

Success from the very beginning

BY ERIK BORG

What a start for Moldova when it took part in the World Orienteering Championships (WOC) for the first time!

Moldova was one of the 42 nations taking part in WOC in Ukraine. The number of participating nations was a record. The previous record, Switzerland 2003, stood at 41 nations.

In the long distance, Alexandru Perstnev secured a place in the final.

– Alexandru trains every day and was well prepared. I expected that he would go through to the final on the long distance, says Andrei Severuhin, Alexandru's trainer. He was number 15 in one of the three heats in the long distance qualification and therefore qualified for the final. The fifteen best from each of the three groups run in the final.

– I'm glad for the whole team. It certainly was very nice to be in the final, says Alexandru.

On the final he had a tough time. It was long, warm and tough, but the Moldovian managed the challenges and finished number 36. That's a good start for a young orienteering nation.



PHOTO: ERIK BORG

On the warm long distance it felt good to tip water over your head as Alexandru Perstnev shows.

Alexandru is in his first year as a senior and is 21 years old. He has been orienteering for about ten years and has been to Ukraine several times.

– I had run quite a lot of races in Ukraine before the championship, he says.

In this issue: Success from the very beginning; Ksenia Chernykh – star from Russia; Mika Tervala continues his quest for gold; Matthias Merz: "I always take one step at a time"; Good to share the gold; Thierry sleeps well again; Competitors from 18 nations participated in the 2007 World Trail Orienteering Championships; News in brief.

Good reading!

BARBRO RÖNNBERG
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Ksenia Chernykh – star from Russia

BY PIRJO VALJANEN

If you have not seen the comet Chernykh in the sky, don't worry. The Russian MTB orienteering star Ksenia Chernykh shines much more often than her astronomical namesake.

Ksenia Chernykh was one of the most impressive stars at the World Mountain Bike Orienteering Championships (WOC/MTB) in the Czech Republic. She won two gold and two silver which tripled her total medal count. Despite this, her success wasn't surprising.

– Between WOC 2006 and 2007 I have participated in two European Championships and won five medals. Last year, I was second in the IOF MTBO World Ranking. My recent success might be expected in many respects, Chernykh says.

Dream of the Olympics

Her dream is to compete, next year, in the Olympics in Beijing. Not in MTBO but in Mountain Bike Cross Country which she has also competed in this year. Tough cross country races in Team Russia provided a sound basis for MTBO.

– I have had very intensive bike training and that's the reason for my strength in MTBO. This season I've been very busy with cross country and I had less time for MTBO. That's why I made some mistakes in orienteering. Luckily, my 20 years' experience in orienteering and my biking skills compensated for the lack of MTBO starts, Chernykh says.

She had a virtually perfect race at sprint distance – the format being part of the World Championships for the first time. In middle distance her performance wasn't her best, yet despite some small mistakes she took the gold.

– My gold in the middle distance, with not the best orienteering, lulled me into a false sense of security and I was punished for this in long distance. I made a double mistake there, choosing a road and that



PHOTOS: PIRJO VALJANEN

ruined my chances of victory.

If her dream of the Olympics comes true, she cannot defend her gold medals at WOC/MTB in Poland next year.

– If I am given the opportunity to compete in the Olympics, I'll only be in time for the long distance and relay in Poland.

This year she won her silver medals in long distance and relay. At relay she rode the last leg and started at the same time as the Austrian, Michaela Gigon, four times gold medalist. At the finish Chernykh and Russia took silver after Finland.

– When I started, I was very close to Gigon and already I could see the plate under her bike saddle: "Don't follow me, I'm lost." Then I was pretty sure of silver.

Chernykh and Gigon are both known for their excellent biking skills and speed. But that's not the only thing these champions have in common.

– We both have the strength to win.

And that, like the best orienteering sportsmen, is expressed by superb control over their behavior during the race.

Satisfied with two gold medals

Ksenia Chernykh was very satisfied with her two gold medals. But she could have been even happier.

– The gold medal certainly cheered me up. If I had my family with me, I would have said that I was on the seventh heaven of delight.

