

More TV coverage than ever from the World Cup

BY ERIK BORG

The 2007 World Cup commenced with a direct broadcast on the Finnish national television channel, and there will be TV coverage of all the World Cup rounds this year. – Orienteering is definitely now a TV sport, says Björn Persson.



**Orienteering
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Since January 2007 the Swede has been working as IOF Sports Director. One of his main tasks is to assist in making the World Cup and the World Orienteering Championships more attractive for TV and other media. The world's elite runners and the big events will be utilised even more in the work to make the sport more interesting for spectators and to achieve more publicity both for the athletes and for the events.

– There is increasing awareness of orienteering as a top-class sport. In most countries, a World Championship gold medal is highly valued and good results



Björn Persson is determined to make the World Cup hot stuff for TV and other media. The first World Cup event in Finland was to a large extent covered live on Finnish TV.

PHOTO: ERIK BORG

In this issue: More TV coverage than ever from the World Cup; Live TV coverage from the first World Cup event; Simone and Thierry – repeat wins; Athletes' Commission in Foot Orienteering in its first meeting; Yuri Omelchenko: "Injuries are my worst fear"; Ukraine's first World Championships; Paula Iso-Markku: "I still have a lot to learn".

Good reading!

**BARBRO RÖNNBERG
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF**

in the events creates orienteering heroes. Simone Niggli is well known in Switzerland. Thierry Gueorgiou would be one of the most famous sportsmen in Scandinavia if he had been from a Nordic country. Although Annichen Kringstad and Jörgen Mårtensson finished their careers a long time ago, they are still the most well known orienteers in Sweden because they had such outstanding results, says Björn Persson.

This year the World Cup events are being held in conjunction with already existing major orienteering events. The first race was held just before the Jukola relay in Finland, and the second one was organised in conjunction with O-Festivalen in Norway. The next World Cup events will be held in conjunction with the O-Ringen in Sweden and the World Championships in Ukraine, and the final World Cup round in October will be at the Swiss Cup in Switzerland. The World Cup will be organised as part of well established existing orienteering events at least until the end of 2009. The new style World Cup seems to be attracting more TV coverage than ever in the biggest orienteering countries in Western Europe.

TV a pre-condition

Organisers of already established orien-

teering events have good contacts with TV and other media and they also have a strong financial base to enable them to provide good conditions for TV. All World Cup event applicants are nowadays required to guarantee some form of TV coverage of the event.

– The minimum requirement is that news clips are available from each of the World Cup races, says Björn Persson.

The TV broadcast of the first World Cup event in Finland was partly edited, partly live. In Norway, news clips were made available and broadcast.

– In order to make orienteering more attractive for the TV channels it is important to secure regular availability of pictures. The sport itself becomes more interesting when there are broadcasts provided regularly and not just once in the whole season, says Björn Persson.

It is already known that there will be direct broadcast of the World Orienteering Championships in the Czech Republic next year. In Ukraine this year, news clips will be available.

Edited coverage of long distance

Tracking and better use of the map will

make orienteering more interesting and thrilling as a TV sport.

– Tracking is a good means of showing the secrets of orienteering, says Björn. Even though this technical development is of great help, Björn Persson does not believe that all orienteering formats are suitable for direct TV broadcast.

– Edited coverage broadcast after the event will probably remain the best TV concept in the case of the long distance. I therefore think that we'll probably be able to go back to a 3-minute start interval. If we do this, we won't need to worry about pack-splitting in the course design, and the course planning will benefit from this. On the other hand, the other formats offer excellent possibilities for good live coverage. After the World Championships in Sweden, the Swedish broadcasting company regretted that they hadn't covered the relay live. It would have been extremely good entertainment, says Persson.

Björn has now been working as Sports Director for half a year, but he has extensive experience of the IOF. Since 1993, when he first became involved with the IOF, he has been working in different voluntary positions. As Sports Director he works 40 % of full time.

