



**For Immediate Release**

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## **Sonnesyn and Hagenbuch Top the Podium in the 47<sup>th</sup> Slumberland American Birkebeiner**

### ***Solid Field of American Elites Vie for the Championship Title***

**HAYWARD, WI (Feb. 27, 2021)** – With temps hovering around the freezing mark, the morning's racecourse was fast and the competition hot in the 47<sup>th</sup> Slumberland American Birkebeiner (Birkie). In this unique year, the annual Birkie ski race was completely modified from the traditional point to point race – traditionally American Birkebeiner Trailhead to downtown Hayward, WI - to a shortened 43K looped course with the race starting and finishing at the American Birkebeiner Trailhead, Cable, WI. Johnny Hagenbuch, Ketchum, ID, and Alayna Sonnesyn, Plymouth, MN, were the first elite skiers to cross the finish line in Saturday's elite skate technique race.

It was a race to the finish as a trio of male skiers fought their way up the bridge to their descent toward the finish line. Hagenbuch finished with a time of 1:54:15, with Sam Wood mere seconds behind at 1:54:18, and Tyler Kornfield taking the third podium spot with a time of 1:54:20.

In the women's skate race, Alayna Sonnesyn, crossed the line with a time of 2:06:45, with Rosie Frankowski, Anchorage, AK, closing in with a time of 2:06:49, and Caitlin Gregg clinching her third place finish with a time of 2:08:17. This is Sonnesyn's second Slumberland American Birkebeiner title having won the race in 2019. Gregg is no stranger to the podium with a record five Slumberland American Birkebeiner championships in here career.

### **2021 Slumberland American Birkebeiner Skate/Freestyle Race Championship Podiums**

#### **Men's 43K Race**

- 1 – Johnny Hagenbuch, Sun Valley Ski Education Foundation – Ketchum, ID – 1:54:15.2
- 2 – Sam Wood, Sun Valley Ski Education Foundation -- Ketchum, ID – 1:54:18.6
- 3 – Tyler Kornfield, Alaska Pacific University Nordic Ski Center -- Anchorage, AK – 1:54:20.3

#### **Women's 43K Classic Race**

- 1 – Alayna Sonnesyn, Stratton Mountain School – Plymouth, MN 2:06:45.0
- 2 – Rosie Frankowski , Alaska Pacific University Nordic Ski Center – Anchorage, Ak – 2:06:49.1
- 3 – Caitlin Gregg, Loppet Nordic Racing – Minneapolis, MN – 2:08:17.6

The 2021 Slumberland American Birkebeiner and Kortelopet races were unlike any found in any other year with no international competition; no spectators; no busing; no indoor gathering or warm spaces, masking in the start/aid stations/finish zone; skiers needing to be self-reliant by transporting themselves to the start area, carrying their own energy needs and hydration vessels; social distancing in the start and finish areas; and an extensive list of safety protocols and measures in place for the safety of participants, volunteers, staff and the greater communities.

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Since the first American Birkebeiner ski race in 1973, over 250,000 skiers have completed American Birkebeiner Ski Foundation (ABSF) cross-country ski races. While 2021 participant numbers were down from previous years, the ABSF offered both virtual and in-person race options to all registered participants. Fifty percent of skiers chose to ski in-person over the five-days of race week (February 24 – 28, 2021) with the remaining 50% opting to ski virtually from points around the globe. Virtual skiers must complete their events by Sunday, February 28, the end of Birkie race week. The ABSF worked with 48 Birkie Virtual Partner locations across the United States to provide a unique Birkie experience for skiers choosing not to travel to NW Wisconsin for Birkie week. Skiers in no-snow locations had the option of cycling, running, rowing, or swimming their way to their Birkie finish line.

Saturday's 26-kilometer Kortelopet race also followed a modified looped course starting and finishing at the American Birkebeiner Trailhead. The Kortelopet has a long legacy of elite skiers winning the race including Olympic gold medalist Jessie Diggins' who won the Kortelopet twice in the earlier days of her skiing career.

#### **Kortelopet 26K Race –**

- 1<sup>st</sup> Men's Skate – Kieran Mullen, Hazelhurst, WI – 1:16:43.2
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Men's Skate – Declan Rodefeld, Blaine, MN – 1:17:56.5
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Men's Skate – Nick Kjome, Maple Grove, MN – 1:19:26.1
  
- 1<sup>st</sup> Women's Skate – Nina Chosy, Madison, WI – 1:31:07.8
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Women's Skate – Liv Fabel, St. Paul, MN – 1:35:12.7
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Women's Skate – Audrey Lahammer, Red Wing, MN – 1:35:54.0

Race action continues on Sunday, February 28, 2021 with the 43K Slumberland American Birkebeiner and Kortelopet 26K classic technique championship races at the American Birkebeiner Trailhead in Cable, WI.

Live streaming of the race begins at 8:00am on Sunday, February 28, 2021 on Birkie.com or on the Birkie Facebook page. Rebroadcasts of the entire elite races, with commentary, will be webcast at 10:30am – recorded elite men, and 12:30pm recorded elite women. Recorded races may be watched after that time. Full details on Birkie.com.

Next up is the Fat Bike Birkie on March 13, 2021 at the American Birkebeiner Trailhead in Cable, WI. The American Birkebeiner Ski Foundation has a year-round schedule of events to promote a healthy, active Birkie lifestyle. Visit [www.Birkie.com](http://www.Birkie.com) for a complete listing of 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 100+ kilometers. Learn more at [www.birkie.com](http://www.birkie.com). BIRKIE Ski. Run. Bike. Live!

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