

Worldloppet developments in 1978-2007

GENERAL SECRETARIAT

According to the Worldloppet Constitution, the organisational work of the series is managed in General Secretariat lead by Secretary General. His responsibility is the administration and operation of the organisation. The location of the Secretariat is determined by the work-place of the Secretary General. The Secretary Generals normally use their home race office and the organisation covers the expenses that come with the job (mainly related to travelling).

Election of the Secretary General takes place at the appropriate Annual General Meeting. During the early years the election of the new leader took place every three years, but starting from 1993 the time was prolonged for one more year. The Secretary General's term may be extended for one year or he may be re-elected for an additional four year term.

Since 1985, from time to time, the idea of establishing a permanent office for the Worldloppet has been discussed to avoid problems of moving. A permanent office would also make easier the employing of professional staff, for example a press officer. Bringing this idea into life has always fallen over the financial hurdle, so until today the headquarters keeps rotating.

Who has determined the evolution of Worldloppet: the member races or Secretary Generals with their staff? No doubt that evolution has been the result of mutual discussion. The work of the headquarters, unlike the influence of the member races, is easier to trace and this is the reason why WL history in this book is divided into time sections by the leadership periods of Secretaries. The headquarters' influence on the Worldloppet evolution is hard to measure, as all the changes are connected also to the technological developments of the (sports) world overall. The handwriting of every Secretary General has been different and focused on areas determined by their personal knowledge and issues currently in the agenda of the organisation's everyday life. Worldloppet race organisers meet only once a year and the journey of an idea from proposal to reality takes long time. This way some issues (like new candidates for membership) have stayed on the list over the years.

1978-1981 Tony Wise, American Birkebeiner (USA)

The role of Tony Wise was to start the machinery of the circuit, whose basic elements have been unchanged until today.

Angelo Corradini: „Tony Wise's first idea gives 90% of its merit until today, even if copied from Euroloppet. First of all Tony had a very good "nose" for finding out something that people needed at the international level - it was and it still is "in" to practise aerobic sports. There was no big financial risk for organisers in joining the new organisation, because everything was based on existing races and there was not even an official responsibility (no agreement to sign). For customers it was important that the initial cost of a passport was not remarkably high (comparing to travelling etc)."

Tony worked close with Tom Kelly, his PR person, and their good promotional work resulted in remarkable passport sales already before the start of the first WL ski season. Even today the greatest number of passport holders is from the USA.



Tony Wise

The first season of Worldloppet was a success in many terms: all races took place as planned; Matti Kuosko of Sweden achieved the first Worldloppet Champion title and there were over 300 passport holders, which meant, that there were already customers for the next season. The first season of World Loppet League was completely financed by Tony Wise as no race agreed to pay the fee of 1000\$.

By the end of the second season there were already 559 passport holders and the first Worldloppet Master Titles were awarded, but there were still many weak sides to the organisation's work, such as the date conflicts in the race calendar and criteria of acceptance of new members. At the annual meeting in 1980 all members agreed on the present criteria: there can be only one event per country; the race must be the best and biggest race in that country; it must be not less than 42 km and not more than 90 km. Risto Rytökoski added that every event must be strong in order to keep the League strong. The meeting agreed that the race in France was worth investigating and from 1981 La Transjurassienne joined the Worldloppet family. It was decided that after 1. July 1980, the complete circuit would consist of 10 races and the price for a passport would be 20 USD.

Tom Duffy was requested to chair the committee to draft the WL Constitution and set of by-laws and to evaluate the possible value of existing Euroloppet documentation for the drafts.

A new problem appeared in the third season: who is the real first Worldloppet Champion? During the König-Ludwig-Lauf, on the last part of the race course, a group of 6 skiers, who were leading the competition with a gap of 5 minutes, missed the correct course and made an extra 4 km loop. The case was solved by declaring 7 skiers as the winners of the race. Worldloppet headquarters had to deal with the overall standing list. To make a fair decision, all members had to send their opinions. With the communication