She has family of three children: the twins Zoya and Misha are 5 years old and Slava is 11 years old.

– Slava is already an experienced orienteering sportsman. He has many victories in all three disciplines of orienteering (foot, ski and mountain bike) and also in ski races, Ksenia smiles proudly.

Mika Tervala continues his quest for gold

BY PIRJO VALJANEN

Mika Tervala has dominated the men's class in MTB orienteering since 2002 when the World Championships were staged for the first time in France. In seven years he has won 10 medals at WOC (MTB) – and only three of them are from relay.

This season he won almost everything. In June, at the European Championships: gold in middle and long distance, but no medal in relay. At the World Championships in the Czech Republic, in August, he again won the middle distance, but was very disappointed with his 11th place in the long distance.

Close to perfect

Mika Tervala's performance in middle distance was almost perfect. He focused on avoiding all mistakes.

– I knew that concentration would be crucial in middle distance and I kept it in my mind all the time, Tervala said after the race.

He made only one small mistake: he didn't notice that the third control was along a narrow path, and he rode past the crossing. At the seventh control, he caught Beat Okle and later on Ruslan Gritsan. The Swiss was ranked number 1 and the Russian won the long distance three days later.

– I became more confident after catching Beat and Ruslan. I knew that my race couldn't be too bad, Tervala said.

In the end, the Finn won by 2.23 in front of Jeremie Gillmann from France.

Mika Tervala lives in Hollola, in southern Finland, near Lahti. He works as a fire brigade chief in addition to his sports career.

– Normally I work a 24 hour shift and after that I have three days off. As a result of training camps and competitions, I'm usually away from work three months of the year.

From biathlon to MTB orienteering

Mika Tervala is a very experienced 39year www.orienteering.org



PHOTOS: PIRJO VALJANEN

old competitor. He began his sporting career as a biathlete.

– I represented Team Finland in biathlon from 1989 to 1991. I finished biathlon in 1993 and took up ski orienteering.

After a career in ski orienteering, he finally found his gold mine in MTB orienteering: six gold medals in five World Championships. That means at least one gold for every year of World Championships.

Mika Tervala is known as good tactician. He has a great ability to make the right decisions about tyres and bike. At the European Championships in Italy, in June, he won double gold and afterwards said that the choice of tyres was very important in wet and slippery terrain. In the Czech Republic, the choice of tyres was simpler. Instead, Tervala thought carefully about which bike to use. He chose the bike with full suspension for both middle and long distance. Tervala believed, especially for the middle distance, that this was an excellent choice that gave him lots of advantage.

Tervala has two different bikes for races:

one with full suspension and one with hard tail. Before the race, he tries to find out as much information about the terrain as possible – and makes the final decision based on it.

– For example, it was known before the middle distance that the terrain would be technical and difficult to ride.

– There is quite a big difference between a bike with full suspension and one with hard tail especially in terrain with lots of rocks and root stocks. If you can ride along the roads it's useless to use a heavier bike with full suspension, Tervala compares.

He has competed for many years at the top. He hasn't made any final decision concerning his career, but he does, at least, provide some hope for those who would like to win their share of gold medals.

– It would be fine to retire as World Champion, but on the other hand I'm still enjoying competing too. I'll decide during the winter. I will anyway retire from the national training group to open up possibilities for younger talent, Tervala smiles.

I always take one step at a time

BY ERIK BORG

Last year Mattias Merz suffered a lot of sickness. This year has been amazing, but the Swiss has set more goals. He wants to take the next step.

– I always take one step at a time, says Mattias.

How will you improve your skills even more?

– I can still increase the level of my training and there is always something you can do better in your orienteering technique. I just have to go on with my training, he says.

Matthias now leads the good Swiss men. It's a generation of orienteers that have been together for some years.

– Even as a junior there was more than one good runner so nobody could take it easy. You had to improve every year and when you beat other runners in a competition, or even during high quality training, you knew that it would also be good at the international level. It's great motivation and enjoyable, says Matthias.

