

## 2018/19 Overseas Report

Katerina Paul



Firstly, I would like to thank the Birkebeiner Nordic Ski Club for the support you have given over the years; it is and will always be greatly appreciated!

This season for me was a new mission for me, with bigger goals and more major events. I wanted to prove to myself that I could last the season without injury, much illness and most importantly end the season with motivation and a positive attitude for the following seasons to come.

The season started for me in Davos, Switzerland. Davos was my base for the season and where I spent most of my European winter.

During the first month and a half I spent my weekends going to Swiss Cups, and OPA cups, which was tough racing as always but I was happy with my progression as a distance skier (with still the longest way to go).

The start of the New Year was the beginning of the most exciting part of my season. The first of my major championships for the year was U23 World Championships. My dream for the longest time was to achieve a top 30 in the classic sprint. This year I got 32<sup>nd</sup>.... You would think I'd be annoyed but I couldn't of been happier, it was the first time for me where everything felt perfect and the first time for as long as I could remember where felt like I was racing like a fast skier, and to me I felt like I deserved to be there.

With the emotional high of the sprint race I could barely contain my energy for the following races at U23's, but it didn't matter I got what I came for.

There was of course a break back in Davos, then after U23's. I did get a little cold in Slovenia but get rid of it before my next focus, the FIS World Senior – Seefeld Championships Austria. For me I was only going to race the sprint, but at a later time we thought it could be a great experience to do the 5km Classic qualifier.



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Tired and maybe not in form, I was satisfied with my sprint result. It wasn't the worst and it wasn't the best. However once the focus shifted off World Champs, it went straight onto the FISU Krasnoyarsk, Russia World Universiade.

And wow... what an event. I have never experienced something like it. The village alone was amazing with an all sport village with everything in there for you. But the venue was probably my favorite skiing tracks I have ever raced on. A lot of money was poured into that event and you could tell, plus Vladimir Putin came along to watch the 5km classic... Probably to see how his money was being spent.

The first race was the 5km Classic, a solid result for me after feeling a little tired at Seefeld World Champs. The next day was a 5km skate pursuit, a race in the past I hadn't been so confident with but I managed to gain some places. But mostly gaining confidence in my distance racing was the best part.

After a one-day break came my favorite event, the skate sprint. I felt tired but I managed to pull a top 30 to qualify for heats. Turns out the heat I was in was the fastest of the day, and I did managed to race a faster time than my time trial so I was pleased after being knocked out after Quarter Finals.

The last race came after a 4-day break of a little rest, exploring Siberian culture and watching other events. The 15km Skate mass start as most know is my least favorite event... so long... but I surprised myself and when I woke up on race day I was so excited. I finished the race further into the field than I had expected and had one of the most enjoyable races I have had this season. (Probably because of the coolest tracks).

After the FISU Krasnoyarsk World Universiade it was time to head home, tired and happy after a long enough season. I was so excited to complete all 3 major Championships this year and couldn't have done it without the support of my coach and my sponsors. So a huge thank-you for everything.

I look forward to a long, snowy and sunny Australian winter!