said Weidel. Just three years later, she landed in biathlon. Out of pure curiosity. “When a friend from the club went to biathlon, I wanted to try it out too, and I had so much fun that I stayed until today,” said the young woman with long blond hair. There were other reasons too. “I especially like the versatile training in the summer, because you can go cycling or mountain climbing every now and then,” explains Weidel.

She ventured her first step in alpine skiing at first. There were bad consequences: at the age of five, she suffered a fractured calf and shin and was unable to walk for five weeks. “I have not forgotten that until today. Today I’m not afraid anymore when I do alpine ski tours,” recounts Weidel. “But that’s the past,” she says. Her future belongs to biathlon. After her first successes in the youth ranks, she pushed to the top of the German juniors and found a place on the Customs Ski Team in Ruhpolding after graduating from high school. The community in Chiemgau has now become her second home.

**FAMILY IS IMPORTANT**

The Zolloberwachtmeisterin [Customs Senior Sergeant] usually lives with Marion Deigentesch and Niklas Homberg in Ruhpolding from Monday to Friday because of the daily training. “Each of us has our own room there,” says Weidel. For now, she forgoes a permanent residence. She is not only very close to nature, but also someone who seeks to be close to her family.

“It’s only 40 kilometers to Kiefersfelden, so I like driving home once a week and then on the weekend,” says the biathlete. For her, life is more than just biathlon. Weidel is also particularly adventurous. She loves cycling in particular and is a fervent fan of Peter Sagan, the golden boy on the professional German team Bora-Hansgrohe. Her mobile phone case is adorned with the face of the extremely successful Slovak sprinter. The Tyrolean also makes no secret of her affection for FC Bayern Munich. She has many ideas that she wants to carry out. And if time permits, she’ll take the wheel of her VW bus, her second home, and drive to the mountains for some mountain biking or to Lake Garda with her surfboard.

“Windsurfing with my sister, we have a lot of fun there together,” says Weidel on the sidelines of the German Championship in Ruhpolding. She beams, she smiles. And when asked about her goals, she remains modest. “I don’t think about that much because that’s how I would put myself under additional pressure.” Nevertheless, she is confident. Her preparation went rather well compared to previous years. “I was never hurt or ill and had no problems,” said the slender biathlete. That of course gave her self-confidence in the important competitions for the open
spots on the World Cup team. “I have to stay relaxed, I saw how quickly I was out of the World Cup last year,” said Weidel.

She has taken a step forward internationally. In her first appearances at the World Cup in Pokljuka (Slovenia), she already made a sensational entrance into the World Cup standard with 10th place (sprint) and 11th place (pursuit). She was particularly impressed by the conditions in the World Cup after her previous appearance in the IBU Cup. “The tracks are the same, the targets too - but everything surrounding it is much bigger,” she observed. “I want to go there again.” “The fact that several open spots for the World Cup were awarded at the German Championship was a good incentive,” she said at the competition site below Zirnberg.

Anna Weidel made it exciting again this time. But the first half of the German Championship at Arber did not go quite according to plan for the up-and-coming talent from national coach Florian Steirer. After ninth place in the sprint, the customs officer sent out an exclamation point to the competition with the second fastest run in the pursuit. And in the second part of the German Championship just a week later in almost home territory, things went almost entirely according to her plan. With fourth place in the mass start, she pushed her way firmly onto the World Cup team. “The mass start suits me, I was already looking forward to it,” said Weidel, who loves the fight, woman to woman. She was also motivated by her family and friends visiting. “You really want to show yourself from your best side.” She succeeded impressively in doing so in the arena of the German Championship. She prevailed against Janina Hettich in a “head to head race” for the sixth starting position at the World Cup. The others already headed for the World Cup were World Cup champion Denise Herrmann and Franziska Preuss. Vanessa Hinz, Franziska Hildebrand and Karolin Horchler were also able to qualify. Once again, she will be the youngest member of the German Skiing Association (DSV) team at the World Cup kickoff in Östersund. That does not bother her at all. On the contrary. “I will try to do my best to establish myself in the World Cup.”

A BIT CRAZY, WITH A LOT OF POTENTIAL

That’s what her coach Christian Mehringer also believes of her. “Anna is a bit crazy, she still has a lot of potential, she just has to be more orderly in implementing her training.” She is one of the greatest talents in the female field in the DSV. In the last few years, she has been a frontrunner internationally again and again. At the Junior World Championships, she won silver in sprint and pursuit behind Lisa Vitozzi (Italy) in 2014, bronze in the relay in 2015, and silver in the relay as well as bronze in the individual race in 2017. In addition, at the IBU Junior Cup in the 2016/2017 season, Anna Weidel won the pursuit and individual rankings and was fifth overall in the competition series.

Once in the women’s field, she seamlessly added to her successes in the junior competitions. The native Tyrolean celebrated her first IBU Cup victory in the pursuit race at Kontiolahti. Weidel does not have a direct role model in biathlon, “but you can copy from many people and learn a lot.” One advantage here is that she has a very strong team at her home base in Ruhpolding - which will provide the entire women’s World Cup team. “This is the world’s best here in training.” She can learn from this too. Because she also has an ambitious goal. “I would like to participate in the Olympic Games once in my life.” Through all her humor, she also has her sights set on her goals.
18/19 OVERALL WORLD CUP WINNER

JOHANNES THINGNES BØ

SKIING IS NOT A LIFESTYLE. IT’S LIFE.
FISCHERSPORTS.COM
Werner Brombach is celebrating his 90th birthday this year. This is an achievement in itself, but Brombach is still astonishingly full of life and plans. He continues to enjoy watching biathlon in person, for he loves the unique drama of the sport and the atmosphere that comes with it. In 2001, ERDINGER dared to do what no one before them had done: they specifically positioned their non-alcoholic drink as “the isotonic thirst-quencher for athletes.” Erdinger decided to partner with biathlon because they knew they could successfully anchor their ERDINGER Non-Alcoholic brand to the No. 1 winter sport. They were clearly right in all their decisions.

**BIATHLON WORLD**  Mr. Brombach, what excites you most about biathlon?

**WERNER BROMBACH** I am a self-confessed biathlon fan. I am fascinated by the athletic excellence of biathletes and the unique atmosphere at the competitions. I have attended many events live in the stadiums - you are guaranteed to have high tension, drama and the best atmosphere. I am generally inspired by the sport, especially the true Olympic idea. I experienced my first Olympic Games in 1960 in Rome. Top athletic performance paired with the Olympic ideals of fairness and fair play. These values were instilled in us from our early school days, and they still inspire me today. I even experienced a wonderful example of how it should be, in biathlon itself: at a prize ceremony, a serviceman from the Italian team was awarded the Fairness Award. He handed a new ski pole to a Russian biathlete who had lost a pole. So that he could continue. Even though there was a risk that the Russian would overtake an Italian who was in third place. That is what I mean: fairness!

