

On the Trail at the World Mountain Troph: A Historic First For US Women

By Nancy Hobbs As featured in the JanFeb 2007 issue of Running Times Magazine

The 2006 World Mountain Running Trophy Race, considered the World Championships for the sport, set records for participation and witnessed the emergence of Africans in this venue of running and a historical first gold for Team USA. Host country Turkey, steeped in history dating back to the first Stone Age settlements in 7500 BC, is most noted for its carpets, silk head scarves, custom ceramic tiles, and olives rather than as a center for mountain running. After this year's event, Turkey may now claim the largest participation in the 22-year history of the WMRT with 36 countries represented. First-time competitors from Greece, Macedonia, Armenia, and Venezuela were among the entries, prompting World Mountain Running Association president Danny Hughes to remark, "This should send a message to the IAAF that mountain running is reaching the level that should be fully recognized as a World Championship." Currently the IAAF offers the status of "patronized" to the race, providing a minimal level of support and recognition, hence its designation as the World Trophy rather than World Championships.



Team USA scored a historic first world championship victory in Turkey. Rachel Dobbs(10th), Chris Lundy(16th), Lisa Goldsmith(30th) & Nicole Hunt(9th).

Women's Team Scores:

Medal	Country	Points*
Gold	USA	35
Silver	Czech Republic	36
Bronze	Italy	37
Lead	France	43

* Combined score of teams' top three finishers.

Getting to the race venue was by far the biggest challenge facing competitors. After landing in Istanbul, shuttle buses transported teams nearly two hours through stop-and-go traffic to a ferry which took them on a 45-minute journey across the Sea of Marmara. On the Asian side they faced a two hour bus ride through the city of Bursa, first capital of the Ottoman Empire, to Uludag, the last 36 kilometers up a narrow, windy, nausea-generating roadway. Lisa Goldsmith, the final member of Team USA to arrive in Istanbul, made her way to Uludag some seven hours after landing at Ataturk International Airport. The lengthy travel did little to dampen Goldsmith's spirits, which, days

later, were filled with elation as Team USA stood on the gold medal podium with the senior women's trophy held high above their heads.

With a low score of 35 points, the sum of the places for the first three runners across the line, the Teva U.S. Mountain Running Senior Women's Team earned its best place finish in the 12 years of competing in the Trophy Race. Led by top ten-finishes from newcomers Nicole Hunt (ninth) and Rachael Dobbs (10th), the women were poised for a great team finish. With two-time team member Chris Lundy crossing the line in 16th place, a gold medal was assured. The final team member, Goldsmith, placed 30th, bettering her 41st-place finish from the 1997 Trophy, where she was the top American.

Pre-race favorites included eventual winner Andrea Mayr of Austria, third-place finisher and masters competitor Isabella Guillot of France, Anna Pichrtova of the Czech Republic in seventh and two-time World Trophy champion Melissa Moon of New Zealand in 14th. Pichrtova led the Czech Republic team to a silver medal finish while Italy's team took the bronze.

The 8.4 kilometer course, with nearly 3,000 feet of elevation gain, started in a small village four kilometers uphill from Bursa, site of the senior men's start. The mostly uphill route was a mixture of gravel road, single-track trail, grassy meadow, and steep, rocky terrain, with a slightly downhill finish on asphalt.

Race day started with sunny skies and temperatures in the 60s, but a cloud bank formed and the fog rolled in while the senior men were on the course. Temperatures dropped to the 50s and remained cool even after the fog lifted by mid-afternoon. The senior men ran last, their 12-kilometer race climbing 4,300 feet from Bursa to the small mountain settlement of Sarialan. Five-time World Trophy Champion Jonathan Wyatt emerged from the forested path first, but just one stride ahead of Colombian Rolando Ortiz. Ortiz sprinted past Wyatt in the final 400 meters to win by a mere six seconds.

Wyatt has beaten his nearest competitor by an average of two minutes and 10 seconds in the past five years and set numerous course records. While taking nothing from Ortiz's run, it should be noted that Wyatt had been training on the course in advance of the race on Friday and was attacked by two dogs, both biting him on his buttocks. He fell to the ground, got up, and was going to continue running, but was instead urged to go back down the trail and get to the hospital. Team manager Barry Ellis, who was hiking at the time, called an ambulance and got Wyatt to the hospital. On Friday evening Ellis said Wyatt was 60/40 about running but, "more sore from the shots (antibiotics, tetanus, and rabies vaccine) than the bites."

For team USA, five-time team member Simon Gutierrez repeated his 10th-place finish from the 2005 World Trophy. Eric Blake exchanged the lead with Gutierrez throughout the race as the pair picked their way through the top 20 runners during the early kilometers. Blake finished right behind Gutierrez in 11th place. Newcomer to the men's team Ricky Gates placed 25th and Paul Low, running in his seventh World Trophy, closed out the team scoring with his 67th-place finish.

