

Ganbare! -頑張れ!-

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Middle distance Qualification

7th August, 2005 – Suganuma

After days of final preparations and impatient waiting for the event the world's top orienteers are peaking for has finally begun. The Middle distance Qualification in Suganuma opened the programme of the 22nd World Championships. This year it is the first time that this premiere orienteering event has been held in Asia and the whole world has been eagerly expecting what it was going to bring. For a long time there has been speculation about the heat and humidity, but also big steep hills and rough forest overgrown with thick bamboo grass. The Middle distance Qualification was to be the first answer to all the questions and speculation. And it proved them right. For most of the teams the race brought nothing new, it was exactly what they expected, only that the heat was less intensive than many had feared.



Sweden's Hanna Palm running between the rice fields after the drink control
(Photo: Lucie Navarova)

Heyday for French runners

French runners dominated in two of the three heats after Damien Renard and Thierry Gueorgiou proved unbeatable. The other heat was topped by Norway's Anders Nordberg who, after rather poor performances at the Norwegian WOC selection races, seems to have got back in the sort of shape were used to see him in during the first part of the season.

Double Swiss victory

As in the men's class, even in women's one nation could celebrate victory in two of the three Heats. This time it was the Swiss women who proved to be the strongest and left their opponents behind. Apart from the clear favourite Simone Niggli in Heat B, it was the young Martina Fritchy who had a great run in Heat A, which catapulted her into the lead. For Fritchy, who did not run so well in the first round of the World Cup and was suffering from a foot injury in June, this race was a very important test of her shape and great boost to her self-confidence. In Heat C the fastest to the finish was another youngster: Finland's Minna Kauppi. This result means the Finn will be the last starter in the Middle distance Final on Thursday.

Men-A			Men-B			Men-C		
1	Anders Nordberg	NOR	1	Thierry Gueorgiou	FRA	1	Damien Renard	FRA
2	Chris Terkelsen	DEN	2	Jarkko Huovila	FIN	2	Gernot Kerschbaumer	AUT
3	Kalle Dalin	SWE	3	Daniel Hubmann	SUI	3	Jorgen Rostrup	NOR
4	Matthias Muller	SUI	4	Roman Ryapolov	RUS	4	Simonas Krepsta	LTU
5	Klaus Schgaguler	ITA	5	Oystein Kristiansen	NOR	5	Mats Troeng	SWE
6	Petteri Muukkonen	FIN	6	Ingo Horst	GER	6	Troels Nielsen	DEN
7	Olle Karner	EST	7	David Andersson	SWE	7	Nicolas Girsch	FRA
8	Karl Dravitski	NZL	8	Michal Hora?ek	CZE	8	Janusz Porzycz	POL
9	Marius Mazulis	LTU	9	Kiril Nikolov	BUL	9	Matthias Merz	SUI
10	Lukas Bartak	SVK	10	Mikkel Lund	DEN	10	Michele Tavernaro	ITA
11	Rob Walter	AUS	11	Oskars Zernis	LAT	11	Marco Povia	POR
12	Ewan McCarthy	GBR	12	Marian Davidik	SVK	11	Shunsuke Konno	JPN
13	Francois Gonon	FRA	13	Oliver Johnson	GBR	13	Ondrej Pijak	SVK
14	Jan Zazgornik	AUT	14	Julian Dent	AUS	14	David Shepherd	AUS
15	Toma? Dlabaja	CZE	15	Yoshinori Takahashi	JPN	15	Darren Ashmore	NZL

Bad day for Hausken, Fagerudd and Omeltchenko

Although it is often said that for top runners it is almost impossible not to qualify in the Finals at a World Champs, this time there were a few who did not manage to deal with the challenges of the course and did not make it. In the men's Final of the Middle distance we will not see the Ukrainian Yuri Omeltchenko or Finland's Kim Fagerudd. Among the women it will be the Norwegian Anne Margrethe Hausken, one of the runners counted among the favourites in the race before the champs started, who will be missing in the start list after she ended up just outside the top 15 in Heat C, in 16th position.

A good day for home runners

One of the questions asked before the World Champs started was how good the Japanese runners will be on their home ground. Now after the first day we have the answer: They are not the best, but they can do much better than in other terrains. If last year they finally they had only 2 runners in the Finals, this year, after the very first Qualification, the number is 4 as only two members of the team were actually unable to qualify.

So who are the Japanese who will run the final on Thursday: Yoshinori Takahashi and Shunsuke Konno in the men's; Yoko Bamba and Shihoko Ochiai in the women's.

On Thursday we will see what they can do in the Final.

Long Distance is My Next Aim

The Frenchman Thierry Gueorgiou now aims for the Long distance

Over the last two years in the Middle distance the Frenchman Thierry Gueorgiou has won everything he could. He has won the World Champion title twice, he is also the reigning European Champion, and this year in Germany he won the World Games. In Middle distance he has reached perfection.

Looking at the results, you seem to once again be more than ready for the champs.

Yes. I think so. It is always important to start the championships with a good race. So I made sure I was 100% focused on my orienteering and ran a flawless race. I didn't run the whole course at full-speed but on the first part of the course I pushed hard, as if it were a final. Only at the refreshment control did I slow down a bit and finished the course running a bit easier. I almost walked on the big climb in the final loop to keep my legs fresh for tomorrow.

That's another thing I would like to ask you about: this year is the first time you will start in the Long distance at the World Championships. I remember that last year when we discussed that, you told me you were not ready yet. So now you are?