**BW** When did you decide to develop a relationship with biathlon?

**WB** In our ERDINGER Non-Alcoholic, we have a top-quality drink that tastes excellent, contains many healthy and entirely natural ingredients, and is isotonic. The optimal drink for athletes and recreationally active individuals. However, around the turn of the millennium, the market for non-alcoholic beer was at rock bottom. No one could have been persuaded anymore by mere advertisements. So in 2001, we dared to do something that no one before us had dared to do: we positioned our non-alcoholic drink specifically as “the isotonic thirst-quencher for athletes.” At first, it was oriented strongly towards the target groups of endur-
ance athletes, runners, and triathletes. Since the 2006 season, we have been involved in biathlon in order to show a presence in winter as well. We decided on biathlon because we could anchor our ERDINGER Non-Alcoholic brand successfully and emotionally on the No. 1 winter sport.

**BW** ERDINGER Non-Alcoholic is associated with many successful athletes. What do you / ERDINGER look for when you / ERDINGER choose to work with a particular athlete?

**WB** Of course, I am delighted when our athletes are successful. But success is far from everything. It is just as important that the athletes are suited to us and our brand in their character, share our values and are likable role models. ERDINGER Weissbräu is a global ambassador for a zest for life, down-to-earthness, and quality. This is embodied by our athletes as well, who can rely on us to be by their side as a strong partner. With some, for example Magdalena Neuner, Michi Greis and Andi Birnbacher, a strong bond connects us even after their active careers are over. This is always based on mutual respect.

**BW** Your brewery has remained in private hands and is therefore still a private business, a big family. Do you see parallels here with biathlon, which also likes to be known as The Biathlon Family and is not governed by the FIS?

**WB** We are happy to be part of the Biathlon Family. We are connected by values such as fairness, quality awareness, open-mindedness, and also team spirit. Although biathlon is an individual sport, there is always a team of coaches and technicians standing behind every successful athlete. This also applies to us as a medium-sized private brewery. We have succeeded in building an established brand that is represented even in the farthest regions of the world. This can only
be achieved with a good team. We are all in the same boat, rowing together in the same direction. This has an incredible value that especially in this day and age cannot be appreciated highly enough.

**BW** How do you manage to remain successful and independent as a business today?

**WB** For me, reliability is the top priority, as well as straightforwardness. That means not running after every trend and not throwing one’s convictions overboard – even when there is some pushback. Long-term added value can only be achieved with appreciation. This applies to our own product, but also to our employees, as well as to our customers and business partners. I place great value on my surroundings and on the people who work with me.

**BW** ERDINGER has been growing very steadily for decades without losing its identity or being, or needing to be, sold to a larger corporation. What have you learned in this relatively long period, and what do you need to look out for in order to stay on a successful course?

**WB** We were the first brewery to venture to sell the purely Bavarian specialty wheat beer outside our borders. In order to do this, it was necessary to make the “ERDINGER Weissbier” a strong brand. Marketing was not a concern for brewers here at that time. At the same time, we always cultivated the best brewing traditions: Weissbier brewed according to the Bavarian purity law. Even the four pillars of our business philosophy are an unalterable tradition at ERDINGER: concentration...
make what is good even better. When people drink our Weissbier with enjoyment and pleasure, that is the highest form of appreciation and motivation for me.

**BW** What are the characteristics of a successful entrepreneur and a successful athlete?

**WB** Ambition, courage, and above all, an unconditional passion for what they do. Most athletes must work hard from childhood to achieve success later. Absolute perseverance is required here. This also applies to a certain extent to my career as an entrepreneur. I learned brewing from scratch. As a ten-year-old, I was already helping out at the brewery and scrubbing fermenting vats until they were clean as a whistle. When I was older, I spent night shifts with beer steins and discovered how difficult it is to keep going until morning finally came. The theory came in during my university studies. Throughout this time, I learned to understand and love the craft of brewing – until today. My purpose in life is to be a brewer with heart and soul. It is the same in sports. To have a successful career, you must invest an enormous amount of time and energy.

**BW** What are your most treasured memories or moments in sports or biathlon, in which you thought, “This is priceless”?

**WB** It is certainly something special to be able to share and accompany the high points of an athlete’s career as a sponsor. The Olympic gold medals for Michi Greis at the Olympic Winter Games Torino 2006 and of course the incredible successes of Magdalena Neuner. Two golds and one silver at the Olympic Games in Vancouver 2010, twelve World Champion titles and many World Cup wins – I personally attended most of them and was able to join in the cheering live. These are absolute highlights. In addition, though, there are the many personal moments that you experience with the athletes, that have made a lasting impression in my memory. Whether at the autumn festivals in Erding, birthday celebrations or tributes, I always look forward to the times when I can converse with the athletes in a more private setting.

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**Perfect match:**

Magdalena Neuner and ERDINGER

**In good hands:**

Werner Brombach with Stefan Krauss and Michael Witta from Infront Austria

**Werner Brombach and his daughter with German star Michael Greis**
It feels like the previous season ended just recently with the IBU Cup final competitions and awarding of the globes in Martell-Val Martello, Italy, but it is already time to turn to the next biathlon page and write down new names and records. The athletes are ready to step back onto the tracks, hoping that countless hours of persistent work and hard training will pay off with the desired wins and podiums.

VALUABLE PERSONAL QUOTAS

The biathlon season traditionally kicks off in Scandinavia with the IBU Cup competitions, which give athletes one last chance to jump onto their national teams or qualify for the BMW IBU World Cup. These are the main reasons why the competition program in Norway’s Sjusjoen starts with two sprints, followed by the pursuits that will wrap up the first IBU Cup. While some athletes will only try to gain necessary qualification points, Anton Babikov and Victoria Slivko of Russia have already received personal start quotas at the World Cup opener in Oestersund as the winners of last season’s IBU Cup Total Scores.

After a short break, the competitions will continue at the traditional mid-December venues in Ridnaun-Val Ridanna, Italy and Obertilliach, Austria. In Ridnaun, athletes will battle for the podium in the super sprint, sprint, and last season’s pre-
miere, the mass start 60. Obertilliach will also have three scheduled competitions: the short individual, also introduced last season, sprint and mixed relay. With the final competitions scheduled on December 21, 2019, athletes will have enough time to go home for Christmas and spend the holidays with their families while they recharge their batteries after the first trimester.

