

The Road to Biathlon World Youth & Junior Championships 2011.

Austria Cup Eisenerz. 22nd January 2011.

No pressure but can you go top 10?

The last preparation race before WYJCH was at Eisenerz in Steiermark, Austria. These guys really know about mining! We had heard about the mountain of Iron Ore that was being cut away and thought that this would be interesting to see it as well as race somewhere new, catch up with our new Austrian friends and Dyllan to continue the friendly rivalry he had struck up with some of the other racers.



As usual the top Austrians were on the start list including Martin Maier who won the individual at the 2010 WYJCH. Could Dyllan shoot well enough to get a top 10 finish? It would take a strong skiing performance over the 12.5km and only a few penalties.

When we arrived at our accommodation (just meters from the course) it was snowing. It continued to snow for official training and in the evening when I returned from the team captains meeting it was still snowing. The course had been quite slow during training and depending on how much it snowed overnight would depend on how hard the race would be.

In the morning...still snowing but not as heavy. Temperature: minus 7. Course: firm with new snow on top. Hopefully it will not get cut up too much once the 70 competitors have skied over it 5 times each.

As I wished Dyllan all the best in the warm up area before taking my spot on the range he gave me a look...it read; "This is gunna hurt!" The hurt on many competitors' faces showed through as they completed their 5 laps. Dyllan's first prone, 1 penalty and his first standing 2 penalties. I went out onto the track and encouraged him to stay focused on the range. It would depend now on how well the others shot and what Dyllan could do in the last 2 shoots to not slip down in the placings. I'm sure that this was going thru Dyllan's head too. We had discussed at length that with his ski times he could not afford any more than 4 penalties, less if possible. He was already up to 3.

Second prone clean! Yes! Back on track. I had been recording the number of penalties of the other competitors in his age group. Some were up to 4 with 2 shoots to go; the guy who was skiing the fastest was up to 6 with 1 shoot to go. Second standing; 1 penalty making a total of 4. The results would be very interesting. Out on the track I encouraged Dyllan to keep pushing and come home strong... 4 penalties was OK. He crossed the finish line and confirmed what his expression at the start of the race had predicted..."That bloody hurt!" We anxiously waited for the results.....

8th! 48:46.0 +4:48.9 10.96% behind. Not a 10% behind but top 10 result! **Brilliant!**

Time for some R&R and sightseeing in Salzburg before joining Alex, Lucy & Nick in Czech Republic for the WYJCH.

Toscha Stopar
Biathlon Coach