The 23 year old Swiss had great success at WOC in Ukraine. He won the long distance with a gap of 3.38 minutes, with Andrey Khramov taking silver. He was also only nine tenths of a second from gold

on the sprint. In May, he won three golds at the open Nordic Championships. As a junior, he won gold in three JWOCs, one after the other, and two years ago he was in the Swiss team that won the relay.

– I have always been talented in orienteering. But that doesn't help all that much anymore in the elite class. You have to train well. I think I have found a good way to train. I have improved a lot in running over the past years. I have the ability to concentrate well. I'm still motivated and want to become a better orienteer, says Matthias.

The young Swiss has had a lot of good results, almost from the time he was a youngster, but last year was a bit different. As a result of illness, he was forced to stay in bed for almost a month, but he has come back better than ever.

– I now run faster and am calmer in orienteering practice, he says.

What has Simone Niggli's success meant for you?

– It's very nice to have someone like Simone in the team. When she won her first gold medal I was 17 years old and hadn't even competed in the Junior World Championships. So, of course, I looked up to her. But I didn't say to myself that I wanted to reach the same heights. That would have been too high a goal, he says.

Matthias is from Beinwil am See, 30 kilometres southwest of Zurich. He is studying in Zurich.



PHOTO: ERIK BORG

Matthias Merz created an incredible gap to second place on the long distance. The Swiss had plenty of time to display his happiness as he ran the last metres.



PHOTO: ERIK BORG

Heli Jukkola (left), team coach Janne Salmi, Minna Kauppi and national director of coaching Petteri Kähäri hugging each other when it had been confirmed that Heli and Minna had shared the gold.

Good to share the gold

BY ERIK BORG

Both Minna Kauppi and Heli Jukkola felt that it was better to share the long distance gold medal at the World Championships than to win or lose the gold with just a very tiny margin.

– We have competed against each other for many years and we have also run many relays together on the national team. I think it was good that we shared the gold. It felt much better than if one of us would have been just a second faster than the other, smiles Heli.

She won gold at last. The Finnish girl had never before won an individual international championship but she had been second and third several times. The gold was her fifth individual World Championship medal.

– Shared gold is not like silver. It is gold, says Minna.

For Minna this was also the first individual WOC gold medal.

The two elite orienteers live in different parts of Finland and they do not train together.

Simone Niggli took bronze and she was happy with her performance, which of course adds to the value of the performance of the Finnish girls.

It is rather unlikely that two runners would finish on exactly the same time in the long distance race and that they would also win gold but it is even more unlikely that they would come from the same country. Minna Kauppi (left) and Heli Jukkola managed to do all of this in the World Championship long distance in Ukraine.

In the relay, Heli and Minna also shared the gold. Together with Paula Haapakoski, they managed to repeat their victory from Denmark in 2006.

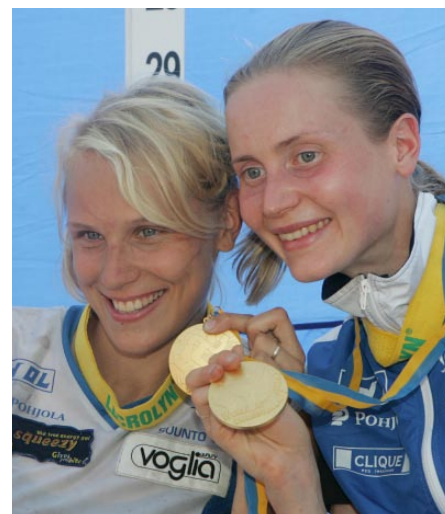


PHOTO: ERIK BORG

Thierry sleeps well again

BY ERIK BORG

A miss during the World Orienteering Championships (WOC) in Denmark, 2006, made Thierry Gueorgiou wake up in the middle of the night to ponder. Now he again sleeps well. In the Ukraine he became the WOC king.

–Were the wins revenge? Not at all, but it is good to be back, smiles Thierry after the win on the middle distance.

The Frenchman was the favourite after a successful run-up to the World Championships. He was expected to win his fourth WOC-gold on the middle distance.

