

Chairman of the FIS Committee for Popular Cross-Country is invited and present on EC meetings.

Since 1999 the Executive Committee has become more and more important as the Secretary General Madis Lepajõe kept the committee posted about member marathons and asked for its judgement on problems that had appeared.

The importance of the EC rose in August 2001 in connection with the registration of Worldloppet as a corporate body: non-profit association Worldloppet Ski Federation. It brought along the responsibility of the financial side of the organisation and expanded the EC rights of decisions.

WORLDLOPPET YEARBOOK

Since October 1980, the yearbook that covers the coming season of Worldloppet is published. This yearbook has become a bible for travelling cross country skiers as the only printed material about Worldloppet so far. Each member marathon has one page for promoting their upcoming race, the programme and registration, contacts etc. The yearbook also includes a calendar for the coming season and a summary of the previous season. As this magazine is posted to all passport owners it has been the main source of information for them. For the past 10 years the names of all new Masters are also printed in this yearbook..

The changes in new marketing purposes, information sharing on the Internet and media outputs have raised Worldloppet's need to make the yearbook look more attractive and journalistic. This is connected with informing new skiers about the series and bringing them to the Worldloppet races more than for old clients as they already know where to find information (marathons' internet websites).

RACE CALENDAR

Each marathon has its certain weekend in the competition calendar from the moment of joining Worldloppet. According to the rules the race dates should not coincide. In 2006 La Transjurassienne and Tartu Maraton exchanged their dates hoping to simplify the trips of skiers who have decided to participate in as many Northern Worldloppet marathons as possible during one winter.

The calendar is confirmed at the AGM two years in advance. From time to time races have regularly changed their weekends mostly because of

some other big competition that takes place in the same area (for example in 2002 when there was a World Championships in Lahti, Finlandia-hiihto had to exchange its date with Tartu Maraton). The coordination of the race calendar has been a problem from the beginning of the series because of overlapping dates. The ideal would be if each race took place on in its own weekend, to avoid competition inside the series. Having a suitable date and a marathon's flexibility to change the date according to the series' needs is one of the most important criteria for widening negotiation later on.

PARTICIPANTS

Looking "only" 30 years back, to ski 50, 70 or 90 km in one day was for a "normal" skier a Superman task. The first popular skiers who went to Scandinavia in the 60s to ski the long distance races, were regarded as heroes back at home! Women were not allowed to participate in most of the races at least until middle of 70s. The maximum FIS racing distance was 50 km.

Today an average popular skier with a minimum of training is able to ski through the finish line of a ski marathon with an average speed of 10 km per an hour.

Looking at the age statistics we can see today happy "girls and boys" over the age of 80 finishing in a good time and good shape in long distance races! The main reason is not only the result of the much better skis, poles, shoes, energy foods and better prepared ski tracks, but most probably it is a new way of life, a different mentality, much more free time than in the past and a much better general health and financial situation all over the world. For example the average of age of participants in the Worldloppet races in 1973 (men and women together) was 34 years, now 30 years later, it has grown to 45.

In recent years about 90,000 skiers have taken part in the Worldloppet calendar races in each year. In the season of 2006 a new record was established: 99,411 participants! Looking at the change in the participation numbers over the seasons the picture is pleasant: the number is growing annually. In some seasons poor snow conditions caused only temporary relapses: the hardest year for skiers and organisers was in 1990 when 5 races did not take place. In 2000 three marathons, in 2002 two and in 2007 four marathons were cancelled due to lack of snow.

The addition of short races in the 1990s has had a positive influence on the Worldloppet. The fear that many long distance skiers would choose an

