

## **Women in Biathlon – A History**

Following the change from full bore rifles to .22 calibre small bore rifles in 1978, interest in biathlon among women and girls began to rise. In 1982, the European Cup, which followed the Men's World Cup throughout Europe, was established for women offering an international competitive opportunity. In 1986, there were competitors from three continents on the tour and the events were elevated to the status of World Cups. Today, 120 women from 39 countries vie for the coveted title of World Cup Champion.

World Championships for women were inaugurated in 1984 as part of the World Junior Championships for men. In 1989 women gained their rightful place at the combined men's and women's World Championships and that year the World Junior Championships were opened for the first time to junior women.

Despite the rising number of female competitors, the International Olympic Committee did not include women in the Olympic Winter Games biathlon program until 1992! In Albertville, France, the first Olympic gold medals for women's biathlon were presented to Antje Misersky (GER) in the Individual event and Anfissa Retzova (RUS) in the Sprint while Canadian Myriam Bédard won the Bronze in the Individual – Canada's first Olympic medal in biathlon. In the 1994 Olympic Games in Lillehammer, NOR, Myriam rose to the top of the podium winning 2 gold medals in the individual and sprint competitions respectively. Since 1992, several Canadian women have graced the podium making Canada's women a force to beat internationally.

Within Canada, girls and women comprise approximately 36% of Biathlon Canada's membership and participate as officials, athletes, coaches, parents and volunteers. More women are needed in our sport! Contact us to find out how to get involved and join the hundreds of girls and women who have already discovered the wonderful aspects of biathlon!