Live TV coverage from the first World Cup event

BY PIRJO VALJANEN

The live coverage of the first event of the new style World Cup in Finland reached 222,000 Finnish viewers. Compared with the TV coverage of previous orienteering events, this number is very good. As an example, the broadcasts of the World Orienteering Championships in 2001 were watched by 118,000 – 240,000 viewers, the sprint event being the most popular.

Arto Teronen, Head of Production of

YLE Sports is also very satisfied with the number of viewers. "I think this is more than we expected and it is a very good figure", Teronen says.

The World Cup event was broadcast partly live from 6:20 p.m. until 8 p.m. The numbers of viewers on all the other Finnish TV channels were lower: channel 4 had fewer than 100,000 viewers, MTV3 just over 100,000 and TV1 fewer than 200,000.

International signal available

The World Cup coverage was available

through the European Broadcasting Union EBU. Producer Markku Jylhäsalu at YLE says that Norwegian TV took the live broadcast and Swiss SRG ordered news clips. In addition, the host broadcaster YLE also transmitted the news clips through the Eurovision Sports News Exchange.

Markku Jylhäsalu says that the sprint format is good for TV. "It is easy to follow and it's fast. Using GPS makes it possible to watch the different route choices and it adds a lot of value to the broadcast".

Simone and Thierry – repeat wins



PHOTOS: ERIK BORG



Amongst the men Thierry Gueorgiou is showing great strength.

“Queen” Simone Niggli won the first two World Cup races.

BY ERIK BORG

Simone Niggli and Thierry Gueorgiou have both taken two victories from the first two races in the World Cup this season.

Both are looking extremely strong. Twice in a row they have beaten the other runners in Nordic terrain. In particular, the victories in the middle distance race at Bykle in Norway showed strength.

Simone has continued her progress. Thierry has regained high motivation after feeling for some months last year that the sport wasn't that interesting. At Bykle in typical Norwegian terrain it was also a little surprising to find three French runners among the six best in the men's class. France has become one of the best nations, but three near the top in very special Norwegian terrain was much more than expected. In the World Cup total standings, Thierry, François Gonon and Damien Renard are all among the five best!

The Finnish team has also shown that they are well prepared. Mats Haldin has finished second twice; he is stronger than last year, a year which wasn't that good for him. And Heli Jukkola has finished second and third in the two first races.

Marc Lauenstein, who has won two silver medals in successive years in the long distance in WOC, was third in Norway and is now one of the best of the Swiss men.

Helena a new star

The Swede Helena Jansson has shown that she's moved up to a new level. She was only just beaten by Simone in the first World Cup race, but didn't take part in the second. Helena also did well at the Nordic Championships with gold in sprint and relay.

Minna Kauppi didn't take part in the second World Cup race after finishing fifth in the first race. In Minna and Heli, Finland has two women who can give Simone a fight on their best days.

Kajsa Nilsson, a new star in the Swedish team last year, hasn't started in the World Cup yet because of injury problems.

The Russians with Tanja Ryabkina and the couple Julia Novikova and Valentin Novikov are for sure again among the best. The only runners among the 20 best in the world not from the big nations - Switzerland, France, Finland, Russia, Sweden and Norway - are Dana Brozkova and Jon Duncan. The Czech girl is sharing fourth place, and Jon from Great Britain is number 14. It could have been nice with runners from some more nations among

the best, but the World Championship in Ukraine is the most important event of the season and so far there have only been competitions in Nordic terrain. In Ukraine the terrain will probably suit runners from a larger number of nations.

Hanny hasn't started yet

Hanny Allston, World Championship sprint gold medallist last year, hasn't been present at the World Cup so far.

The Norwegians have been present, but haven't got the good results they are used to getting. They have only got eighth



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places as their best results so far. "We cannot continue with such results", the Norwegian trainer Jarle Ausland said. It was expected that the Norwegians would have done much better, especially on

home ground.

Holger Hott, who has cut Johansen from his name this year, achieved one of the eighth placings. Holger and his Canadian wife Sandy got a baby boy just four days before the race at Bykle. Marianne Andersen, who got four individual silver medals at international level last year, was lacking in iron at the beginning of the season and has later had influenza.

