

Victoire à la Gatineau Loppet 2010

Contributed by Administrator
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No translation available.20-02-10 - 1er au 49km style libre de la Gatineau Worldloppet avec un chrono de 2hr 50minutes.

Blame it on the snow.

Skiers at Saturday's opening day of the Gatineau Loppet said the lack of the white stuff this winter might have been why the race was a lot less crowded this year.

The weekend-long event, which included Saturday's 27K and 49K classic races and continues Sunday with skating races, saw a drop of some 500 entrants compared with the average turnout of 2,500 in recent years.

"Conditions haven't been ideal all season," former Olympic biathlete Lise Meloche said Saturday at the finish line of the 29K classic, where her stepson, Chris McMahon, 17, finished second to repeat winner Samuel Dostie-Menard, 18, of Gatineau.

"I don't think people are as geared up to race. They see that there's no snow downtown and figure the trails in the Gatineau Park are as barren,"

It did snow Saturday, but that actually made things more difficult for many skiers.

"The tracks were full of snow, which made it hard to get going," said Dostie-Menard, who finished almost 20 minutes slower than his winning time last year.

"We ended up getting out of the tracks and skiing in the middle of the parkway after a snowmobile went by."

Dostie-Menard and McMahon were together until the 15K point, when the Gatineau skier pulled away.

Genevieve Masson of Longueuil, Que., finished first in the women's division, crossing the line more than five minutes ahead of her nearest competitor.

"I'm really happy with my race," said Masson, who was fourth here two years ago.

The men's 49K race looked like it was going to come down to a photo finish among a pack of eight skiers. Then, with 4K to go, Phil Shaw of Rosemere, Que., surged ahead and never looked back.

Shaw came home in 2:50:53.8, 44 seconds ahead of Stefan Desfosses of St-Adele, Que. (2:51:37.1), who had led most of the way. Frederic Grandjean of Switzerland took third spot (2:53:25).

"Yeah, it was sticky snow today," said Shaw, who finished 25 minutes slower than he did last year when he took second place. "But when you're a crazy avid skier like me, you're used to every kind of condition."

The enigmatic Shaw credited his bottle of power gel, which he'd taped to the inside of his tights, for giving him the energy to win the race.

"No lie, it's the juice," he said. "I have no secrets — I'll tell everyone. You need to take in something at the end of the longer races. I mean, it's a marathon."

Shaw shared more than just race tips — he donated half of his \$1,500 prize to Desfosses.

"Stefan is my buddy," Shaw said. "We train together whenever we can. This will help us get to Marcialonga (a loppet in the Trentino region of Italy)."

Ottawa's Sheila Kealey surprised herself by winning the women's 49K race.

She did it easily, finishing just over 11 minutes ahead of Ingrid-Anne Ingvaldstad of Hamar, Norway (3:14:53.7). Third went to Louise Martineau of Rimouski, Que., in 3:17:32.9.

“This is the first time I’ve raced the classic,” said Kealey, who won the long-distance skate ski race last year.

“I really didn’t know what to expect. I guess my classic skiing is coming along more than I thought.”