BIGGER FIELDS

At the beginning of January, the second trimester will kick off in Osrblie, Slovakia, with sprints and individuals, followed by the IBU Cup 5 in Duszniki Zdrój, Poland, where mixed relays with alternating genders, sprints, and pursuits are scheduled. Unlike in previous season, athletes will get a two-week break before traveling to the next stage in Arber, Germany. The Hohenzollern Ski Stadium, which tested the short individual in January 2019, will have a different competition program this time: the sprint and the mass start 60. Interestingly, this season’s two mass start 60’s, in Ridnaun and Arber, will be held according to different procedures: in the first competition, bibs 31-60 will proceed to the first shooting while bibs 1-30 go to the transit loop. In the second competition, it will be vice versa: as bibs 1-30 conduct their first prone, bibs 31-60 will continue skiing without shooting.

IBU Sports Director Felix Bitterling explained why the mass start 60 competitions are scheduled in the first two trimesters: “Last season, the test of the mass start 60 was held at the final IBU Cup in Martell and in general, we were quite happy with this competition. Nevertheless, the number of participants at the end of the season is usually smaller, and we want to test the competition with full fields and the strongest athletes; we want to have all the information before

Interestingly, this season’s two mass start 60’s, in Ridnaun and Arber, will be held following different procedures: in one competition, bibs 31-60 will proceed to the first shooting while bibs 1-30 go to the transit loop. In the second competition, it will be vice versa: as bibs 1-30 conduct their first prone, bibs 31-60 will continue skiing without shooting.
“We always try to find the best compromise for the final of the season and it certainly depends on the location of the venue. For example, last season it was high-altitude Martell, so we made an easier program for the athletes. The stadium in Raubichi is not so challenging with its lower altitude, which is why we scheduled short individuals, sprints, and pursuits, which will also be interesting with regard to the battle not only for the Total Score, but also for the three small discipline globes.”  

IBU Sports Director Felix Bitterling

FULLY RENOVATED

From the German venue, teams will head to the highest IBU Cup stadium in Italy’s Martell, which is located at an altitude of 1700 meters. Three competition days with super sprints, sprints, and pursuits scheduled will become a final test and last chance for athletes to qualify for the IBU Open European Championships 2020, which will take place in Otepaa, Estonia at the end of February. As a traditional venue for IBU Cups in the past, Otepaa already hosted the IBU OECH in 2015. Unlike at the previous event, this time, Tehvandi stadium, which will also welcome its first World Cup in March 2022, will be fully renovated. To hold four competitions, the individual, mixed relay, sprint, and pursuit, on the highest level, many changes will be made. Besides a new lighting system at the stadium, tracks, and shooting range, there will also be a new penalty loop and brand new Kurvinen targets, as well as new stands for the fans and a tunnel for the media.

COMPROMISE

After a saturated February, teams will reach the finish line and head to the final IBU Cup in Belorussian Minsk-Raubichi, the venue that successfully held the IBU OECH 2019. Situated just 30 minutes from the capital of Belarus, the “Raubichi” stadium also received the right to host a World Cup stage in March 2022, so the IBU Cup will be a great chance to carry out the last tests before such an important event. Explaining the IBU Cup 8 schedule, Bitterling noted, “We always try to find the best compromise for the final of the season and it certainly depends on the location of the venue. For example, last season it was high-altitude Martell, so we made an easier program for the athletes. The stadium in Raubichi is not so
challenging with its lower altitude, which is why we scheduled short individuals, sprints, and pursuits, which will also be interesting with regard to the battle not only for the Total Score, but also for the three small discipline globes.”

**CHANGED START TIMES**

It is important to note that the regular IBU Cup start times were changed slightly. At the request of the teams and their technicians, the first competitions will now begin later, with most of them starting at 10:30 or 11:00 CET. At the same time, the total number of competitions, which was increased last season to 29 (including the OECH), will remain the same, allowing a larger number of athletes to reach the podium. In the 2018/2019 IBU Cup season, 33 men and 34 women from 13 different nations took the podium in 23 individual competitions. We will know very soon how many new names will succeed in the 2019/2020 season.

Mariya Osolodkina
Harald Deubert
With another exciting Junior season coming up, athletes will fight to climb the ladder from the Junior Cup to the IBU Cup as well as to make the starting quota at the finals of the BMW IBU World Cup in Holmenkollen. Still, others have different goals in mind, like winning the IBU Junior Total Score Globe or a discipline score; but who is someone to look out for in the upcoming season?

Over the past season, many athletes showed potential. Norwegian Junior athlete Sivert Bakken led the IBU Cup before Christmas and decorated his already very good season with two bronze medals at the IBU Youth/Junior World Championships (IBU YJCH) in Osrlie, Slovakia. After the IBU YJCH, several Junior athletes were selected for the IBU Open European Championships (IBU OECH) in Minsk, where they showed some great results. Best of them were France’s Lou...
Jeanmonnot-Laurent, who won a bronze medal in the Single Mixed Relay, and her teammate Sophie Chauveau, who finished eighth in the Women’s Individual competition, both proving the strength of development in the IBU Junior Cup.

Jeanmonnot-Laurent, Chauveau, and Bakken are all still Junior athletes in this upcoming season, but athletes born in 1997 no longer meet the age criteria to compete in the IBU Junior Cup. Joining them in a new Junior Cup season are athletes born in 1998, 1999, and 2000, and Youth athletes born between 2002 and 2005.

We can expect to see Chauveau compete in the IBU Junior Cup this season, but Bakken and Jeanmonnot-Laurent have already been selected for their reserve teams, meaning they will be competing in the IBU Cup despite still being juniors.

“My goal this season is very simple, it is to have good results in the IBU Cup, since I will not be competing in the IBU Junior Cup, unfortunately,” said Jeanmonnot-Laurent.

THE CONTENDERS

The biathletes to watch out for in this upcoming season consist of medalists from the IBU YJWCH 2019, athletes that have shown strong long-term results in one or several IBU Junior Cup seasons, and athletes that have proven themselves at the IBU Cup.

The Swiss duo of Amy Baserga and Sebastian Stalder seem to be very interesting prospects for various reasons. Going into her first Junior season, Baserga has been competing with Junior athletes up to four years older than she is for two seasons, but her best results come from Youth competitions at the IBU YJWCH 2019 in Osrblie, Slovakia, where she won the silver medal in the Sprint competition and followed up with gold in the Pursuit competition. Whether Baserga can take the necessary steps to shine on the Junior level remains to be seen, but she definitely has the talent for it.

Meanwhile, after three seasons in the IBU Junior Cup, Stalder is going into his last season as a Junior athlete. He performed very stably throughout the whole 2018/19 IBU Junior Cup season – especially with precise shooting, something that allowed him to win the IBU Junior Cup Individual Total Score. Despite being one of the best male athletes in the 2018/19 season, Stalder has yet to win his first Junior World Champion medal.

