

NRDC-ITA participation in the 60th Italian Mountain Troop Ski Championship - CASTA 2008

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In January 2008, after its excellent performance of the previous year, HQ NRDC-ITA was again invited to take part in the Friendship Trophy within the Italian Mountain Troop Ski Championships, a set of ski races among national military teams and multinational NATO HQs.

The cross country training started during November 2007 in S. Maria Maggiore and Val Formazza (Verbania Province), and in Pila (Aosta) for the downhill training.

Christmas stand down came and went, but the training kept continued. By New Year's Eve the team was confirmed: for the downhill event; LTC Robin Carrow USA-Army, LTC Pierluigi Costa ITA-Army, LTC Giuseppe Musico' ITA-Army and Maj Francesco Sorvillo ITA-Army.

For the cross country event the team

was trained by Maj Roberto Mastrotto ITA-Army, who pushed the following to their limits: Col Peter Grunebach DEU-Army, LTC Fabio Sandonnini Punzi ITA-Army, Maj Francesco Sorvillo ITA-Army (again!) and Maj Steve White GBR-Army.

After all this training, the team at last reached S. Candido, (Alto Adige Province) in the far northern-eastern corner of Italy, where the competitions took place, to be met by plenty of snow and good weather.

30 Jan 08, Race Day 1 (15km cross country): The name "cross-country" could mislead the reader, letting him think of a vast, flat area with beautiful pine trees in the distance. Nothing could be more wrong. The track started with a bridge to cross -the wrong way- after 200 meters, and it went on and on uphill-downhill-uphill again for fifteen kilometers. The uphill parts caused pain in the legs and lungs, while the downhill portions were hard on your body, especially with the parts of your body you smashed on the snow when falling. Anyway, all of the team completed the event, much to the satisfaction of Maj Steve White who would never believe this possible with only two months and 20 hours of training.



31 Jan 08, Race Day 2 (Giant Downhill Slalom and Cross-country Team-Sprint): Downhill we scored well, no falling nor big mistakes, so we finished only eight seconds after the first-placed team. In the team sprint both Col Grunebach and Maj Mastrotto were initially slow, but the Support Team swiftly replaced the batteries of both and the speed improved.

1 Feb 08, Final Race Day (Patrol): 25 km of cross country ski with a shooting in the middle. The start was fast, the uphill never-ending. After some 20 km, the team reached the range and fired the rifles they were carrying on their backs from the departure line. We did not perform too well, with only one target hit out the three necessary. Possibly the hard panting and gasping played some part in it. However only 5 km after that, the finish line was in sight, and the team sprinted (...) with all its might for the last 80 meters.

Well, all good things come to an end, and the same afternoon the NRDC-ITA team proudly paraded in the main square of S. Candido for the closing ceremony, to receive the applause of the fellow competitors and the cheering crowd. We had enjoyed a perfect occasion to foster good relations with other HQs and units from all over the world, and we proudly flew the flag. The Support Brigade provided the team with excellent support for the whole training phase and the competition, with transportation and a professional driver all the way.

COMNRDC-ITA, who was present on the last competition day, was also proud of the effort, and even our score was not that bad: 10th out of 15 competing teams. Taking into account that most of the national teams counted young and professional athletes, the performance was actually rather good! In a future our team could perform even better if we had fresh legs for each event.

See you next year for the CASTA 2009!