At the end of July the World Cup continues in Sweden, where it is part of O-Ringen: the first three days of the big international event.

Athletes' Commission in Foot Orienteering in its first meeting



PHOTO: SÖREN ANDERSSON

The newly formed Athletes' Commission in Foot Orienteering held its first meeting in conjunction with the World Cup event in Lapua, Finland. Simone Niggli, Emil Wingstedt and Thierry Gueorgiou were welcomed to the IOF by Council member Heikki Kauppinen, Foot Orienteering Commission member Erlend Slokvik and Sports Director Björn Persson. The fourth member of the Athletes' Commission, Jo Allison was unable to attend the meeting.

Yuri Omelchenko: “Injuries are my worst fear”

BY ERIK BORG

Prior to the World Championships on his home ground, Yuri Omelchenko is most afraid of getting injured, although he doesn't currently suffer from any injuries. The World Champion from Germany in 1995 is now on the hunt for new top results.

Yuri Omelchenko is Ukraine's biggest hope. In addition to the gold medal in the short distance at the 2005 World Championships, he has also won WOC silver in the long distance in 2003 and the sprint



in 2004.

– I aim to be among the six best in the sprint and also in the long distance, says Yuri.

What has the gold medal meant to you?

– It changed my whole life. As a result of the gold medal, I moved to Sweden and I could continue my orienteering career. Without the gold medal that would not have been possible, he says.

Many years in Sweden

The 2007 World Orienteering Championships will be held in Kiev, 500 km from Yuri's home town, but many years have passed since he lived in Ukraine. He has lived in Blekinge, Sweden for 11 years now. He is a physical education teacher and works 75-80 % of full time. During his years in Sweden he has also got two children, 5-year-old Maxim and Jakob, who is now one year old.

Is it possible to make it to the absolute top when you have two small kids and you work almost full time?

– I would not have been able to do it unless my wife Inga, who is from my home town in Ukraine, had been there for me. She makes it possible for me to devote enough time to training. The ambition to do well at world elite level also requires a lot of detailed planning. It certainly is a bit difficult, he says.

The Omelchenko family visits Ukraine every summer. Inga's and Yuri's parents also come to Sweden to visit them.

Injured in June

This year, 35-year-old Yuri has had problems because of a muscle strain. He first became injured at the beginning of the year. After that he had a good training period, and was on his way to top form when he suffered a new muscle strain in June. The training has therefore mostly

Yuri Omelchenko is a big hope for his home country at the World Championships, even though many years have passed since he actually lived in Ukraine.



PHOTO: ERIK BORG

included elements other than running. Yuri has nevertheless trained well and he may well be successful in Ukraine in mid-August.

Who is going to be your biggest contender?

– The injuries may be my biggest contenders, but the competition is certainly going to be very tough. There are some 20 runners that can take the gold. It is impossible to name anyone in particular.

Compared with 1995, how are you as an orienteer today?

– I can't run as fast as I did at that time, but I am now a better orienteer, he smiles.

Long career

Even though Yuri has been very successful and has trained hard for many years, he does not intend to finish his orienteering career yet.

– I want to continue for a few more years, he says.

What does it mean to you that the World Championships will be on home ground?

– It's just another World Championship. It doesn't differ very much from any other World Championship, but I will of course be able to understand the local language. I think it would have meant much more to me if the event had been held closer to my home town. I also believe that the visibility

of the championships might well have been better in a smaller town. In the metropolis of Kiev the championships may 'get lost in the crowds', he says.

Yuri has been on two training camps in Ukraine together with the Swedish team, but he has no intention of applying for a Swedish passport.

– I do not want to change my citizenship – at least not as long as I continue my career.

Don't you begin to feel Swedish after all these years?

– When I am in Sweden, I am Ukrainian, but when I am abroad, I feel Swedish, says Yuri.

Ukraine's first World Championships

BY CLIVE ALLEN

A new chapter in orienteering history will be written in August when for the first time ever, Ukraine will be hosting the World Orienteering Championships (WOC) and the associated World Trail Orienteering Championships (WTOC).