This season will probably be the most important one of their lives as YJWCH 2020 will be hosted in Lenzerheide, Switzerland, which is home soil for Swiss biathletes.

The 2018/19 season IBU Junior Cup
If I am well-prepared, I would like to start at the BMW IBU World Cup level just to see how the “big guys” compete from the first perspective (not just watching them on TV) and hopefully gain some new experiences which will help me in my career later on when I am a senior athlete.”

Alex Cisar, Slovenia

Men’s Total Score Winner, Tim Grotian of Germany, will once again try to capture more globes and victories in his last season as a Junior athlete. Throughout the 2018/19 season, Grotian only finished outside the top 16 once, thus showing consistency that may prove to be the key factor for the young German. Despite being the best Junior biathlete of the past season, Grotian has yet to win his first individual IBU YJWCH medal. Do not be surprised if this athlete takes the next step into the IBU Cup this season.

IBU Junior Cup Women’s Total Score Winner Hanna Kebinger of Germany no longer meets the age requirement to compete in the Juniors and will be fighting for her sport in the upper echelons of the strong German team.

THE GOLDEN YEAR OF 2000

Two athletes to watch out for are France’s Camille Bened and Slovenia’s Alex Cisar. Despite being born in 2000 and coming into their first Junior season, the two talents have already established themselves at the IBU Junior Cup level, finishing third and fifth respectively in the women’s and men’s season 2018/19 Total Score. Both have already won races at the IBU Junior Cup and are considered to be some of the biggest talents in the IBU Junior Cup series.

Things have not quite worked out in Cisar’s favor during the early phase of the preseason.

“The preparation is not going as I wished so far. Due to my graduation from high school, I had to skip several pieces of training and training camps. Since I was aware of that problem ahead of my graduation, I could cope,” explained Cisar.

Nevertheless, he sets his aim high for the upcoming season.

“It is tough to be a first-year Junior; however, I have gained some experience, I know the other guys and how strong they are. If I am well-prepared, I would like to start at the BMW IBU World Cup level just to see how the “big guys” compete from the first perspective (not just watching them on TV) and hopefully gain some new experiences which will help me in my career later on when I am a senior athlete,” said Cisar.

After finishing third in the overall standings two times in a row, Bened is ready to take the next step.

“I would like to compete for the Overall Globe, I feel ready and motivated. Especially one specific competition is really important to me, and that is the replay competition at the IBU YJWCH, where I hope to win for the third time in a row with my teammates,” said Bened.

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Wolfgang Pichler has been one of the most influential, successful, innovative, and controversial coaches in biathlon for much of the past three decades.

Most of this time was spent in Sweden, guiding the Swedish team to unprecedented success, bringing cross-country skiers who became Olympic medalists into the sport, while also identifying young unproven talents and developing them into Olympic and World Championship Gold medalists.

In his 64 years, Pichler has seen biathlon grow from a dozen competitors shooting at paper targets across an alpine lake to a world-wide sports phenomenon that regularly attracts 100,000 spectators to massive stadiums each winter weekend.

1972: 12 COMPETITORS

Sitting in his hometown Chiemgau Arena, Pichler reached deep into his memory. “I saw the first Ruhpolding biathlon in 1972 with 12 competitors. This stadium was a second home to me. My father built this up; my whole family was here all the time. It started with the jumping hills and then came biathlon. The farmers owned the stadium (ground). There was always a big fight with them; they had the right to bring their cows here in September and October. It was always dangerous to train here. I remember (Herbert) Fritzenwenger crashed into a cow; the cow died but he is still in biathlon!”

LACTATE STUDIES, EAST GERMANY AND OLYMPIC MEDALS

Years of competing while helping his family and others develop biathlon in Ruhpolding led Pichler to a lifetime of coaching.

“My coaching career started when my first wife was studying the effects of lactate on performance in biathlon and cross-country, an idea that came from East German studies. We started a research group of six athletes in Ruhpolding to find out what this lactate was. I studied more and more; then when I retired as an athlete, I studied tennis at university, learned a lot about sports theory, and began coaching the German Customs team, which I thought would be a lifetime job. Then biathlete Jens Steinigen came from East Germany; I left the Customs team (after some serious disagreements) and started a private group with him and my Swedish friend Leif Andersson. Leif came to me and said he wanted an Olympic medal. I said, ‘This is nearly impossible!’ But in 1992 at Albertville, Steinigen won Relay Gold with Germany and Leif won Relay Bronze with Sweden. This started my international career.”

That success took him to Sweden. “After the 1994 Olympics, Sweden asked me to become National Coach; they were really bad back then. I thought I would do this for one year, but I have been in Sweden since then and I am still there!”

PICHLER AND FORSBERG

The move to Sweden was fortuitous: it teamed Pichler up with the now legendary Magdalena Forsberg.

Forsberg was the first of many cross-country skiers to successfully move to biathlon. “We were the perfect team; two people who needed each other. It was luck for me as a coach to work with such a serious athlete; but for her it was also luck, I brought a lot of new ideas to biathlon. We changed coaching in many ways; I am very proud of this.”

Forsberg proved to be a special talent, eventually winning the IBU World Cup Total Score six consecutive times. “She never missed a day in training; she
WOLFGANG PICHLER - GER  BIATHLON LEGENDS
did everything, almost like a machine; trusted me 100%. This put pressure on me. When an athlete gives so much, you want to do the same. Magdalena was the perfect biathlete, but was unlucky because she started too late, at age 27. I saw right away that she was an amazing talent in shooting. Only Bjorn Ferry (2010 Olympic Pursuit Gold medalist) had that same talent.”

SHOOTING AND DANCING

With a chuckle, he added, “They say there are two talents that you cannot teach, shooting and dancing. Both had that talent…and Magdalena now is a good dancer (second in Sweden’s “Let’s Dance” competition this year).”

With podiums in 90 of her 170 World Cup starts, “she was the greatest ever,” Pichler thinks. “No other woman has matched her 14 victories in one season.”

NEW COMPETITIONS; TRAINING REVOLUTION

Pichler feels that the move to Sweden, new competitions and the Forsberg collaboration helped revolutionise biathlon training. “In biathlon you have to look at what happens each season. The sport was changing in those years with the pursuit and mass start, so we needed a revolution in training. The rhythm of shooting had to change, and the tracks were shorter (for the new competitions). Older coaches focused more on (classic skiing). I trained for skating, with more focus on the upper body and intense intervals. I also brought ideas from tennis where
“We were the perfect team; two people who needed each other. It was luck for me as a coach to work with such a serious athlete; but for her it was also luck, I brought a lot of new ideas to biathlon. We changed coaching in many ways; I am very proud of this.” Wolfgang Pichler on Magdalena Forsberg
you have this pressure for big points, just like in the last shooting. If you make a mistake, you have to recover quickly and start new. This all comes with the move to fast shooting. You have to train for these situations."

