



## MEDIA RELEASE

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### AUSTRALIAN BIATHLON – VANCOUVER & NORTHERN HEMISPHERE WRAP

The Australian Biathlon community has enjoyed its highest participation for many years, with Junior, Olympic and Masters biathletes representing Australia during the 2009-10 Northern Hemisphere winter.

“The sport just keeps on growing – it’s fantastic to be run off my feet with the paperwork!” says ABA Executive Officer Paul Connor.

In the sport which combines the arduous demands of cross-country skiing with precision target shooting, here are the highlights from the season to date, which includes the Vancouver Olympic Winter Games:

- Irene Dunn won Gold for Australia at the inaugural World Masters Winter Games in Pokljuka, Slovenia, beating an ex-Olympian gold medallist in the process.
- Mark Raymond and Alex Almoukov battled it out in IBU Cup events right up to selection time for the Vancouver Olympics. Alex was the eventual qualifier:

*Biathlete Alex Almoukov has delivered an improved performance in the 20km individual event at Whistler Olympic Park today.*

*“It was definitely better than the sprint so I was happy with that,” Almoukov said.*

*Aged just 19, and the second youngest competitor in the field, he shot well to miss only four of 20 shots, including a clean final round in the standing position.*

*Athletes must complete five laps, with a shooting stop after each of the first four. Each biathlete shoots at 20 targets, the first and third sets of five in the prone position, the second and fourth standing. “Four penalties isn’t too much considering I did four out of 10 in the sprint event. I was hoping to do just two or one but I was more relaxed with my skiing today and I’m happy with that.”*

*Almoukov demonstrated a lot of character to bounce back from the disappointment of finishing at the tail of the field in the Sprint earlier in the Games. Today he beat home 10 of his competitors.*

*Considering Almoukov has been struggling with illness for several weeks and in a sport where many athletes peak around age 30 - when strength and endurance reach their optimum - the young Australian has a bright future ahead.*

*Almoukov will take away invaluable experience from these Games and will now concentrate on the under 26 European championships to round out his season. Andrew Reid, AOC Whistler*

- Five Junior biathletes represented Australia at both Ridnaun (Italy) and Torsby (Sweden)
- Four Junior biathletes attended a training camp, and participated in a friendly competition in British Columbia (Canada)
- Back in Australia, another dozen school-aged biathletes have been sweating it out cross-training at the beach and on roller skis.

All this augers well for the future of the sport in Australia.

“We’re looking forward to a bumper Australian Biathlon Winter Season” says Paul.

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