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Local athletes dominate at Junior Trials!

Coleraine, Minnesota, December 31. Minnesota natives won all four categories in sprint competitions today as the Youth and Junior World Championship Trials opened under cold, clear conditions at the Mt Itasca Biathlon Center.

Junior National Coach Vladimir Cervenka, who is also serves Mt Itasca Nordic Director, was beaming after the competitions. He commented, "It was a beautiful day. We had a great competition-- everything went very well and conditions were perfect. We had about 5 inches of new snow last night and it was about 4 degrees this morning. After the races, I saw a lot of smiles on faces. We had a great first day."

Brian Olsen of Bloomington, MN as expected won the Junior Men's 10K in 32:47 despite five penalties, two prone and three standing. His 27 second margin of victory came on a strong ski race. Still, only 1:10 separated the first five finishers. Olsen was chased to the finish by three teammates on the Junior National Team, all from Duluth. Bjorn Bakken, with only three penalties shot better than Olsen, but was slower on the tracks. Kurt Farchmin, also with three penalties trailed by another 26 seconds, closely followed by Adam Van Straten, with five penalties, another five seconds behind Farchmin. Fifth place was Kevin Padzoldt (Grand Rapids, MN) with three penalties, 22 seconds behind Van Straten. In overall results two Canadian Juniors placed 3rd and 4th. Jaime Robb from Canmore, Alberta, Canada hit only 4 targets, but finished only 33 seconds behind Olsen. Robb's teammate Dylan Costuras-Hay missed only 4 targets and finished just 37 seconds behind Olsen. Canadian athletes were not included in the overall points for determining the U.S. Junior World Team.

Sonne Nordgren of Marine on St. Croix, MN had an outstanding performance as she topped pre-race favorite Annilies Cook (Saranac Lake, NY) 31:27 to 33:04 over the hilly 7.5K course. Cook did have a better shooting day than Nordgren, as she had only three penalties to five for the winner. Junior National Coach Vladimir Cervenka commented on Nordgren, "Sonne is skiing very well. She has been training with the boys and is very strong. There is no question that she is one of the fastest skiers in the nation right now. Of course, her shooting still needs some work, but she did a good job today." Regarding Annilies Cook, Cervenka added, "Annilies just came off a hard training camp with the senior team and may be a little tired. But I think she will be fine." Third in the junior women's category was Emilia DeMarchis (Burlington, VT), with two penalties, 1:55 behind Nordgren. Finishing 1 minute 25 seconds off of Nordgren's time 2nd overall with 3 penalties was Canadian Lindsay Bolivar of Canmore, Alberta, Canada. Bolivar's teammate Sonya Erasmus struggled in the range missing 8 of her 10 targets to finish 13th overall.

Chasing the junior girls were the top finishers in the Youth 7.5K Sprint. Brynden Manbeck of Grand Rapids, MN won with two penalties in 32:58, which put her second overall for women. Kari Lunemann (Grand Rapids, MN) finished two seconds behind Manbeck despite four penalties. Cervenka described Lunemann as "a natural athlete, who only has one year in biathlon and with more experience will only get better." Third in that category was Britt Salmela (Duluth, MN) with three penalties, 48 seconds behind Manbeck. Kelsy Bouchard (Fort Kent, ME) followed with two prone penalties, 1:18 back.

The day's most dominating performance for men came in the Youth 7.5K, as Ben Byrne of Bovey, MN finished 1:06 clear of second placer, Nigel Kinney (Chanassen, MN). Byrne's performance was described as "solid." He had one penalty in prone and another in standing, winning with a time of 27:19. Having what was described as, "his best race ever" by Coach Gary Colliander, second finisher Kinney had only one penalty, which allowed him a three second margin over Tyler Gerling (Cohasset, MN), who had three penalties. Russell Currier (Fort Kent, ME) and Wynn Roberts (Battle Lake, MN) finished fourth and fifth, 2:03 and 2:04 respectively behind Byrne.

The competitors at these Youth and Junior World Championship Trials will bring in the New Year tomorrow with a collective bang as the Pursuit Format competitions kick off at 11 AM. Competitors will start in their finish order from today with thirty second interval starts, and four shooting stages. The Trials will conclude on Saturday.

The US Biathlon Team competes under the auspices of the United States Biathlon Association, the National Governing Body for the Olympic sport of Biathlon. **Lapua, adidas, and Exel Ski Poles** sponsor the US Biathlon Team. Full results can be found at www.minnesotabiathlon.com.