A tough time

Before the WOC in Denmark, Thierry had won three gold medals in a row in middle distance. Then he was placed fourth, and the Norwegian Holger Hott won.

Thierry made a big mistake on the fourth control in Denmark. After that, he never regained his rhythm.

– The disappointment after the WOC in Denmark was the toughest period of my orienteering career. I always knew that my winning streak on the middle distance could come to an end, but it still took me a long time to accept my mistake on the fourth control, Thierry says.

– While some travel home and forget the big mistakes, I torture myself. Several nights I woke up at four in the morning and thought of the mistakes I had made at the fourth control in Denmark. The memory went wild. I went through the start of the middle distance repeatedly. What could I have done differently? What caused my fatal mistake?

One mistake was to run the long distance. At the middle distance final, two days after the long distance final, he had still not fully recovered.

In the days immediately after the WOC-banquet, Thierry went to practise in relevant terrain for the 2006 World Cup final that was to be held in his homeland. He impressed greatly at the World Cup final, but had still not completely forgotten the WOC-mistake.

– I still had a hollow feeling in my stomach as a result of the WOC-mistake. I realised that it would take a long time to get over it, but I had made a plan for the season, that would come with some small but important changes in training, he says.

How did you get your drive back?

– It was actually much easier than I had expected. I was no longer world champion. I had nothing to defend. I was the hunter. I was hungry again, exactly as when I was a junior, Thierry says.

Before the season, he worked a lot at becoming a complete runner and the goal for the Ukraine was to take back the middle distance crown.

– There was only one place that would make me happy, he says.

Small mistakes

He also made a small mistake at the start of the middle distance in Ukraine.

– On my way to the first control, I had to stop and find out where I was, but I had run with the compass so I quite quickly

realised, he says.

While many did not get the better of the green terrain, it was different for Thierry.

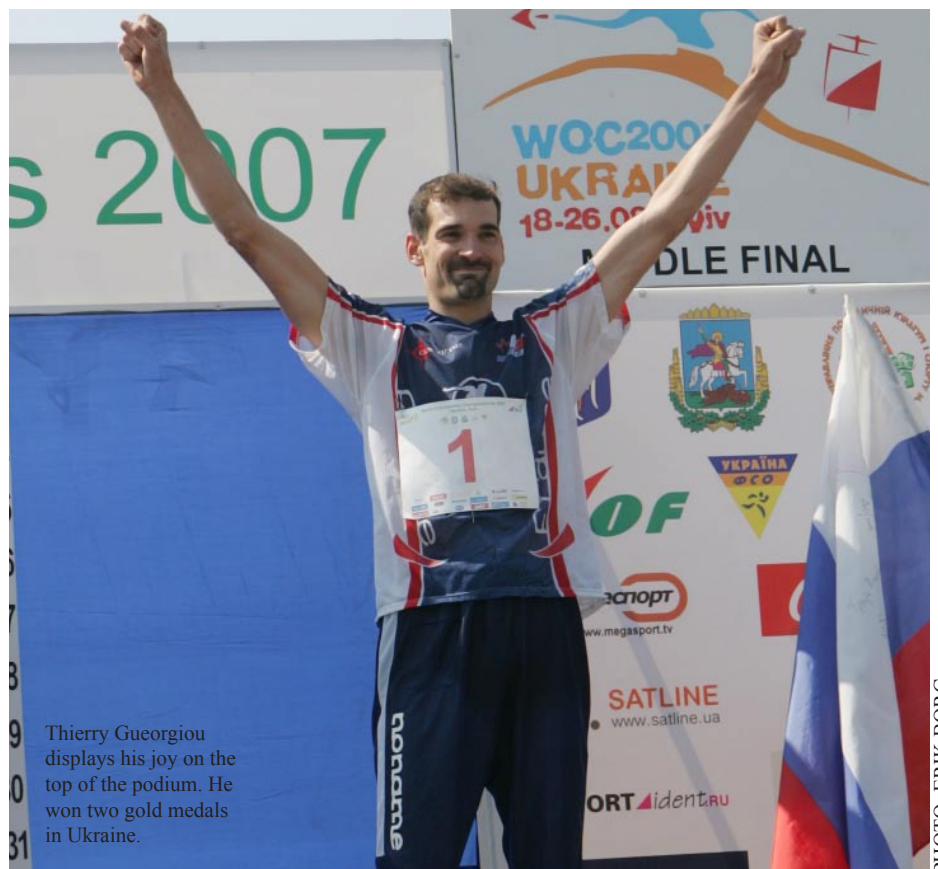
– I liked the terrain and the challenging orienteering. It was a bit like night orienteering. I like that, Thierry says.

