



Austrian National Championships Mass Start  
14<sup>th</sup> January  
By Damon Morton

Hochfilzen mass start. 5 x 1.5km loops prone, prone, standing, standing. On the day of the race it snowed, hard, all day. When we arrived at the range they were bulldozing the snow off the road and when we drove through the car park there were walls of snow three meters high on either side of us.

Sighting in the rifle was difficult because we could not see the targets very well through the heavy falling snow and we lay frozen on the mats trying to see. Dad also could not see the targets really well through his crappy little scope, so this meant I had to shoot a really tight group and after 15 shots I had made a hole in the centre large enough to see.

On my first lap of the race I kept to the middle of the field, so as not to break a pole, until we got to the hills where I was able to overtake most of the people and came into the first shoot in 3<sup>rd</sup> position. My shooting was very good and I missed just one and was the first one out of the range. This gave me a good lead over the other competitors, with the exception of one guy who shot clean giving him a 20 second lead over me.

Coming into the second prone I had made up 10 seconds on first place and was feeling confident. I shot clean and really fast and was out of the range in first position. Because of my great shooting I was now 45 seconds ahead and increased my lead over the next three laps with the help of my standing where I hit 3 out of 5, then 4 out of 5. By the end of the race I had won by a bit over 2 minutes. Unfortunately I would not 'officially' win anything because it was an Austrian champs and I am not Austrian. So I was disqualified along with every other person of foreign nationality from the official results.

Am racing in Trin, Switzerland, in a few days, so looking forward to that.

On Saturday we will race a 10km Sprint and I am racing in U19/Youth. This will be a tough race as it is 4 km longer than I have been racing lately and is the official World Cup IBU distance. This will be my first 10 km Sprint Biathlon event. I feel I have the fitness and mental strength to handle it though.

On Sunday we will do another 10 km, but this time as a Mass start with PP SS (four shoots) and 5 loops of 2km. It will be the same distance for Junior Men, Youth and Senior Men, so I will feel like one of the little kids again in the Mass start.

Will write again after the next race. Until then keep warm and consider that I'm not as it is - 16 degrees here in Obertilliach presently. Today is a rest day and as I have finished some homework I am now going to catch the chairlift up the downhill slope for a rodel with Alex.



Right – "Ah, How Sweet, Lane No. 1"