



NEWS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Across the Board Success for this 31st Edition!

Gatineau, February 15, 2009 – Ideal temperatures, excellent trail conditions and a solid organization helped treat the 2,509 participants in the Gatineau Loppet to a noteworthy 31st edition.

The decision to change the course following last week's rains proved to be the right one. The organizers received highly positive comments from the participants about the beauty and fine condition of the course, as well as the warm and professional welcome they received.

“This 31st edition was marked by outstanding performances by several local skiers! Thanks to the unrelenting work by a well-tuned team of 500 volunteers, the skiers were treated to an exceptional course, ideal for speed. This was a truly great edition!” according to Gatineau Loppet President Alain d'Entremont.

53 km Bell freestyle

Germany's **Thomas Freimuth**, who came in third last year, wrested the 53 km Bell freestyle championship from Canadian hands. He was the first European since Czechoslovakia's Stanislav Rezac in 2005 to win this race. With a steady pace of 25.1 km per hour, he managed to cover the 53 km in 2:06:53.0 hours. He was followed less than 15 seconds later by Chelsea's **Karl Saidla**, a member of the Gatineau Loppet Board of Directors and a member of the XC Ottawa ski club. **Luc Thériault**, from Kenogami Lake, came in third with a time of 2:07:08.4 hours.

Among the women, Ottawa's **Sheila Kealy** took the gold by completing her race in 2:23:36.5 hours. A fine victory for a woman who had been racking up strong performances over the past few years but had never before managed to reach the top rung. She was followed less than a minute later by her Ski XC Ottawa team-mate **Megan McTavish** from Chelsea. Megan completed the race in 2:24:01.0 hours. Calgary's **Eva Szabo** finished third, with an official time of 2:35:59.8 hours.

Just like the day before, the 28 km went to the youth, with a second winner under 20. Young Olympian hopeful **Andrew Stewart-Jones**, from Chelsea, completed the race in only 1:07:17.2 hours. Sainte-Adèle's **Stefan Desfossés** took the silver medal with a time of 1:10:27.1 hours. Less than 8 seconds later, Gatineau's **Éric Rouleau** crossed the finish line, earning himself the bronze.

On the women's side, **Nathalie Godbout**, from St-Ferréol, earned accolades for a second consecutive year with a time of 1:20:22.9 hours. A minute later, **Karine Perrin**, from Sainte-Adèle, joined her in the arrivals area. Ottawa's **Stéphanie Rees** stepped onto the third rung of the podium for the second time in two days.

More than 350 skiers took part in the 10 km freestyle. **Alain Riel** and **Sébastien Townsend**, both from Chelsea, took the first and second places on the podium, respectively, while **Dominique Moncion-Groulx** finished third. Among the women, **Michelle Workun-Hill**, **Noémi Bérubé** and **Sandra Mortimer** finished in the lead. Michelle Workun-Hill had also won last year.

The noon-hour **Mini-Gazifère** started off amidst great excitement. Several colourful personalities were on hand to cheer on the youngsters, as well as the aptly named Billy Goat. This goat is a very popular character in Poland, the host country for this 31st edition. You had to be there to see the pride on the faces of the parents as they greeted their children at the finish line. After gulping down a nice hot chocolate, they played for almost two hours on the inflatable structures.

The Norway/Gatineau Giant Ski Competition, which took place on Saturday, treated spectators to a memorable moment thanks to the two teams that pitted themselves against one another in a friendly face-off, with smiling faces. The group consisting of representatives of **La Revue** and **Ville de Gatineau** took top honours, beating out the **Republic of Poland** team, whose captain was His Excellency Piotr Ogrodziński, Poland's Ambassador to Canada. It should be remembered that Poland was taking part for the first time. We would like to congratulate the two teams that took part in the game.

The entire Gatineau Loppet team is looking forward to seeing you from February 19 to 21, 2010 for the 32nd edition.

Until next year!

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Source:

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