



For Immediate Release

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American Birkebeiner Ski Foundation Announces Birkie 2020 Inga & Warriors Contest Winners

Minnesota Trio Carries on Longstanding Birkie Tradition.

Hayward, Wis. (January 9, 2020) – The American Birkebeiner Ski Foundation (ABSF) is pleased to announce the winners of the 2020 Birkie Warriors & Inga Contest. The selected cross-country skiers will re-enact the 800-year-old legend that inspired the creation of the American Birkebeiner ski race, now celebrating its 46th year on February 22, 2020. This year's winning trio consists of David Kettula of International Falls, MN, as Skjervald; Vergil Pinckney of Rochester, MN, as Torstein; Tasha Pinckney of Rochester, MN, as Inga; and Baby Caelan Pinckney as Prince Haakon.

"Please join us in congratulating and welcoming this year's contest winners" said Ben Popp, ABSF, Executive Director. "Throughout Birkie week this trio brings to life the legacy of the Birkebeiners. Torstein, Skjervald, and Inga are important threads in the greater fabric of the overall Birkie experience."

The contest winners were carefully selected by judges who know exactly what it takes to ski the 55-kilometer Birkie Classic Trail on wooden skis and in full period costume. Each year, the contest judges are none other than the previous year's contest winners.



Each group who enters the Warriors & Inga contest is required to submit an essay outlining their skiing abilities and why they should be selected as the next "Birkie Royalty." Together, the Kettula/Pinckney trio has a long history of Birkie week participation and a definite case of Birkie Fever! The 2020 Slumberland American Birkebeiner will be the thirtieth Birkie for David Kettula (Skjervald). When he lined up on the start line 30-years ago, it was the very first ski race he'd ever participated in and he hasn't missed a Birkie race since.

"We were all together when I received the email that said we made it. We all let out a Birkie yell. It is a once-in-a-lifetime honor" stated Kettula.

Kettula's daughter, Tasha Pinckney (Inga), has an equally impressive Birkie track-record skiing her tenth Birkie in 2020. Pinckney has also skied two Kortelopet races, along with four Junior Birkie and ten Barnebirkie races.

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“When I found out we won, I couldn’t stop smiling,” Pinckney recalled. “I started thinking about training on wooden skis, what costumes we would wear, and when the elite skiers might pass us! I’ve been skiing since I could walk and am so excited to portray Inga for my tenth Birkie and cross the finish line with my son,” she continued.

Tasha’s husband, Vergil Pinckney (Torstein), did not grow up as a cross-country skier, but it didn’t take long for him to catch Birkie Fever after meeting Tasha; 2020 will be Vergil’s second Birkie.

“I married into a skiing family but had never cross-country skied before I met my wife,” said Pinckney. “After I watched my wife and father-in-law ski the 2015 Birkie, I started to get the fever. I definitely have it now and am honored to represent the warriors who saved the Last King of Norway.”

In addition to skiing the entire 55-kilometer Birkie Classic race, the trio will pick-up baby Caelan Pinckney (Prince Haakon), Tasha and Vergil’s son and David’s grandson, at the American Birkebeiner International Bridge and carry him across the finish line on Hayward’s Main Street to signify the safe delivery of Prince Haakon to Trondheim, Norway.

February 22, 2020, the date of the 46th Slumberland American Birkebeiner, also happens to be Caelan Pinckney’s first birthday. The entire Birkie community is pleased to share a hearty Happy Birthday with this young warrior prince and his family.

About the American Birkebeiner® Ski Foundation and Birkie® Events

Located near Hayward and Cable, Wisconsin, the American Birkebeiner Ski Foundation, a 501(c)(3) organization, is known for its signature American Birkebeiner Ski Marathon held each February. Today, the Birkie brand has grown to encompass a year-round lifestyle that provides healthy, active events for thousands of outdoor fitness enthusiasts of all levels. www.Birkie.com

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