Ukraine's capital Kiev is the host city for the Championships. All the WOC races will be held within or close to the city boundaries, where the terrain is said to be largely 'continental' in character with both forest and open land, and with some areas of complex contour detail. The Middle Distance races will be held in undulating forest on sandy ground, whilst ravines and steep slopes with clay soil as well as flatter areas will be encountered in the Long Distance and Relay competitions. In this kind of terrain there are fine margins between success and failure, and some exciting and



close-fought races can be anticipated.

38 nations will have competitors at WOC, with 127 women and 179 men expected to take part. Ukraine will be represented by 10 runners, the most well-known being Yuri Omelchenko, WOC gold medallist in short distance in 1995 and still a major force in the Ukrainian team. Moldova will be sending a full-strength team for the first time – in fact it is the first WOC ever for Moldova, which became a full member of IOF earlier this year.

The WOC competition programme starts

on Saturday 18 August with the Sprint Qualification races and ends on Sunday 26 August, when the Sprint Finals will take place in Kiev's Botanical Gardens and War Memorial Museum areas. The other key dates are: Middle Distance Finals on Wednesday 22 August, Long Finals on Thursday 23 August and Relays on Saturday 25 August. The two WTOC events take place on 22 and 24 August.

The Ukrainian organisers are sparing no efforts to make the Championships challenging, exciting and spectacular for both the runners and for spectators. With some of the venues easily accessible by the city's metro system, it is anticipated that many of Kiev's citizens will take the opportunity to view the action. Competitors and officials too will use the metro to get to at least one venue – a challenge in itself for western participants, with names and signs all in Cyrillic script!

“I still have a lot to learn”



PHOTO: ERIK BORG

BY ERIK BORG

Paula Iso-Markku is one of the positive surprises of this season. The young Finn has been among the best seniors in the world even though she is only 20 years old.

In the World Cup she has finished 19th and 24th in the first two races, but much more impressive is her bronze medal in middle distance at the open Nordic Championships (NOC) at the beginning of May. A lot of strong runners took part on Bornholm.

– In fact it was quite a surprise for me, too, the medal at NOC. I hadn't expected my improvement to be so great, she says.

A dream fulfilled

As a junior Paula won a medal at the Junior World Orienteering Championships in Switzerland. Before this season it was the first-year senior's goal just to come to NOC.

– Last autumn I wrote down that it would be great to get to NOC, but it felt more like a dream than a goal, she says.

Now has she become one of the best Finns. She won the Finnish Championships at sprint and has been in the World Cup team so far, even though the first race didn't end so well.

– I was nervous and made mistakes in Lapua. I almost always tend to be really nervous before competitions, even if they are only small ones. I still have a lot to

learn in orienteering, says Paula. Paula Iso-Markku from Finland has already, in her first year among the seniors, become a very good orienteer - but there is still a way to go.

learn in orienteering, says Paula.

A long process

What did you learn from the start of the World Cup?

– Learning is not something that happens, it's more like a process. I hope that the competition in Lapua was one orienteering experience in a series of experiences that teach me to concentrate more thoroughly, improve my tactics in different orienteering situations, and help me to choose a good speed for finding the controls without making mistakes. Specifically at the start of the World Cup I discovered that I should pay more attention to finding my rhythm in orienteering: running more slowly when it's more challenging, she says.

Not old any longer

Last year Paula had her last year as junior. She felt a bit old!

– It's a bit funny. Now in my first year among seniors I feel young again, she says.

How have you managed to take the step from junior to senior so easily?

– I think it is a coincidence that I happened to take a jump in my development as an orienteer at the same time as I stepped up from junior to senior. Now I have a better rhythm in training; training hard at times and resting well. I have also stopped competing in skiing and ski-orienteering in order to focus on training and studying. I think that that suits me well.

How will you continue your progress?

– I intend to train more and harder, and I trust that my trainer Annariitta Kottonen will help me. I also have a lot to learn in my orienteering thoughts and models, says the 20-year-old Finn.