On the middle distance, the difference was 2.01 minutes to the somewhat surprising silver medallist Tero Föhr. The Finn was, for the first time, among the three best in a large international race.

On the sprint in The Botanical Gardens in Kiev, it was a battle between the winner of the middle and the winner of the long. Thierry finished with the gold with a margin of 0.9 seconds to the Swiss Matthias Merz.

– It was great to win the sprint, but I like the middle distance much more than the sprint. The technical challenges are what I seek in the forest, Thierry says.

Thierry likes orienteering more than anything else, and he is sure that he will continue to compete until he is over 70 year old!



Thierry Gueorgiou displays his joy on the top of the podium. He won two gold medals in Ukraine.

PHOTO: ERIK BORG

18 nations represented at the 2007 World Trail Orienteering Championships



PHOTO: PAULALEHTOMÄKI

Competitors from 18 nations participated in the 2007 World Trail Orienteering Championships (WTOC) in Kiev, Ukraine. In the Paralympic class 35-year-old Roberta Falda from Italy won the gold medal. Lithuanian Evaldas Butrimas got silver and the bronze went to Bernt Gustafsson from Sweden.

In the Open class 37-year-old Kreso Kerestes won the first-ever gold medal in orienteering for Slovenia. Antti Rusanen from Finland came second and Ole Johan Waaler from Norway was third. Sweden won the Paralympic Class Team Trophy.



News in brief

World Cup evaluation group formed

In line with the previously taken decision to make an evaluation of the 2007 World Cup, the IOF Council has formed a World Cup evaluation project group consisting of Edmond Szechenyi (Council, FRA), Leho Haldna (Council, EST), Mike Dowling (Foot Orienteering Commission, AUS), Erlend Slokvik (Foot Orienteering Commission, NOR) and Thierry Gueorgiou (Athletes' Commission, FRA). Sports Director Björn Persson is acting as coordinator.

As a first step, member federations and national team coaches have received a questionnaire aimed at identifying any needs for minor changes able to be implemented in 2008. This part of the evaluation process is meant to be finalised in November. The second phase of the work, an evaluation of the entire World Cup concept, is expected to be finalised within about a year from now.

Three orienteering events in the 2009 World Games

The 2009 World Games in Kaohsiung, Chinese Taipei, will include three orienteering events. The International World Games Association (IWGA) and the Kaohsiung World Games 2009 Organising Committee have accepted the IOF's request for the addition of a sprint event to the previously included middle distance competition and mixed team relay.

The number of athletes allocated to the IOF is the same as in previous editions of the World Games, i.e. 40 men and 40 women. The qualification criteria will be published in November 2007.

Switzerland and Denmark appointed organisers of IOF events

Switzerland has been appointed organiser of the World Masters Orienteering Championships in 2010. The event will

be staged in the Neuchâtel region with the event centre in the town La Chaux-de-Fonds.

The Junior World Orienteering Championships 2010 will be held in Denmark. The event will take place in the town of Aalborg, situated in the northern part of Denmark. The terrains to be used for the event have already been embargoed.

Kyrgyzstan new member of the IOF

At its meeting held in Kiev, Ukraine, the IOF Council admitted the Kyrgyzstan Orienteering Federation as a provisional associate member of the IOF. The IOF now has 69 members out of which 48 are full, and 21 associate members.

Earlier this year, the former associate member Moldavian Orienteering Federation was admitted to provisional full membership of the IOF.