The early years in Sweden set the training pattern that became the hallmark of Pichler’s program.

“With Magdalena, I created this whole new training program: 3 weeks training and one week rest. This is where I learned the importance of rest. As everyone knows, we work really hard, but I also have a lot of recovery days for the athletes. Recovery is as important as training."

"MY WORD WAS THE LAW"

Bringing new athletes into a program is always a challenge, but the Pichler charisma kept the pipeline flowing. “The athletes knew that I was very strict about discipline; my word was the law. But they also saw that I did everything for them... They have to like the training; they have to be motivated."

Anna Carin Zidek, the 2006 Olympic Mass Start Gold medalist was the next cross-country skier he lured to biathlon. “She was a diesel and could train very hard; she hated me in training; I pushed her so hard."

Reflecting on this, Pichler laughed, adding, “I always say to my athletes, ‘You hate me in training, but when you look at your bank account, you love me.’”

THE NO-TALENT TEAM

Östersund was awarded the 2008 IBU World Championships; the hosts needed to step up performance-wise. “We had no women’s team, so we picked ACO (Zidek), Helena Ekholm, Sofia Domej, and Anna Maria Nilsson. In the beginning, they were not good. We had some fun and I often called them the no-talent team. Anna Maria said, ‘We know we are!’ then I would say, ‘train harder.’ Helena made big steps every year training with ACO and the German cross-country skiers I was working with. Ekholm eventually won the 2009 IBU World Cup Total Score and three IBU WCH Gold medals.”

RUSSIAN ADVENTURE

Pichler took a short-lived coaching excursion to Russia because “I was a little tired of Sweden and they were tired of me; too long with the same athletes... I thought I could change the system. I had three really good years. You cannot change this country that is so big. Change will always be difficult for them. It was a really good experience and I have some good friends from those years. I learned a lot.”

TOTALLY NEW TEAM CONCEPT IN SWEDEN

Soon it was back to Sweden. “I never completely separated from Sweden; I had good contacts with the federation and athletes. After Sochi, I agreed that I would take one year of rest and work like a mentor; that year gave me a lot of energy and I was ready to work at 150%.”

The return to Swedish biathlon came with demands Pichler thought would bring new success.

“I told them I needed a free hand... we started a totally new team. I kicked out all of the medium athletes; it was hard for..."
them. I talked to the sports gymnasium coaches; over 100 calls looking for athletes. In my year off, I studied many sports and saw how in team sports, they had a totally new strategy, taking specialists for everything. I took a coach for technique, a coach for psychology, for nutrition, a shooting coach, while I made the plan and made sure we followed it. I am really proud that we built up a totally new system working with the university in Östersund. Everyone moved there; we trained together and always had coaches (at training). We were really lucky to have these good coaches like Matthias Nilsson and Johan Hagstrom. Johannes (Lukas) came to us, first without pay because we had no money; now he is Head Coach."

HARD WORK AND BENEFITS

Forming a completely new team from scratch was almost unheard of, but it worked. The group included Sebastian Samuelsson, Hanna Oeberg, and Mona Brorsson. "I think it was my spirit that brought them to the team. We trained hard; we did everything together; they had respect. They knew I was hard, but they knew the benefits. Our goal was the 2019 IBU World Championships in Östersund (the team won three medals) but they (improved) so fast; we had a really good spirit."

The earlier-than-expected success came at the

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2018 Pyeongchang Olympic Winter Games with two Gold medals and two Silver medals. “Our results were from really hard work; we had a super preparation… We were really focused on this Olympics, skipping Antholz-Anterselva week, and we had our own house and chef in South Korea. We did everything right, preparing them mentally with our own psychologist. No one could know how they would react since it was their first Olympics (except for Fredrik Lindstrom).”

EXPERIENCE EQUALS SUCCESS

Pichler’s success is a result of years of experience. “My training system came from many years of testing. I had many years of good results. It is proven. I prepared athletes for eight Olympics; I came home from only one Olympics without medals! I know I made mistakes like in Nagano 1998 and did not do that again… Preparing teams for the Olympics, you cannot study this; it is experience.”

Despite all of the hard work, one thing has always loomed large for Pichler’s teams.

“It was always important that we had good team spirit.” The Pyeongchang success is the perfect example. “It was really important that we held our spirit together until the end of these Games, when we won this (relay) Gold medal. My main job then was to hold up the spirit; we said we would fight until the last minutes. We had Sebastian’s Silver medal and Hanna’s Gold medal. Normally every team would be satisfied. I pushed them so hard, said you have the chance of your life. You are in super shape, have super skis; take every race as a big possibility.”

Now out of direct coaching, Pichler remains connected as a talent developer for the Swedish Olympic Committee. “This job is something I am learning myself. I took it after declining coaching offers from other nations. I am now looking at Swedish sports and trying to see what we can do better beyond the youth age to improve the whole system. I do not see the same enthusiasm in other sports as in biathlon. You need enthusiastic people and athletes.”

If enthusiasm, experience, and innovation are the keys to success, then look no further than Wolfgang Pichler.
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Although his appointment as Head Coach of the Swedish Biathlon Team came as no surprise to many on the scene, Johannes Lukas felt it was a very special honor.

“Having even more responsibility on such a team is a very special task for me,” said Lukas. After all, this is his rise from former intern and student of sports science to head coach in an extremely successful ski nation. Since 2015, Lukas has been on the coaching team of his longtime mentor Wolfgang Pichler. The crowning achievement for the now 26-year-old from Munich was his athletes winning two gold and two silver medals at the Olympic Winter Games in Pyeongchang.

“That was terrific, but it also shows that we did not do much wrong on the coaching team,” said Lukas.
He benefited from the years of work of his mentor, who trained athletes in several countries. His path to biathlon was somewhat surprising. His father brought him to Ruhpolding, the mecca of German biathlon in Chiemgau. But he didn’t make it into the elite ranks of the nation. He belonged to Bernhard Krüll’s training group with Laura Dahlmeier for four years.

**TWO KNEE OPERATIONS LED TO... SPORTS SCIENCE**

Two knee surgeries and two cartilage injuries forced him to end his career in late 2014. Among his colleagues at that time were athletes such as Roman Rees and Philipp Nawrath, who now have hopes of making World Cup appearances for the German Ski Association (DSV). At age 21, he took a different path and studied sports science at the Technical University in his hometown of Munich. His compulsory internship led him back to biathlon.

“I deliberately did not want to do an internship in Germany, because I already knew the whole system. I was curious to try something else,” explained Lukas. After his bachelor’s degree, he completed training to become a personal trainer. That led this fan of German football champions FC Bayern Munich to become a football athletics coach at the junior training center for TSV 1860 Munich. It was a job that gave him a lot of pleasure, but that he had to give up because of his commitment in Sweden.

