



Cross Country Ontario Race Report

**Event: Nordic
World
Championships**

**Location: Oslo,
Norway**

Race: Classic Team Sprint

Date: March 2, 2011

Kieran Jones, CCO Events Reporter

Ontario's Devon Kershaw has made cross country skiing history, combining with Alex Harvey to win the first ever World Championship medal for Canada.

Kershaw, a member of the Canadian National Ski Team was paired with fellow CNST member Harvey to create an unbeatable duo in the Team Sprint event at World Championships in Oslo, Norway, Wednesday.

Kershaw, who hails from the Northern Ontario mining town of Sudbury, Ontario, and is a member of the Ona-Wa-Su ski club was the lead skier for pair in the two-person 6-lap sprint race.

After finishing 4th in the same event a year ago at the Olympics, in skate technique, the pair was among the top teams in the event, but far from the favourites. Home-town Norwegians Ola Vigen Hattestad and Petter Northug were considered a serious threat, and the Russian pairing of Olympic classic sprint gold and silver medalist's Nikita Kruikov and Alexander Panzhinskiy were heavily favoured as well.

And in the first 100 meters of the Canadians semi-final, it looked like all was lost. Kershaw tripped up, and lost a ski, and had to turn back to pick it up. By the time he recovered, Kershaw was off the back of the pack, and had some work to do.

But the pace was slow, and Kershaw reeled the other skiers in until he was safely sitting in near the front of the group when he tagged off to Harvey for the first time, and the two safely emerged from the semi-final in second place, which guaranteed them a spot in the final.

While Kershaw looked a little shaky in the semi, during the final he was rock solid. With the pace high but manageable from the beginning, Kershaw successfully navigated each exchange and lap, staying out of trouble and in contact with the lead teams, Sweden,



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Norway, Finland and Russia. Finally on the second last lap, Finland's Sami Jauhojaervi leaped away from the pack, leaving everyone scrambling, including Kershaw.

Instead of panicking, Kershaw skied strongly, staying tight with Northug, and tagged off to Harvey in third place, a little over three seconds back of Finland's Ville Nousainin.

However, Harvey and Hattestad, Northug's Norwegian teammate, as well as Germany's Tim Tsharnke reeled in the Finn, and dispatched him on the final uphill.

Even then, things looked dicey for the Canadians – the Tsharnke made an attempt to cut in front of Harvey, who held his ground just before the descent into the stadium.

Harvey and Hattestad were shoulder to shoulder coming into the finishing straight, but the Norwegian was unable to match the power and tempo of Harvey, and the 22-year old crossed the line for the victory, straight into the arms of Kershaw, leaving the Norwegians with silver, and the Russians with bronze.

Meanwhile, another Ontario athlete, Perianne Jones of Almonte, Ontario, teamed up with Daria Gaiazova to battle the best in the world.

Jones, a member of Nakkertok Ski Club, was a surprise last-minute addition to the team, as it was expected Chandra Crawford would get the call. However, after Jones finished one spot behind Crawford in last weeks' freestyle sprint, and then finished 39th in the 10 k classic earlier this week to Crawfords 52nd, it was the natural, if difficult, choice.

During the final, Jones skied the opening leg, and immediately following the start, it was clear that the Finns, Swedes, Norwegians, Italians and Slovenians were in a different league than the other five teams.

Gaiazova and Jones then hunkered down for a battle with Germany, Japan, Russia and the U.S. for the entire 6-lap race. Coming into the final exchange, Jones was at the front of the group, and tagged off to Gaiazova, who managed to best Germany's Nicole Fessel at the line.

Jones has now recorded two sixth place finishes in the Team Sprint classic at World Championships – in 2009 in Liberec, Czech Republic, she was paired with Sara Renner,



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and the two finished sixth.

Racing at Nordic World Championships in Oslo action continues this week, with the women's 4x5 k relay Thursday, the men's 4x10 k relay Friday, women's 30 k freestyle Saturday, and the wraps up Sunday with the men's 50 k freestyle, an event steeped in history in Norway.

Cross Country Ontario (CCO) is the Provincial Sports Organization for cross country skiing in Ontario. Our organization is divided into four geographical ski districts: Southern Ontario, Northern Ontario, Lake Superior, and the National Capital, representing 81 clubs and 16,000 individual members.

Cross Country Ontario provides the framework for Ontario cross country ski clubs and their individual members to participate in national programs established by the National Sport Organization, Cross Country Canada (CCC). The Ontario-based National Development Centre is located in Thunder Bay, Ontario.

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