It is difficult to say. I have no big goals in the Long distance this year. I just want to try it and see how good I can be. I want to get the experience and I think it is important for my sport career in the future. Tomorrow in the Qualification I will take it a bit easier and carry drink with me out on the course. The Final will be tough, of course, but I hope I will be able to perform well.



(Photo: Lucie Navarova)



Shunsuke Konno passing through the rice fields before heading in the final loop.

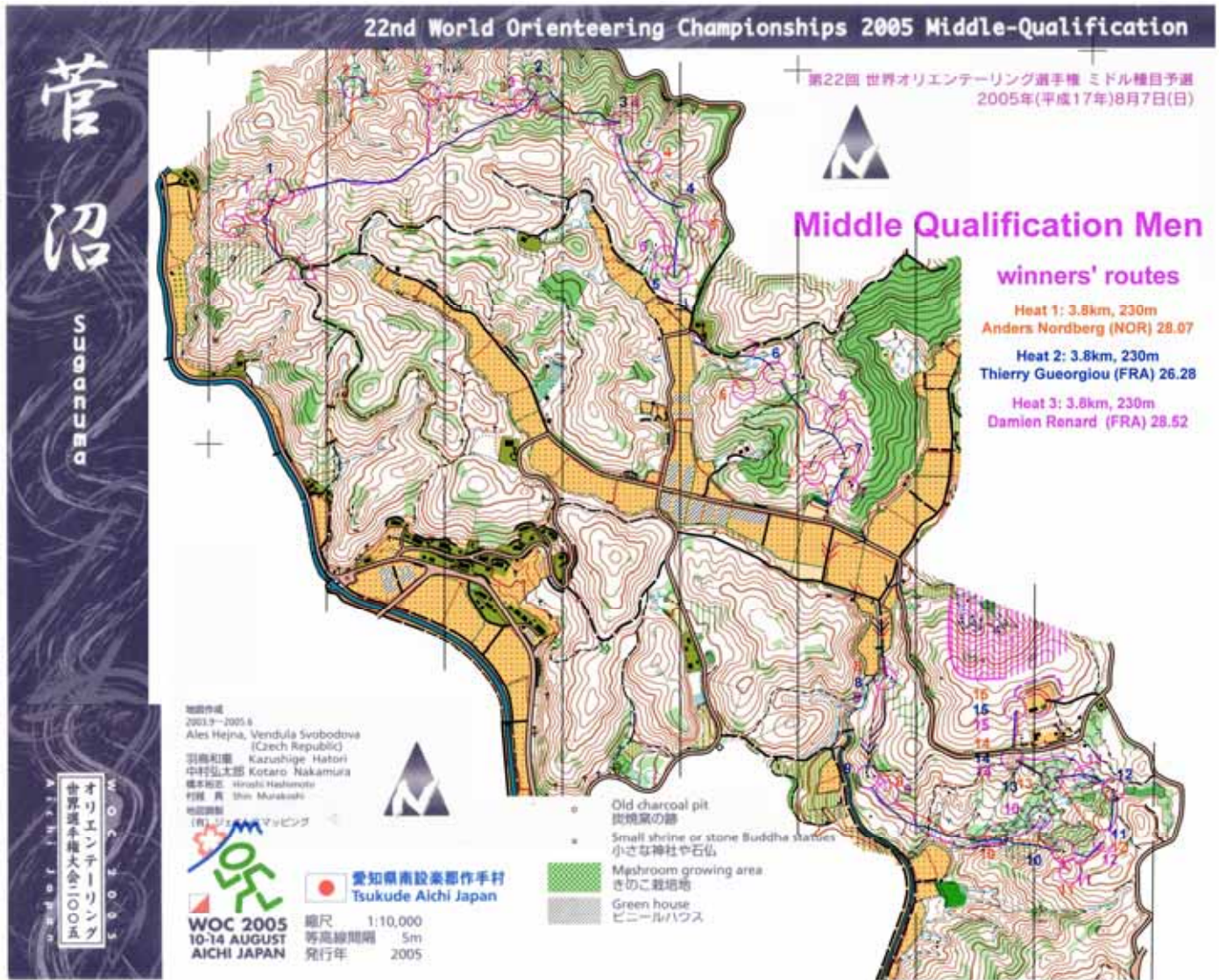
(Photo: Lucie Navarova)

What do you think makes orienteering in Japan special? There are a few things which make it different from what we experience in Europe, right?

Yes. Basically there are three problems you can face. The main one is to be really careful about the right route-choice selection. Another is to be careful about where you leave the ridges to go down to the controls, but today we faced something new. On one of the legs it was possible to run fast on the slope, contouring. That was my first time in Japan I could run at full speed on the slope in a nice forest. There's always something new to learn.

Long Distance Qualification Next Up

Today the Long distance Qualification is the next event on the World Championship programme. The venue is again Suganuma. Some of the runners we saw in the Qualification for Middle will appear at the start line again – the clear winners from the Middle distance Qualification Thierry Gueorgiou and Simone Niggli among them. However, there will be quite a few other elite runners for whom this race will be their 2005 World Championship debut. In the men's class we will keep a special watch on two strong Finns Jani Lakanen and Mats Haldin, as well as Sweden's Emil Wingstedt, Norway's Holger Hott Johansen and Russia's Andrei Khramov. In the women's class it will be the strong Finn Heli Jukkola and Sweden's Karolina Arewang-Hojsgaard who will set out on their first run in the champs.



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