

## *World Cup Biathlon Team*

*February 2009*

At the moment it is down time for the World Cup season as teams prepare for the World Championships in Korea starting 12 February.

The World Cups of Ruholding and Antholz were successful in terms of numbers for Australia as we were able to start our Maximum start numbers of 2 for each event. This will continue through to Korea when Alex Almoukov and his father Nick will join Mark and I at the World Championships.

Overall, Mark achieved the IBU Q time at Oberhof and Antholz which enables him a direct start in the next World Cup Trimester he chooses to start in. Since the season started Mark has achieved 4 Olympic Qualification results out of 5 starts. The results also place Mark within the Olympic Qualification system and part of the shadow team for the 2010 OWG if Australia is given one start position

Alex had good results at Ruholding and Antholz considering his short time in the sport yet fell short of the IBU Q time to enable a start in any future World Cup Trimester at this stage. He does have further opportunities to achieve the Q time at the World Championships or the IBU Open European Championships (U26) in UFA (Russia) later in February.

So what do you do in the down time between racing, well for Mark and I it meant a visit back to Obertilliach and an opportunity for Mark to take part in Exercise Rucksack. The exercise is a military run Biathlon and XC race format set over a two week period and Australia has been represented many times at this Exercise by Aussie individuals and our ADF team. Two missing iconic parts of the Exercise were Tina and Hoppy who were always a popular favorite at Obertilliach. Tribute was paid to Hoppy who gave so much to the camaraderie of the events.

For Alex and Nick it was time to head to France for the Junior World XC Championships where they were set to join up with the rest of the Australian Cross Country Team.

Obertilliach provides excellent opportunities to train and race with the courses and altitude challenging enough to test the endurance of all athletes. Snow is in overabundance here with tracks packed hard and dry.

Another 8 days remain for a mixture of racing, training and resting, then its back to Frankfurt for the connecting flights to Korea and the start of the World Championships were Mark and Alex will take part in the Sprint and Individual events.

Keeping cool

Paul Connor  
ABA National Coach