

Sonnesyn and Agnellet take top spots in two contested sprints for the Slumberland American Birkebeiner
Skiers from 16 countries & 47 States Competed in the 48th Annual Race

HAYWARD, WI (Feb. 26, 2022) – After an early week snowstorm brought over 14” of snow on Tuesday, the American Birkebeiner Ski Foundation crew worked diligently to create a world-class course that would withstand more than 11,500 racers over four days.

On Saturday morning, single digit temperatures set the stage for a fast and firm course for the 48th Slumberland American Birkebeiner. Alayna Sonnesyn, of Stratton Mountain School’s T2 Elite Team, won her third Slumberland American Birkebeiner Championship in the women’s skate/freestyle race. Frenchman, Gerard Agnellet won a closely contested men’s freestyle sprint.

A trio of skiers including Sonnesyn, Caitlin Patterson, Craftsbury Common, VT and Rosie Frankowski, Anchorage, AK broke away from the field late in the race. With just 4km left in the race, Sonnesyn went down, but was able to recover. In Sonnesyn’s words, “Going over the bridge and hearing the roaring crowd was just incredible, it gives me the chills thinking about it. I just channeled my energy and gave it everything I had.”

Women’s 50-Kilometer skate race

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| 1. Alayna Sonnesyn, Minneapolis, MN, USA | 2:22:52 |
| 2. Caitlin Patterson, Craftsbury Common, VT, USA | 2:22:54 |
| 3. Rosie Frankowski, Anchorage, AK, USA | 2:23:01 |

The men’s freestyle race started with 217 elite skiers, with 30 of them being SuperTour athletes. Around 29 skiers stayed together after the start, but halfway through the race, at the Madshus Sprint bonus (at OO) they split up. The field dropped to 19 skiers, who skied together until Fish Hatchery, when David Norris pushed the pace and split the group further to a lead pack of three skiers. A second group of skiers, led by Ian Torchia, was only 25 seconds behind. The top three men finished in a tight sprint only separated by two seconds.

Agnellet, who won with a time of 2:07:24 said, “the lake was hard and windy. I thought I was racing for second place. I tried to pass and find a position on the bridge, but I still thought I’d be second. I would have been happy with second, but it feels awfully good to win.” David Norris, North Pole, AK, lost in a photo-finish sprint. Adam Martin, originally from Wausau, Wisconsin, now skiing for Craftsbury ski club, came in third with a time of 2:07:26.

According to Gerard, “It is the best finish line of the entire distance skiing world.”

Men’s 50-Kilometer skate race

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| 1. Gerard Agnellet, La clusaz, FR | 2:07:24 |
| 2. David Norris, North Pole, AK, USA | 2:07:24 |
| 3. Adam Martin, Craftsbury Common, VT, USA | 2:07:26 |

In the Slumberland American Birkebeiner 55-kilometer classic race, the U.S.A. filled out the top three spots on the men's and women's podium. The women's podium included 43-year-old, Hayward local Josie Nelson.

Women's 55-Kilometer classic race

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| 1. Delaney FitzPatrick, Minocqua, WI, USA | 3:23:39 |
| 2. Josie Nelson, Hayward, WI, USA | 3:29:05 |
| 3. Molly Watkins, Duluth, MN, USA | 3:31:49 |

Men's 55-Kilometer classic race

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| 1. Leo Hipp, Minneapolis, MN, USA | 2:51:57 |
| 2. Chris, Burnham, Stowe, VT, USA | 2:52:17 |
| 3. Evan Wetzal, Waukesha, WI, USA | 2:54:21 |

The excitement at the 2022 Birkie was undeniable. There was a strong showing of elite athletes from around the world. This year's race featured competitors from 16 countries and 47 states, with participants completing anywhere from their first to 48th race.

The American Birkebeiner Ski Foundation would like to recognize the commitment of the Hayward and Cable communities. ABSF Executive Director Ben Popp said, "It takes a village to organize an event of this caliber. We rely heavily on our incredible volunteers, community members, local businesses, staff, and board members to make this week happen."

The 49th Annual Slumberland American Birkebeiner week of festivities is slated for February 23-26, 2023. Registration for 2023 Slumberland American Birkebeiner, Kortelopet, Prince Haakon, and Open Track events opens to ABSF members on April 11-18, 2022 and to the general public on May 2nd, 2022.

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