

Report 1 – World Cup and IBU Cup Trimester 1 - Sweden, Austria and Italy – November/December 2011

The 2011/12 Northern Hemisphere Biathlon season kicked off in Ostersund, Sweden with Australia having 2 representatives at IBU Cup No 1 – Lucy Glanville and Alex Almoukov, with Alex also representing Australia at World Cup No 1, which was held in Ostersund immediately after IBU Cup No 1.

Snow has been a little scarce in Europe so far this season, so the conditions in Ostersund while adequate were also icy and quite tough in some places. The 2011/12 season is Lucy's first season on IBU Cup having qualified by some good results in Bulgaria in February 2011. Lucy and Dyllan Harmer will be representing Australia at IBU Cup level for the 2011/12 season which is the first time for many years Australia has had both male and female representation at this level. Dyllan starts his IBU Cup competitions in January 2012 after achieving his qualification at the YJWCH in January 2011 with a strong sub 50% of the field result.

Alex Almoukov has been keeping Australia's presence at the World Cup elite level for some 2 years now and there has been a steady improvement in his results and with many biathletes now competing at elite levels well into their 30's, there is plenty of time for Alex to move Australia into the higher level Biathlon nations.

This season will be the first season entirely under the new IBU rules which limits the number of athletes the top nations can enter into World Cups. Thus expect to see WC athletes moving continually between IBU Cup and World Cup as they jostle for positions in their countries World Cup and IBU Cup teams. This makes the IBU Cup level of competition much stronger and thus more difficult for smaller nations like Australia to achieve strong team results - so please cheer on Alex, Dyllan and Lucy as they look to achieve their best for Australia!

Results

IBU Cup No 1 – Ostersund - Sweden

Icy conditions and a lack of snow made for a difficult open to the IBU season. Many athletes fell on the icy track with its sharp corners, including unfortunately Alex who suffered grazes and damage to his racing skis. However he was still able to achieve a sub 15% behind result which was important given the top skiers in this race were all World Cup athletes. In the 2nd Sprint race, Alex performed well in much better conditions finishing 65/120 and 12.4% behind.

Lucy also performed well in her first IBU Cup race for the season, achieving 2 sub 30% behind results with 2 misses only on both days of competition. Her races were also dominated by World Cup skiers (with the overall WC winner from 2010/11 starting in her 2nd Sprint race) as IBU Cup No 1 is always used by the top nations to finalize their World Cup and IBU Cup teams for Trimester 1.

World Cup No 1 – Ostersund - Sweden

Alex achieved some strong results in WC No 1 with percentages of 12.9% in the Individual and 14.8% in the Sprint. Alex's shooting was strong with misses of only 3/20 and 2/10. These results will allow Alex to continue racing at World Cup level for Trimester 2 which importantly for Australian ensures continual representation at the highest IBU level.

World Cup No 2 – Hochfilzen - Austria

Conditions in Hochfilzen were ideal and the whole of the WC race was very fast. Alex improved further to achieve a percentage behind of 10.8% in finishing 83/104 starters in the Mens 10km Sprint. His shooting continued to be strong shooting 2/10 and the aim now for Alex is to continue to use his strong percentages to move towards a sub 60th finish and thus a Pursuit start in Trimester 2.

IBU Cup No 2 – Ridnaun - Italy

Lucy raced both the Individual and Sprint races in Ridnaun and her results showed further improvement. In races which again saw the podium dominated by WC skiers, she achieved percentages behind of 24.7% in the Individual and 18.2% in the Sprint. Importantly her shooting continued to be strong with misses of only 5/20 and 1/10 which combined with fast skiing over the 2 day of competition ensured continual improvement in her percentage results. Lucy is the youngest competitor currently on the IBU Cup circuit and her percentages behind qualify her for on-going IBU Cups in 2011/12 and also consolidate the sub 20% result she achieved in Bulgaria in 2010/11 season which allow her to represent Australia at the World Championships in Ruhpolding, Germany in March 2012.

World Cup No 3 – Hochfilzen - Austria

World Cup No 3 is the last World Cup in Trimester 1. The races were moved from France to Hochfilzen as France continues to suffer from lack of snow. Alex raced a 10km Sprint in Hochfilzen with fresh snow and a 79th starting position. Alex raced well and finished 9.63% behind with 1 penalty which is his best result to date and a strong note on which to finish Trimester 1.

Both the IBU Cup and World Cup circuits take a break now for Christmas and New Year, with Alex re-commencing at World Cup No 4 in Oberhof, Germany in early January. Lucy will take a break from the IBU Cup Circuit for Trimester 2 and compete at WYOG for Australia in XC Skiing and Biathlon YJWCH in Finland towards the end of February. Watch out for Dyllan Harmers debut on the IBU Cup circuit in January and his racing at European Championships (OECH) and YJWCH along with Lucy in February.

Nick Almoukov and Toni Hulme
(travelling with the AUS WC and IBU Cup Team)
15th December 2011