Working with young new talent in this sport is very meaningful to this likeable guy. So is looking beyond the horizon into other sports. Because of this, he also trained the European sailing champion, Tina Lutz.

“I don’t have a shortage in the holistic view of things,” says Lukas. It was the recognition of this very trait in him that brought Wolfgang Pichler to involve him in his training work from the beginning. “The nice thing was always that Wolfgang regularly asked for my opinion and I was able to contribute my ideas,”

“He is a very special and very experienced trainer. I am just glad that I was able to study with him and that he also encouraged me.” On his mentor Wolfgang Pichler
Lukas explains. The new head coach is not one who wants to be the center of attention by himself. “We are a team, we harmonize and complement each other. That is exactly what makes the collaboration so exciting and interesting.” He learned training ideas, discipline and training planning from Pichler. The way the Ruhpoldinger showed his authority impressed him. “He is a very special and very experienced trainer. I am just glad that I was able to study with him and that he also encouraged me,” said the Bavarian. Lukas, who lives in the district of Großhadern, did not want to overhaul and change everything after his appointment as head coach. “My goal is to maintain the good experiences that I have had with my colleagues over the last few years and to provide new impetus.”

ALLWAYS LOOKING AHEAD TO IMPROVE

Lukas knows what he’s talking about. He wants to provide new stimuli to coax even greater achievements out of every athlete. This also means including new places as training camps, such as Dobbiaco in South Tyrol. True to the motto: “A good mix makes the difference.” Mattias Nilsson and Johan Hagström will round out the coaching team in the future. They were already on the coaching staff under Wolfgang Pichler. But Lukas, who will continue to live in Munich, saw another advantage in the collaboration with Pichler, which he described as harmonious and supportive: “It was very helpful that we come from the same region and speak the same language.”

But that is in the past. The Munich native now speaks perfect Swedish. “It is certainly my aspiration to speak the language of the country I am able to work for.” So, he communicates with his entire team of currently 11 athletes exclusively in their native language. The exception is still English. “If there’s a deficiency, I’ll occasionally switch to English, but otherwise I try to avoid that.”

Meanwhile, he is looking forward to his first season in a position of responsibility. But he does not put himself under pressure. “I have high expectations for myself and I try to translate them to my team. The federation does not pressure me there.” His contract will initially run until 2022. “I am completely relaxed, I feel comfortable in this team and I am also happy,” says Lukas, who clearly possesses the Bavarian trait of calmness. In any case, the coming season is a transition year for the new head coach. The Olympics in PyeongChang 2018 and the IBU World Championships in Östersund had significantly higher priority than the upcoming title bouts in Antholz/Südtirol. “That does not mean we do not want to develop as a team,” Lukas remarks.

THE IMPORTANCE OF GOOD COMMUNICATION

Being together, communicating well within the team and having a high fun factor are important to him. “We may get on each other’s nerves sometimes, but by the next unit it must be forgotten,” says Lukas. He expects absolute professionalism. “Many units can run without me, but the athlete needs to know that I’m very close by,” he adds.

The long-term planning, however, revolves around the 2022 Olympic Games in Beijing. He doesn’t want to miss any chances on the way there. Johannes Lukas therefore spends a lot of time on his laptop. Almost daily. “Regular review is important to me. Only then can I see what is working or not.” He loves to deal with the details of training planning, but also management. “We have to lay the foundations for the races in practice.” However, a varied training is also very important to him and his main focus is on individual work with each individual athlete.

“I think that caring for athletes individually is the modern coaching idea.” He does not want to be a strict coach who follows the principle of superiority and subordination, but rather one who wants to go down the path with the athletes together. “They get a lot from me, but I also expect a lot from them in return.” He wants to stay close to them to see if his specifications are also implemented during races. This is one reason why, unlike many of his colleagues, he does not see his place behind the shooting range, but rather on the track. “I want to see how my athletes are moving and how the race unfolds. This is where I make the tactical decisions.”

He acknowledges that at the age of 26, he is barely older than many of his athletes. “Being a coach is not a matter of age,” says Lukas. “If I do a good job, nobody will ask me about my age anymore.”

Respect and discipline are crucial, not how old the coach is.
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A SOCIAL MEDIA

Oh Summer, what a time to ...

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A SOCIAL MEDIA SUMMARY

... celebrate ...

New families

... with an eye on next winter!

117 BIATHLON WORLD SUMMERY SOCIAL MEDIA
Interview with **JORIS WAUMAN**, biathlon TV delegate for Eurovision Sport. In the new season he will share his schedule with newly appointed Bettina Vecchi.

**BIATHLONARGUABLY**

**ONE OF THE MOST DIFFICULT SPORTS TO DIRECT**

**The historical TV partner of the IBU, Eurovision Sport, provides signals to rights-holding broadcasters and offers broadcast services for biathlon events.**

**BIATHLON WORLD** What kind of role does Eurovision Sport have in its collaboration with the IBU?

**JORIS WAUMAN** Eurovision Sport is the TV partner of the IBU that represents TV and radio rightsholders, which are mainly European public broadcasters. These rightsholders such as ZDF, NRK, Match TV, SVT, and ORF produce the biathlon pictures that people see on TV. Eurovision Sport has been the historical TV partner for over 20 years since the IBU was founded in 1993.

**BW** What are the exact responsibilities of Eurovision Sport?

**JW** As the TV delegate of Eurovision Sport, my responsibilities are to take care of operational activities and provide full support to the broadcasters and to the Federation to facilitate “world class” coverage of the IBU competitions in order to reach worldwide audiences. As the IBU has sold the TV rights to Eurovision Sport, our job is to ensure that both the IBU and the TV rightsholders are wellserved. We care about the promotion of the sport and assist TV channels in protecting their rights and support them in their onsite operations: accreditations, commentary positions, mixed zone and their technical setup. Last but not least, we also liaise with other stakeholders such as Siwidata for timing and TV graphics, Infront for sponsor matters and the Local Organising Committees, as each one of them has an impact on the TV picture that people see at home.

**BW** What does this mean for viewers?

**JW** Every IBU World Cup is produced by the local TV rightsholder or by Eurovision. They are the so-called host broadcasters. The director and his crew of cameramen, replay operators, and technicians produce the ‘world feed’ signal. This signal is picked up by a Eurovision satellite truck at the biathlon stadium that distributes it via satellite to all TV channels. That is the signal that people see at home. Eurovision also provides the streaming of the world feed to the Biathlonworld website and adds the English commentary.

