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International Masters' Speed Skating Activities

History – Present - Future

International Master speed skaters are non professional speed skaters from 30 years onwards, who compete in general in different age groups.

1 History

1.1 National Activities

Many years before 1990 there were already national competitions for non professional speed skaters of higher age in different countries on club level as well as on the national level. In Norway national "Veteran" Speed Skating Championships were held every year for skaters from 35 years in 7-year age groups. The competitions are held as single distance races over the standard distances 500 m, 1000 m, 1500 m, 3000 m, 5000 m and 10000 m. In The Netherlands the "Veterans" of 40 years and older were very active especially in marathon races of 20 km, 40 km, 100 km and 200 km. In Germany there were for many years national "Senior Association Competitions" for non professional speed skaters from 30 years in 10 year age groups. In 1990 the competitions were renamed to "German Senior Speed Skating Championships". Also in Finland, Switzerland and other countries non professional speed skaters of higher age took part in national speed skating competitions.

1.2 Start of International Activities

In Feb 1991 at the German Senior Speed Skating Championships in Munich/GER, Peter Reimann, former Swiss speed skating champion, was guest participant from Switzerland. In a discussion between him and the German competitors Karl-Heinz Trepke and Peter Kroll of the Olympic Speed Skating Club Frankfurt (OEC) the idea of World Championships for non professional speed skaters from 30 years in age groups was born. In the following season, Horst Klehr, chairman of the OEC, in cooperation with Peter Kroll and Karl-Heinz Trepke, invited for the "1st Veterans' Speed Skating World Games" in Dec 1991 in Frankfurt am Main. The number of 21 entries from 3 Nations was disappointing, but at the 2nd Games in Frankfurt in Feb 1993 already 52 athletes from 5 Nations came to Frankfurt am Main. And at the following two Games in Haarlem/NED 1994 and 1995, organized by Aris J. Dijkman in cooperation with Harry G. Falke, the number of participants had already grown to 105 respectively 125 participants.

1.3 International Masters' Speed Skating Committee (IMSSC)

Because of the necessity of more organization and coordination of international activities of the non professional speed skaters Aris J. Dijkman (Haarlem/NED), Harry G. Falke (Haarlem/NED), Roland Hagemann (Frankfurt am Main/GER) and Dr. Volker Serini (Krefeld/GER) established the "International Seniors' Speed Skating Committee", today the "International Masters' Speed Skating Committee (IMSSC)", at a meeting in Krefeld/GER in the spring of 1994. In the following years Masters from further nations were appointed as members by the IMSSC. Today the IMSSC has 16 Members from 16 Nations and 4 Honorary Members.

2 Activities and Success of the IMSSC

The International Masters' Speed Skating Committee promoted especially the Games, today under the name "International Masters Speed Skating Games", the inofficial World Championships of the Masters. But also a lot of other activities were sponsored by the IMSSC with great success, as shown in the following. The name "Veterans" or "Seniors" for non professional speed skaters in age groups was changed to "Masters" by the ISU Congress in 2002.

2.1 International Masters' Speed Skating Games

The International Masters Speed Skating Games, in the following called Games, are nowadays held every year in another country, as decided by the IMSSC. The maximum of participants in the 4 distance allround contest are 180 - 200 Master speed skaters. The participants, ladies as well as men, during the 3 days of competition are divided in 5-year age groups. Because the number of entries exceeds 200, the different countries get individual quotas of participants, decided by the IMSSC for the Games every year. The sites of all Games which took place till now are:

- 1991 Frankfurt am Main/Germany (in December)
- 1993 Frankfurt am Main/Germany
- 1994 Haarlem/The Netherlands
- 1995 Haarlem/The Netherlands
- 1996 Québec/Canada
- 1997 Berlin-Wilmersdorf/Germany
- 1998 Baselga di Pinè/Italy
- 1999 Seinäjoki/Finland
- 2000 Berlin-Hohenschönhausen/Germany (Icehall)
- 2001 Québec/Canada
- 2002 Hamar/Norway (Icehall)
- 2003 Alkmaar/The Netherlands (stadium partially covered)
- 2004 Inzell/Germany
- 2005 Baselga di Pinè/Italy

2.2 Other International Masters' Competitions

Because of the high interest of Masters in the Games, which are held every year, and the fact that the capacity of the Games was not sufficient for all interested Master speed skaters, a lot of other International Masters' Competitions were established and promoted by the IMSSC. Examples for these Competitions are the International Masters' Master Cup in Berlin/GER, the International Masters' Sprint in Inzell/GER, the International Masters' Criterion in Erfurt/GER, The International Masters' Davos Meeting in Davos-Platz/Switzerland, the International Masters' Single Distance Races in Hamar/NOR, the International Masters' Long Distance Races in Heerenveen/NED and the International Masters' Open Long Track Championships in Milwaukee/USA. About 350 Master skaters from 17 nations every year take part in one or more of the International Masters' Competitions.

2.3 International Masters' Speed Skating News (IMSS-News)

Since 1996 the IMSSC publishes yearly issues of the IMSS-News with important information for Master speed skaters. The IMSS-News, which is issued in October, contains reports and results from the last speed skating season, the IMSSC Records' List with the Inofficial World Records of the Masters, the IMSSC Rules, the Masters' International Competition Calendar, the Announcements of the International Masters' Competitions of the coming season and much other information. For several years a lot of information for the Masters has also been given on the Webpage of the IMSSC: www.imssc.org.

2.4 IMSSC Rules

Because the regulations of the International Skating Union, the ISU Rules, are designed for professional skaters and not for the non professional Master skaters in age groups there was a need for additional rules for Master competitions. The IMSSC developed such rules which are used in addition to the ISU Rules in International Masters' Competitions.

2.5 IMSSC Records

The IMSSC lists International Masters' Records since 1999. These IMSSC Records show the capability of Master skaters to reach high levels in speed skating also at higher and at a very high age. The IMSSC Records' List is issued yearly and is especially interesting for the top Master speed skaters.

2.6 Contacts to the ISU

The intention of the IMSSC was always to develop the Masters' speed skating in close cooperation with the ISU. So many contacts were established by the IMSSC to the ISU President, the ISU Vice President for Speed Skating and the ISU Technical Committee Speed Skating and several proposals were made to the ISU for promoting Masters Speed Skating.

3 ISU Masters Speed Skating Group (IMSSG)

The ISU Council reconfirmed in Nov 2003 its decision to support the development of the Masters International Speed Skating by the appointment of an ISU Masters Speed Skating Group (IMSSG). Members of this group are Dr. Volker Serini/GER (Coordinator), Jae-Seok Choi/KOR, Gaétan Rochette/CAN and Sven-Aage Svensson/NOR. This group will act as liaison between the Masters' activities and the Council of the ISU to give these activities some direction and eventually common rules which cross international boundaries. Informations about the IMSSG can be found on the Website of the IMSSG: www.imssg.org.

4 Outlook

The activities of the speed skating Masters have created a relatively well organized competition system for Masters. But nevertheless, a lot of things are to be done in the future to enlarge and to improve this system. More Master skaters in more countries should be activated. The most important IMSSC Rules should be taken up into the ISU Rules to be obligatory for International Masters Competitions in all countries. We are sure that the growth of the Masters Speed Skating will be important for the further development of the international speed skating scene.

Volker Serini/Germany, September 2005