

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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TEAM BIRKIE ANNOUNCES NEW COACHING STAFF AND STRUCTURE

Ensrud named Head Coach, Salmela moves to High Performance Manager.

(MINNEAPOLIS, MN) – Former Team Birkie skier, Julie Ensrud, has been named Head Coach of Team Birkie. Ensrud raced two seasons for Team Birkie after a distinguished NCAA skiing career at Northern Michigan University and University of New Mexico. The Saltnes, Norway, native comes from a family of ski coaches, and brings a wealth of experience, energy, and expertise to Team Birkie. Ensrud will oversee all Team Birkie’s training, racing, service, and travel.

“I am so excited to step into this role,” said Ensrud. “Team Birkie has given me amazing memories, friends and community relations that I value immensely and I am so excited to try to create that environment for this team. All our athletes are professional, smart and strong, so my main priority will be to support, help and challenge them in any way I can. Together with the other coaches and our supporting crew and community, I really believe Team Birkie is a great place to be. We want to provide a professional environment for the athletes to grow and succeed both on and off the ski course this year and many years ahead.”

Chad Salmela moves from the head coaching position last season, to the High Performance Manager for 2024-25, managing training concepts systems and performance management, across Team Birkie and supporting Ensrud with performance planning and evaluation. Salmela was the head coach of the St. Scholastica ski team for the first ten years of the program, after a racing career and two years as a national team assistant coach with U.S. Biathlon.

“This is the structure we’ve needed and will put the team in the strong position to support our athletes to the fullest,” said Salmela, who moves from Head Coach to High Performance Manager. “This is the move we needed, in order to accommodate what we want to achieve, and I’m really excited to support Julie, Erin, Jake, and Nichole as we all find optimal development for the talented athletes we have.”

Erin Moening returns to the coaching staff off of years of success as the head coach of the Minneapolis Ski Club junior program. As Assistant Head Coach for Team Birkie for 2024-25, Moening will assist Ensrud with organizing and managing the daily training operation, taking a lead role with the summer college program, winter race service, and administrative support.

Jake Stiele returns to the coaching staff in a greater capacity, building development connections from the community and clubs to Team Birkie, and overseeing the operation and logistics of the Marathon Team.

Former Great Britain World Cup skier, Nichole Bathe, returns in the same role as a coach, lending her expertise to the athlete development process.

“We are proud to have Julie take this role as head coach,” said Team Director, Yuriy Gusev. “Julie has demonstrated her capability and commitment to elevate Team Birkie to a higher level and we are pleased about her dedication to the role.”

COACHING TEAM

- Head Coach: Julie Ensrud
- Assistant Head Coach: Erin Moening
- High-Performance Manager: Chad Salmela
- Development Coach: Jake Stiele

MANAGEMENT TEAM

- Team Director: Yuriy Gusev*
- Team Operations: Nichole Bathe*
- Team Community Engagement: Piotr Bednarski*

* Volunteer positions

Team Birkie still has spots available for our 2024-25 Regional Team, Marathon Team and College Summer programs [[All Programs](#)]. Apply by sending an email to teambirkiepro@gmail.com.

ABOUT TEAM BIRKIE: Team Birkie is a Midwest-based professional cross country ski team formed through a collaboration between the American Birkebeiner Ski Foundation, The Loppet Foundation, and Central Cross Country Skiing (CXC). With athletes competing at the FIS World Cup, U.S. SuperTour, and regional marathon levels, the team is dedicated to advancing skiing in the Central Region. With its home base in Minneapolis, MN, Team Birkie promotes partnership and community engagement, striving to set higher standards in the sport and inspire the next generation of Nordic skiers. Learn more at www.teambirkie.com

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