**BW** What other projects do you currently implement?

**JW** Beyond the world feed production and distribution, we work closely with the IBU and the broadcasters on a number of elements that make up the world feed. For example, we are currently working on a new opening sequence and we jointly produce the small animated athlete moves you see before the start of a race. There are IBU TV crews who produce side stories and race reactions on the World Cup, and also on the IBU Cup. Eurovision
contributes staff and equipment. All of these projects are aimed at helping the sport reach as many people as it can. Now biathlon has become one of the favourite winter sports and our goal is to keep it that way and continue developing it.

**BW** Does Eurovision Sport have any involvement in the content?

**JW** Biathlon competitions are produced by different production teams in different countries. In order to achieve a certain level of quality and consistency, we work closely with the broadcasters and with the IBU to improve the production level. We actually perform a production analysis of each race. At the end of each season we have a workshop with the IBU and with the TV directors where we analyze the data and discuss new suggestions to make the productions even better. We talk about camera positions, timing and graphics, but also about the spotting systems.

**BW** What is unique about biathlon in that context?

**JW** Biathlon is arguably one of the most complicated sports to direct, especially when it comes to the Sprints and the Individuals. At these races, the production team needs to track the data of up to sixty different athletes who are skiing around the track, shooting at the range, starting and finishing. A TV director can only show at most two athletes at the same time by using a ‘picture in picture’, for example when two favourites are simultaneously at the shooting range. But when there are three or four important events taking place simultaneously, such as different favourites finishing, shooting and starting, the TV director needs to choose what is most relevant editorially. Since there’s always another athlete coming up soon, he makes such decisions nonstop. It’s like a rally driver riding at 150 kilometres per hour on a small winding road, with a vis-

Having been part of this project from the very start 7-8 years ago, I believe that one of the key developments over the next few years will be to make sure that biathlon fans can watch biathlon and follow their favourites not only on TV, but also in the digital space, when they want and where they want.
ibility of maximum 20 seconds ahead, without the possibility of braking. You could say that a director is almost as tired as the biathlete after the race. It’s a race within a race.

**BW** How do you manage to solve such cases and still provide an excellent picture?

**JW** All the production teams have a so-called spotting system. This team of spotters tracks all the athletes’ data during the race, filters it and provides it to the TV director so he knows who to show next. Based on the data coming from the split-times and pre-timings, and the excellent system from Siwidata, the spotters know 30-40 seconds in advance who is going to reach which position on the course. Siwidata also provides the estimated live ranking of that athlete, so the spotters have an idea of the ‘projected’ leaders. But of course, biathlon is biathlon and once they start shooting and the leader misses two targets, there is suddenly a new leader. And it starts all over again.

**BW** Are these the most challenging aspects of working in biathlon?

**JW** Yeah, they absolutely are. After the race, people wonder why the director did not show this or that athlete, but of course the production team does not know the result of the race in advance. It’s almost impossible to produce a perfect sprint because you want to show everything, and you cannot show everything. As a matter of fact, there are only about ten TV directors in the world who have the experience for it. Therefore, producing biathlon is one of the most challenging things for any TV director to do, but also one of the most enjoyable sports to direct.

**BW** What are the future goals for the Eurovision Sport and IBU collaboration?

**JW** Today, more and more people go digital and watch TV on different devices. The IBU and Eurovision Sport have been streaming live on their websites for many years now. Having been part of this project from the very start 7-8 years ago, I believe that one of the key developments over the next few years will be to make sure that biathlon fans can watch biathlon and follow their favourites not only on TV, but also in the digital space, when they want and where they want.

**BW** How would you describe your personal experience working at IBU events?

**JW** I love being at the World Cups and World Championships to see the competitions. I’m an avid sports fan and have produced many other sports, but biathlon is definitely my favourite. Regardless of the fact that I work in it and look at the TV production with a professional eye, I still enjoy watching every race. But ultimately, like many people who are part of the biathlon circuit, I would say it’s the biathlon family that makes it so special. Seeing everybody again at the first World Cup of the season feels like a big family reunion. Over the years I have established many personal relationships. They are the most enriching part: the diversity of the people, the different nations with their various backgrounds, languages and habits, and the multitude of professions that are around, from athletes to coaches, waxmen and physios, IBU officials, people from SIWIDATA, the suppliers, the enthusiastic people at the organising committees, and last but not least, the fantastic fans and the atmosphere they bring! I think it’s just the whole combination that makes it so special.
In a close partnership with the IBU and national federations, Infront has helped to develop biathlon into a highly sought-after marketing platform.

BIATHLONWORLD: How is the collaboration between the IBU and Infront Sports going, and what kind of services do you provide?

DANIEL OSTERAUER: Infront, with headquarters in Zug, Switzerland, is a leading full-service sports marketing company with a capacity for innovation that is helping to transform the industry. These innovations have enhanced every area of sports marketing, including distribution of rights, host broadcasting, digital media and entertainment, programme production, event operations, brand development and sponsorship. Our office in Salzburg mainly collaborates with winter sport federations and national organizers. Most of the staff responsible for the IBU and biathlon in general is based in Salzburg and has access to all of our subsidiaries and their know-how.

BW: What are your responsibilities in working with the IBU?

DO: The successful partnership between the IBU and Infront started in 1991 and together with all the other involved parties, biathlon was created as we see it today. My personal responsibilities are mainly the preparation and coordination over the whole year with the IBU, national federations and the different organizers on the one hand, and the management of the main sponsors with my colleagues on the other hand. I travel to every single World Cup and World Championship venue with our implementation team to make sure we give the athletes, organizers, broadcasters and sponsors the best possible surroundings for the competition itself. It’s fun working in biathlon and I am proud to be part of the IBU family for 5 years now.

BW: What would you describe as a special or tricky aspect of working at biathlon events?

DO: As I said before, we also do the implementation onsite and I think one of the most challenging things is the weather and the conditions onsite. We need to plan well in advance and in as much detail as possible to avoid too many “surprises” - it’s an outdoor sport. When it comes to our involvement regarding content, it’s quite easy to explain - every sponsor visibility shown on TV is somehow connected to us and mainly also implemented from our side (start gate, finish installations, split times, banners, shooting mats, start bibs, ceremony backwalls, etc.). Only the visibility directly on the athlete (race suit, head) is not part of our marketing rights portfolio.

BW: Is Infront involved in strategy planning with the IBU?

DO: In our role as exclusive marketing partner of the IBU, Infront is part of the whole product, and we try to bring it further and improve the high level of implementation and service to contribute in the best possible way to the success of the biathlon sport. When it comes to the strategic direction of the IBU, the final decision clearly remains at the IBU, so we are mainly consulting and supporting them as best possible.

BW: What are the marketing trends in sports nowadays?

