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**PRESS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

***American Birkebeiner Celebrates 50 Years by Hosting its
Annual Week of Ski Events on Ten Kilometers of Machine-made Snow***

HAYWARD, WI (February 25, 2024) – Despite the warmest Wisconsin winter on record and less than 16” of natural fallen snow in Sawyer County, Birkie Week 2024 events were enjoyed by nearly 12,000 participants representing all 50 states and 26 countries. This week was made possible by the American Birkebeiner Ski Foundation’s capabilities to create and move 30,000 cubic yards of stockpiled man-made snow over a 10km looped course at the American Birkebeiner Trailhead in Cable, WI. This effort was a collaboration between the towns of Hayward & Cable along with Bayfield county and numerous contractors from around the state.

Birkie week unofficially kicked off on Tuesday morning February 20th with a private course completion by Ernie St. Germaine, the only person to successfully finish every American Birkebeiner since its inception in 1973. In a brief press conference before completing his 50th event, St. Germaine said, “I was at the finish line the last two years... and as skiers were coming in, every time I saw the number one on a bib, I made sure to give them a hearty hug and I said, ‘welcome, you are now officially a Birkebeiner.’ That’s what the old Norwegians said to me after I finished my first...in the Norwegian culture that means warrior....that is really a way of life.”

Open Track events on Wednesday marked the official kickoff of the week followed by an alternate event day on Thursday, which was offered to skiers in a successful effort to alleviate congestion on a looped course during event days later in the week. Over 2000 participants moved from a Friday, Saturday or Sunday event to the Thursday alternate event day. Friday’s Kortelopet 20K and Prince Haakon 10K saw nearly 800 skiers on the course.

Wave 1 of the 50th Annual Slumberland American Birkebeiner kicked off at 7AM Saturday February 24th with temperatures in the single digits. In celebration of the 50th American Birkebeiner, three UH-60 Blackhawk helicopters performed a flyover prior to the start of the elite skiers at 10:30AM.

The women’s skate division featured a tight race between Flora Dolci of Villard Saint Pancrace, France who maintained the lead for the majority of the race and Jessie Diggins of Afton, MN, who pulled out a commanding lead in front of Dolci in the final few kilometers of the race. 2023 women’s 50K skate winner Alayna Sonnesyn led the remaining competitive pack taking the third place finish.

Women’s 50-Kilometer American Birkebeiner skate technique

- | | |
|---|---------|
| 1. Jessie Diggins Afton, MN, USA | 2:10:41 |
| 2. Flora Dolci Villard Saint Pancrace, France | 2:11:07 |
| 3. Alaynas Sonnesyn Minneapolis, MN, USA | 2:15:00 |



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In the men's skate division, a tight pack of 12 – 14 competitors formed early and didn't let up until Gus Schumacher pulled out from the front chased closely by 2023 Men's 50K Skate winner and Team Birkie member David Norris. Schumacher extended his lead by 7 seconds in the final kilometer as he sprinted down the final stadium stretch to victory, while San Hendry of Salt Lake City passed David Norris besting him by fractions of a second.

Men's 50-Kilometer American Birkebeiner skate technique

- | | |
|---|---------|
| 1. Gus Schumacheer Anchorage,AK USA | 1:58:33 |
| 2. Sam Hendry Salt Lake City, UT USA | 1:58:40 |
| 3. David Norris Steamboat Springs, CO | 1:58:40 |

In another successful effort to relieve congestion on the course, the Slumberland American Birkebeiner extended into Sunday for the 30-kilometer classic race took place. The men/women's elite race hit the course at 8AM with a competitive field in both divisions.

Women's 30-Kilometer classic technique

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|---|---------|
| 1. Hannah Rudd Bozeman, MT, USA | 1:26:07 |
| 2. Caitlin Patterson Portland, ME USA | 1:26:09 |
| 3. Emily Stitt Jericho, VT USA | 1:27:20 |

Men's 53-Kilometer classic technique

- | | |
|---|---------|
| 1. Reid Goble Bozeman, MT, USA | 1:11:13 |
| 2. Christian Winker Spaichingen, BW Germany | 1:11:14 |
| 3. David Norris Steamboat Springs, CO USA | 1:11:16 |

The American Birkebeiner Ski Foundation (ABSF) would like to recognize the commitment of the Hayward and Cable communities, their staff, the thousands of volunteers and greater global skiing community that make Birkie Week. "There isn't another event like this in the world," said Ben Popp, ABSF Executive Director. "Our goal is to bring events like the Birkie to Mount Telemark Village year-round. We have until February 29th to complete a \$500,000 match donation to help bring this vision to life. If you enjoyed this past week of world-



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class events, and you're able to contribute, now is the time to make your dollars go further than ever. It take a village to raise a village." said Popp. "We can't wait to celebrate the 51st anniversary of the American Birkebeiner in 2025. Our planning starts on Monday."

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