



For Immediate Release

Contact:
Nancy Knutson
715-638-2637
Nancy.Knutson@Birkie.com

Bringing the Birkebeiner Legacy to Life at the Birkie

American Birkebeiner Announces 2016 Birkebeiner Warriors & Inga

Hayward, WI (February 2016) - The American Birkebeiner Ski Foundation has selected three cross-country skiers to depict the two Birkebeiner Warriors and Inga, the mother of baby Prince Haakon, an homage to the 43rd American Birkebeiner Ski Marathon race's roots.

On February 20, 2016, Duluth residents Jen Pearson, Steve Long and Bruce Derauf will portray Inga and Birkebeiner warriors, Skervald and Torstein respectively. The trio will reenact the historic flight on wooden skis in full costume along the entire 55K classic cross-country course.

The threesome will be ambassadors on the trail, encouraging both skiers and volunteers along the course route. They will be at multiple events throughout the weekend, including the Barkie Birkie on Thursday, February 18 and the Barnebirkie on Friday, February 19.

During the Birkebeiner, the warriors will carry a baby doll along the course until Main Street where they will pick up a real infant, Prince Haakon, before skiing the last two blocks with Inga to the finish line. The portrayal is a true celebration of the roots, legacy and traditions of the race.

All three skiers have taken part in the Birkie tradition for years, all competing at various times on classic and skate skis.

"For me, the Birkie is an annual touchstone: a time to reflect on my Norwegian heritage, family Birkie history, and a time to be grateful for friends and family with whom I share a love of skiing," Long, 54, said.

From talking to friends before the race, remembering previous completed races and persuading their families to participate during the weekend, the trio said the Birkebeiner has become a part of their own personal life stories. Pearson, 49, will be celebrating her 20th Birkie while Derauf, 60, will be completing his 35th Birkie.

"Whether you are kicking in a fine track with blue hard wax or skating down hills with fresh corduroy, the sport of cross-country skiing embodies an active lifestyle, enjoyment of the outdoors and year-round fitness." – Bruce Derauf

Each February more than 10,000 cross country skiers gather in Cable and Hayward, Wisconsin to take part in North America's largest and greatest ski race. To date, more than 250,000 skiers have finished Birkie ski events. Nearly 45,000 spectators and skiers gather for the Nordic sports festivities and in celebration of the courage, perseverance, character and determination of the Birkebeiner warriors, the "Birkies."

About the American Birkebeiner® Ski Foundation and Birkie® Events

Located near Hayward and Cable, Wisconsin, the American Birkebeiner Ski Foundation (ABSF), a 501(c)(3) organization, is known for its signature American Birkebeiner Ski Marathon held each February. Today, the Birkie has grown to encompass a variety of year-round, silent sport events that promote a healthy, active lifestyle for thousands of outdoor fitness enthusiasts. The ABSF also acts as steward of the legendary Birkie Trail, providing year-round grooming, mowing and maintenance to all 107 kilometers. From the iconic American Birkebeiner ski race, to the Birkie Trail Run & Trek, and Fat Bike Birkie, the ABSF and the Birkie Trail attract skiers, runners, bikers, trekkers, and hikers, from casual day-trippers to elite athletes. Learn more at www.birkie.com. *BIRKIE Ski. Run. Bike. Live!*

###