The senior men's team finished with a best-ever score of 113 points, bettering the 143-point total from 2002. The fifth-place finish was also a U.S. best for the men. The team competition was fierce with Eritrea ending Italy's 22-year victory streak, dating from the inception of the World Trophy. Eritrea scored 37 points for four runners (placing 3, 8, 9, 17) to Italy's 44 (5, 6, 15, 18). Turkey celebrated its host country status with bronze, scoring 62 points.

All of the 400 athletes and staff members stayed at the Grand Yazici Hotel during the competition. Renowned throughout Turkey as one of the country's best ski resorts, the terrain surrounding the hotel was a wonderful training ground in preparation for the competition. Trails were abundant and varied. Some offered fairly flat sections for short out-and-back runs, others provided rolling terrain with a mixture of dirt and gravel, while others had significant climbing, with the highest point at Mount Olympus, elevation 8,343 feet, known in mythology as the place where the gods watched the Trojan War.

World Mountain Running Trophy
Bursa, Turkey, Women's 8.5 k

	Country	Name of Athlete	Time				
1	AUT	Mayr Andrea	47.11	42	TUR	Ozcan Birgul	54.48
2	SUI	Strachl Martina	47.29	43	AUS	Muarry Emma	54.52
3	FRA	Guillot Isabella	47.43	44	AUT	Kapuscinski Marion	55.06
4	NOR	Hakenstad-Evertsen Anita	48.47	45	ENG	Wilkinson Mary	55.23
5	ITA	Salvini Vittoria	49.19	46	BEL	Verthe Sylvie	55.28
6	COL	Fernandez Yolanda	49.29	47	SLO	Sustarsic Mateja	55.40
7	CZE	Pichrtova Anna	49.37	48	RUS	Grechishnikova Elizaveta	55.51
8	NOR	Melkevik-Otterbu Kirsten	49.47	49	SUI	Riem Claudia	55.54
9	USA	Hunt Nicole	50.13	50	WAL	Todd Mari	56.06
10	USA	Dobbs Rachael	50.24	51	SLO	Mrak Valerija	56.09
11	ENG	Wilkinson Victoria	50.36	52	WAL	Bartlett Anna	56.11
12	ITA	Roberti Maria Grazia	50.49	53	AUS	Hosking Jessamy	56.32
13	CZE	Sadkova Irena	50.54	54	SUI	Vetsch Lea	56.46
14	NZL	Moon Melissa	51.05	55	AUS	King Cindy	56.53
15	AUS	Thompson Anna	51.08	56	CAN	Katrina Blanch	57.09
16	USA	Lundy Christine	51.21	57	RUS	Lesnikova Elena	57.16
17	CZE	Milesova Iva	51.37	58	WAL	Lee Jacqueline	57.23
18	TUR	Asikoglu Gulsen	51.47	59	RUS	Gorbunova Olga	58.09
19	FRA	Leservoisier Michelle	51.52	60	SLO	Tusar Mihaela	58.09
20	SCO	Gordon Claire	51.55	61	CAN	Golumbia Amy	58.16
21	FRA	Didier Aurelie	51.57	62	POL	Bota Iwona	59.01
22	ITA	Morstofolini Monica	52.11	63	IRL	Harney Caroline	59.02
23	GER	Carlsohn Anja	52.17	64	NIR	Shannon Alwynne	59.23
24	CZE	Matyasova Pavla	52.25	65	NIR	Sloan Tricia	59.39
25	GER	Reisinger Lisa	52.29	66	WAL	Jones Angela	59.56
26	ENG	Robinson Rebecca	52.32	67	SVK	Plchova Lenka	1.00.50
27	AUT	Lilge-Leutner Carina	53.00	68	NIR	O'kane Shileen	1.00.53
28	TUR	Kiraz Ummu	53.30	69	TUR	Kaya Canan	1.01.26
29	FRA	Parache Kamia	53.36	70	BLR	Mamedava Hulnara	1.01.38
30	USA	Goldsmith Lisa	53.52	71	IRL	Mccauley Jenny	1.02.14
31	GER	Bott Alexandra	53.56	72	NIR	Maxwell Fiona	1.02.23
32	SUI	Rueda-Oppliger Fabiola	54.02	73	CAN	Elmer Shannon	1.02.31
33	ENG	Buckley Anne	54.03	74	BEL	Verthe Els	1.02.34
34	AUT	Laznik Waltraud	54.04	75	BLR	Saizewa Katsiaryna	1.04.03
35	ITA	Elisa Desco	54.09	76	CAN	Cormier Michelle	1.05.36
36	POR	Moreiras Lucinda	54.11	77	BEL	Leboutte Noelle	1.05.46
37	GER	Siewert Carmen	54.15	78	BLR	Karatkikh Alena	1.05.54
38	SCO	Stuart Helen	54.30	79	IRL	Mcevoy Orla	1.07.42
39	POL	Czuta-Pakosz Irena	54.35	80	BEL	Gerard Stephanie	1.08.03
40	RUS	Korotkova Evdokiya	54.36	81	MKD	Kradzieva Vesna	1.18.41
41	VEN	Salazar Cruz	54.41	82	MKD	Dimova Olivera	1.20.40
				83	MKD	Stojanoska Svetlana	1.32.40