

Masters' ALLROUND GAMES 2008 in Erfurt/Germany organized like World Championships

At the 17th Masters' International Speed Skating Allround Games 2008 the large number of 207 participants, 43 Ladies and 164 Men from 13 Nations, competed in the wonderful Gunda-Niemann-Stirnemann-Icehall in Erfurt/Germany at 29 February – 01 March 2008.

Unfortunately I could not take part in these Games because of knee problems, but nevertheless I had to be early in Erfurt for the Sessions of the ISU Masters Speed Skating Working Group (IMSSG) and the International Masters' Speed Skating Committee (IMSSC) which were



planned for Wednesday and Thursday. So I came already to Erfurt on Tuesday with my wife to take part in the Sessions and to be spectator of the Games afterwards. Many competitors also came early in the competition week for getting familiar with the ice and for having their final training on the competition ice. They told me that they were enjoying very much their training on the good ice in the wonderful icehall.

We had taken one of the official competition hotels, the Mercure Hotel Erfurt Altstadt and were very satisfied with this hotel: Nice calm rooms, good breakfast and the hotel situated at the border of the historical city center. It was fine that participants from many nations and also members of the IMSSC were in the hotel too. So we could hear a lot about Masters' Speed Skating in other countries, about successes as well as about problems.



It was an advantage that the old city center was so close by the hotel. So we could make several trips into the nice old town center and see many interesting historical buildings of Erfurt. Especially interesting are the Townhall, the Zitadelle Petersberg and a lot of old churches, for example the St. Mariendom and the Severikirche, landmarks of Erfurt, the old Thuringian capital. I still remember well my first competition Erfurt. It was at the

German Masters' Speed Skating Championships 1992, still on the old 333 m open air skating rink, about two years after the reunification of Western and Eastern Germany. Since this time Erfurt developed again to a very nice town with many well restored historical buildings.

Wednesday and Thursday I was busy with the sessions of the IMSSG and the IMSSC. There are always to discuss a lot of problems at these sessions. And there is to decide upon many questions for the next season. Often it is difficult to discuss the problems enough intensive and at the same time not to have sessions longer as planned. Especially hard was the IMSSC Session of five hours for the IMSSC Members, who themselves skated in the competition. They still had to go onto the ice for their final training after the session, because the competitions already started at the next day, Friday.



Unfortunately we had a severe incident with Russian participants of the Games at the end of the IMSSC Session because of problems of the Masters in Russia. We had to

discuss this incident at an extraordinary IMSSC Session which led to the cancelling of the planned Allround Games 2010 in Kolomna. The IMSSC decided that the Allround Games now will be held 2010 in Innsbruck/Austria and 2011 in Calgary/Canada. And from the next season we will have Masters' Sprint Games additionally. The 1st Masters' Sprint Games were decided to be held in Inzell/Germany. Further results of the sessions you can be read on the Website of the IMSSG and the IMSSC, www.imssg.org and www.imssc.org.

The Drawing was held in the wonderful historical Townhall of Erfurt. Nearly all skaters took part with their coaches and companions, it was a great happening. At first there were speeches of a Representative of the town Erfurt, of the President of the Thuringian Ice Federation and of myself as representative of the IMSSG. After the very well organized drawing the Welcome Drink also took place in the Townhall. In a short time a lot of friends could be welcomed personally and we could feel the tension of the competitors before the competition on Friday.



At the next day there was celebrated a very nice Opening Ceremony of the Games in the Gunda-Niemann-Stirnemann-Hall with an interesting, good speech of the President of the Thuringian Ice Federation. Skating children on the ice rink were bearing signs with the names of the participating Nations and behind them other children bearing large flags of these Nations and surrounding the iceoval two times.

And then the competitions were started. The ice was very good according to the meaning of the competitors. The hall was nice decorated with the flags of the participating Nations. And the atmosphere was very good among the competitors. One of the reasons for a good feeling in the hall is the harmonic construction with the wooden arches which bear the roof and with the nice arranged seats for spectators in bright colours.



There were a lot of very interesting and exciting races, for example the races of Roberto Sighel/ITA M 40, the famous Italian skater, World Champion Allround 1992 in Calgary, with Hubert Kreutz and René van Hofslot. Still today Roberto Sighel has a perfect skating



style. Very narrow the races in F 40 between Janine Slootstra/NED and Anja Bollaart, difference about 0,506 points, in M 45 between Martin Haire/USA and Jan Duif/NED, both 162,... points, in M 50 between Victor van den Hoff/NED, Ragnvald Næss/NOR and Geir Hestad/NOR, all 171,... points, and in M 75 between Toon Kooijmans/NED and Arne Foldvik/NOR, both 193,... points.

After the Masters' Games in Calgary/CAN last year with 288 participants on four days, where 93 IMSSC Records were broken (nearly all possible records), it seemed impossible to lower many of them in 2007/2008. But nevertheless 14 IMSSC Records could be lowered by Tatjana Sidorova/RUS F 70, the former bronze medallist at 500 m at the Olympic Games 1964 in Innsbruck (3 IMSSC Records), Piet Hijlkema/NED M 35 (2 IMSSC Records), Martin Haire/USA M 45 (3 IMSSC Records), Jan Duif/NED M 45 (1 IMSSC Record), Ragnvald Næss/NOR M 50 (1 IMSSC Record), and with the highest number of records Wim Brand M 65 (4 IMSSC Records). Congratulation to these top results!

The welcome committee, the jury and the competition office were excellent. The competitions were conducted very well. The protocols, which were given to the competitors at the victory ceremony in the evening, were perfect. Only some coaches had problems to get the results of their skaters early enough for coaching.

The victory ceremony was held after the banquet. There was a problem with the banquet, because there were not enough sausages and meat available in the beginning at once, as about 300 participants wanted to get sausages or meat at the buffet in a short time. The reason was that the sausages and the meat were cooked on the grill during the banquet. It was fine that the drinks were free. At the victory ceremony there were a lot of photographers standing before the honoured skaters and for the spectators in the banquet hall nearly nothing was to see from this ceremony unfortunately. A good idea was to show nice videos from the competitions on large screens in the banquet hall. At the end of the banquet there was music and a lot of gay skaters were dancing. But also many interesting talks were made between the participants of the different Nations.



To sum up my impressions of the organization and conducting of the 17th Masters' Speed Skating Games 2008 in Erfurt, I must say that these Games were organized by the Thuringian Ice Federation with tremendous efforts and **as perfect as World Championships**. It was kind from Mr. Noack, the President of the Thuringian Ice Federation to push us to convince the ISU Council that the name Games should be changed to World Championships. He proposed an action with signatures of the participants at the banquet, to help to

reach this target very soon. Thank you, Mr. Noack and thank you all coworkers in making these Games such a great success. We hope that we can come back to Erfurt soon under the name "Masters' Allround World Championships".

Volker Serini/Germany

Further Impressions at the Masters Games 2008 in Erfurt