DO: It’s hard to say. Of course, we always try to adapt as well as possible to the innovations and we see how much faster time goes by nowadays then it did ten years ago. Today it’s challenging for every sport and every federation to stay competitive. Topics like digitalisation and ongoing innovations are trailblazers and challenges
at the same time - every single fan has access anytime to a large variety of different sports and a huge number of different “platforms”.

**BW** Are there any remaining tasks for Infront Sports during the summertime?

**DO** Summer is a sort of off-season but we are involved in the biathlon project daily the whole year long. After the season, we do the post-season discussions and evaluations, and we have meetings with the IBU on a regular basis. Together with the IBU and Eurovision, we discuss how we can go further, what we can do better and how we can optimize. We also need to make some decisions when it comes to production material, advertising possibilities for sponsors and their needs at the different events. And the main goal for us is still to maintain the high quality of the surroundings in biathlon and to find solutions to further develop the whole biathlon sport. There were no big issues to work on in the recent past, but there is always room for improvement.

**BW** How would you describe your personal experience working at IBU events?

**DO** Biathlon has many unique aspects, so it’s hard to compare it with any other winter sport. Personally, I like this sport and its thrilling competitions a lot. They result from the race formats that I really like. It’s also the collaborative working atmosphere onsite of the biathlon family that impresses me. In the end, work needs to have some fun and this fun goes along with the challenging tasks when it comes to biathlon. The IBU made quite a positive development inside the federation. I am happy to be a part of this development and I think every party included in the work process around biathlon events has a similar way of thinking.

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**Ivanna Nikolskaya**  
IBU Photo Pool

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**SIMON EDER**

On his Redster S9 Carbon skis

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**IBU Photo Pool**

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**ATOMIC**

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**WEARESKIING**
**YOU SIMPLY GET HOOKED ON BIATHLON WHILE WATCHING IT**

SIWIDATA, a sport information technology provider for the IBU events, supports the fans and the pros with the live timing, results and video streaming.

Since then, our company has evolved and we now offer top of the line electronic sports timing and results services. I could never have imagined that after the first World Cup in Anterselva, our company would maintain the historic results database for the IBU for the next 30 years!

BIATHLONWORLD: What is SIWIDATA and what kind of mission does it pursue?

CHRISTIAN WINKLER: The company was founded at the time the first personal computers appeared as a hobby for my parents. In 1985, we provided a very basic results service for the first biathlon events in Anterselva, which marked the beginning of the project. I joined the team as a fifteen-year-old schoolboy who was interested in writing software applications.

BW: Did SIWIDATA work only in biathlon or were there any other sports involved?

CW: Besides biathlon, we also worked at the cross-country skiing World Cups in Italy and at other sporting events such as the canoe slalom. Biathlon remains our biggest project, especially now that there are also the IBU Cups and the Junior Cups involved. Both canoe slalom and biathlon are Olympic disciplines and as such are quite important for us.

BW: How did this hobby grow into a company that provides its services at the Olympic Games?

CW: Around 1993 we were asked to deliver our services in a foreign country for the first time: we were invited to Bad Gastein in Austria, then to Oberhof, and finally to Ruhpolding. The key moment came with the three World Championships in 1995, 1996 and 1997 when SIWIDATA signed a contract to work at each of those events. At the World Championships in Anterselva, SIWIDATA is the big data brain that helps athletes, coaches and world media statistically explain each competition.
A major challenge is to transport our equipment to the various venues and install our system, as well as to use the frequencies, the cables and the infrastructure along with many other people. Being able to deliver when something unpredictable happens is our main challenge.

BW What kind of services do you provide at IBU events?

CW Basically, we provide the time and results services and the signals for the public screen boards in the stadiums. We also provide the TV graphics, all the printed results and the different types of start-lists as well as the info-system on the Internet. Additionally, we are responsible for the so-called Member Center of the IBU. It’s an online tool for the national federations and the organizing committees to register athletes and media representatives, to maintain the media archive and staff quotas, to calculate IBU qualifying points and to store information about the anti-doping status of athletes. For example, if there are any changes made after the anti-doping decision, we need to update many of the historic results, calculations and statistics as well as the historic results database.

BW What are the challenges in your work nowadays?

CW Our goal is to deliver the best possible quality in our services. A major challenge is to transport our equipment to the various venues and install our system, as well as to use the frequencies, the cables and the infrastructure along with many other people. Being able to deliver when something unpredictable happens is our main challenge. There is a lot that can go wrong and for that reason, everything in our system is backed up: there is a main data entry point and main TV graphics as well as a backup timing system and a backup of TV graphics. Another kind of challenge lies in the organizational developments of the sport itself.

BW What is the main focus of your work concerning these developments?

CW There is the risk of falling behind with the constant developments in technology. At the moment we are working on technological developments for the next four to five years so that our systems will keep up with the developments in sports and with our client expectations. At the same time, SIWIDATA is focused on building a certain infrastructure to provide live-inter-net services that support about 50,000-70,000 viewers simultaneously.

BW What comes to your mind first when you think about working at biathlon events?

CW Many people who work in biathlon don’t just do a job, but really have a passion for this sport: you simply get hooked while watching it. I think the passion that brings people together is what re-
ally makes the difference. All the people around biathlon are committed to this sport; you experience a great collaborative work environment at every IBU event. All the TV directors working for biathlon bring excellent TV solutions and use experience from other sports, and you can see that they really love biathlon and work hard to bring this sport forward. At the events, you meet many interesting people who create great products using their own passionate approach. Biathlon is growing steadily and is starting to attract more and more attention among the media and the public.

**BW** What would you call the small victories of SIWIDATA?

**CW** There were many different things that we managed to improve upon over the years. Once, after a really long workday, all of a sudden we came up with the idea of a red blinking light if an athlete missed a target. This small detail made a real difference. In the same way, last season we added a range entrance time that was built into the TV graphics. Though there were many discussions about it at the beginning, once people realized how useful this information is for the commentary, everyone admitted that it’s impossible to work without.

**BW** What do you like most about your job?

**CW** It’s really a pleasure to work at the Biathlon World Cup surrounded by many great professionals. The IBU is a small federation where everyone can talk to each other. This provides a non-stop creative exchange of ideas between different people involved in biathlon. I see a bright future for this sport, and I hope that SIWIDATA can be a part of it for a couple more years.

Ivanna Nikolskaya
IBU Photo Pool

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The new Rode glide lines
IN THE NEXT ISSUE OF BIATHLONWORLD MAGAZINE:

IBU EVENTS
• BMW IBU WORLD CUP TRIMESTER 1
• MASTERING THE CYCLE TRIMESTER 1

IBU FEATURE
• CHINA ON THE RISE

IBU PROFILE
• ANASTASIYA KUZMINA

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THE X1

Image shows optional equipment.