



**For Immediate Release**

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## **Birkebeinerne (The Last King) Brings the Legacy of the American Birkebeiner to Life**

### ***Proceeds to Support ABSF Capital Campaign***

**Hayward, WI (February 14, 2017)** – The American Birkebeiner Ski Foundation is pleased to announce two showings of the action-packed feature film *The Birkebeinerne (The Last King)* on February 25 & 26 at the Park Center Theater in Hayward. The North American premiere of the film took place in Hayward in 2016 and was enjoyed by hundreds of Birkie skiers and fans.

*Birkebeinerne (The Last King)* is rooted in Norwegian history and tells the story of the very legacy upon which the American Birkebeiner ski race is based. In 1206, Norway was ravaged by civil war, and a boy, Prince Haakon Haakonsson, the illegitimate baby son of a Norwegian king, was guarded in secrecy. He was a boy that half the kingdom was out to kill and whom two brave Birkebeiner warriors, so called because of their birch bark leggings, vowed to protect with their very lives by skiing the infant prince over the Norwegian mountains to safety. *The Birkebeinerne (The Last King)* is the story of the escape which forever changed the history of Norway. The Norwegian feature film is rated R and is sub-titled in English.

*Birkebeinerne (The Last King)* has two showings at the Park Center Theater in Hayward, Wisconsin as part of the American Birkebeiner's week of Nordic festivities: Saturday, February 25 at 7:00pm and Sunday, February 26 at 12:00pm. Tickets are \$10 and will be sold at the door. Full concessions are available at each showing. All proceeds from ticket sales of the film will be used to support the American Birkebeiner Ski Foundation's Phase 2 Capital Campaign and their mission of promoting healthy, active lifestyles for people of all ages.

The action film inspired by actual events in Norwegian history is directed by Nils Gaup, who won an Oscar nomination for another wintry Norwegian film called *Veiviseren (The Pathfinder)*. A Paradox Rettigheter AS production, distributed by Magnolia Pictures, the *Birkebeinerne* film stars Kristofer Hivju (Torstein) and Jakob Oftebro (Skjervald) in the two main roles of Birkebeiner heroes Torstein and Skjervald. Hivju (Torstein) is perhaps best known for his role as wildling leader, Tormund Giantsbane, on HBO's fantasy series *Game of Thrones*.

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Each February and estimated 40,000 skiers and spectators gather in Cable and Hayward, Wisconsin to take part in North America's largest cross-country ski race, the American Birkebeiner. In homage to the races roots, every year the American Birkebeiner reenacts the historic flight of the Birkebeiner warriors, Torstein and Skjervald, when two skiers in full traditional costume and on wooden skis reenact the escape along the entire 55K classic cross-country race course, surrounded by thousands of other determined skiers. Along the race course, the warriors are joined by Prince Haakon's mother, Inga. The Birkebeiner warriors carry a baby doll throughout the journey and pick up an infant child to ski with them over the International Bridge, toward the finish line, and the thousands of cheering fans on Hayward's snow-covered Main Street. It is a true celebration of the roots, legacy and traditions of the race.

An iconic world-class, International, sporting event, for over 40-years the American Birkebeiner has helped shape the lives of tens of thousands of participants from elite athletes to recreational citizen skiers. To date, over 250,000 skiers have finished American Birkebeiner ski events.

### **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](http://www.birkie.com). *BIRKIE Ski. Run. Bike. Live!*

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