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FIS MEDIA INFO

FIS Continues Fight against Doping - Anti-Doping Programme at the FIS Nordic World Ski Championships 2007 in Sapporo (JPN)

Sapporo, 21st February, 2007/ -- The FIS Nordic World Ski Championships involve one of the largest anti-doping programmes of any international major sports events outside of the Olympic Winter Games.

At the 2007 Championships in Sapporo (JPN), the programme will include pre-competition full-field blood testing of all Cross-Country and Nordic Combined competitors which will be carried out by the Japanese National Anti-Doping Agency (JADA) with the support of a FIS Doping Control Coordinator from the FIS-appointed specialist agency, IDTM. The total number of pre-competition blood tests will amount to approximately 450.

The post-competition doping controls will be conducted by JADA and will take place after the official press conferences. The urine samples will be analysed mainly at the World-Anti Doping Agency (WADA) accredited laboratory in Tokyo (JPN). For all events in all three Nordic disciplines, the number of athletes subject to post-competition doping controls includes the top 4 plus 2 at random, as per FIS Rules. In total, approximately 108 post-competition controls will be carried out during the championships.

Additionally, out-of-competition testing prior to the 2007 FIS Nordic World Ski Championships in Sapporo is underway in conjunction with the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) for the third successive championships after a similar programme before the events in 2003 and 2005 as well as the Olympic Winter Games in 2002 and 2006.

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FIS continues its committed fight against doping in ski sports and the investment in the 2006/07 programme amounts to more than 1 million Swiss Francs. In addition to the testing programme, various preventive measures are also part of the FIS anti-doping programme such as educational and informational programmes.

Important areas of emphasis for the FIS testing programme include out-of-competition testing, blood testing as well as in-competition testing at numerous FIS World Cup events. In addition, the various testing programmes carried out by WADA (out-of-competition) and National Anti-Doping Agencies (in- and out-of-competition) have enabled a comprehensive and increasingly well-coordinated effort.

Central to the FIS testing programme is specific target testing. Based on long-term, structured efforts, including the Blood Profiling Programme that has been implemented since the

2001/2002 season, FIS is increasingly in a position to conduct such targeted testing. "In our experience, recording high numbers of conducted tests does not necessarily translate into more success in finding athletes who are doping. By contrast, effective testing is a question of using intelligent information to conduct testing at the right time and place," comments Sarah Lewis, FIS Secretary General. Recent experience by other anti-doping organisations supports this view as WADA's out-of-competition testing programme has resulted in an increased number of adverse analytical findings as a consequence of more focused testing.

During the 2005/2006 season, 2539 in-competition tests (blood, urine and urine EPO) were conducted on FIS athletes, including a number of tests conducted by National Anti-Doping Organisations. FIS and WADA also conducted a total of 474 out-of-competition controls in 2005.

Athlete's Passport: Longitudinal follow-up project progressing under WADA's coordination

WADA has been considering the concept of an Athlete's Passport since 2002. The project has evolved to include the monitoring of different blood and urine parameters in addition to doping test results over an extended period of time. Since spring 2006, three meetings have taken place to coordinate the efforts of International Federations (FIS for skiing, IBU for biathlon, ISU for speed skating, UCI for cycling and IAAF for athletics) involved in blood testing and longitudinal follow-up. A critical contribution to the project was made by the haemoglobin variation study in Cross-Country skiers conducted by former FIS Anti-Doping Expert, Professor Bengt Saltin in cooperation with the German, Swedish and French National Ski Associations in 2006. This study found that the haemoglobin level is a robust and highly reproduceable variable on the individual level and one of the recommendations is that, in the future, individual Hb values rather than universal maximum values should be used.

WADA is in charge of further developing the project and implementing an Athlete's Passport. It recently announced support for a pilot study of athletes' biological parameters – the so-called Athletes for Transparency (AFT) project - to further assess the feasibility of the concept. As a next step, the parameters to be monitored as part of an Athlete's Passport need to be confirmed, certain procedures need to be harmonised (e.g. thresholds and decision criteria for abnormal profiles), and a concept for the technical management of the individual data prepared.

"FIS strongly supports the concept of an Athlete's Passport being championed by WADA. Access to such individual details will allow us to react much more effectively to abnormal profiles and correctly assess any sudden changes in an athlete's values. We welcome the work done by WADA to coordinate and harmonise in this field and hope to see the project implemented in good time before the Olympic Winter Games in Vancouver in 2010," adds Rasmus Damsgaard, FIS Anti-Doping Expert.

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For further information please contact Sarah Lewis, FIS Secretary General, in Japan on +81 80 1971 0190 or Riikka Rakic, Communication Manager, in Europe on +41 79 64 34 281

Additional resources:

FIS Fact Sheet on WADA supported Haemoglobin Variation Study in Elite Cross-Country Skiers
<http://www.fis-ski.com/data/document/fis-fact-sheet-wada-supported-variation-study.pdf>

FIS Fact Sheet on FIS Medical and Anti-Doping Activities
<http://www.fis-ski.com/data/document/fis-fact-sheet-fis-medical-and-anti-doping-activities.pdf>

FIS Media Info on the CAS decision during the Olympic Winter Games in Turin
<http://www.fis-ski.com/data/document/cas.pdf>

Frequently Asked Questions to Bengt Saltin in Turin 2006
<http://www.fis-ski.com/data/document/faq.pdf>