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Rebecca Konieczny joins elite company with third 50K Sonot Kkaazoot title

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FAIRBANKS—Rebecca Konieczny was competing in the American Birkebeiner 52-kilometer ski race in late February when she had what she described as the “most epic bonk.”

“I was skiing pretty well,” Konieczny said. “I was around like 15th or 16th women and I could see other women ahead of me. And then at 35K, my body just shutoff. It’s like I knew it. It just happened like that. I’m like ‘I think I’m done.’ The rest 17K were just survival mode.”

Konieczny kept that incident in her mind as she claimed her third straight 50K Sonot Kkaazoot title on the Chena River in downtown Fairbanks on Saturday.

“I’ve never bonked in a race and it was still pretty fresh in my mind,” Konieczny said. “I knew if I went out today, I’d have to keep that check. I didn’t want to do that again.”

Konieczny is a former Alaska Nanooks skier who now coaches the Fairbanks Cross Country team through the Nordic Club of Fairbanks.

Konieczny became the fourth skier to win the 50K race three straight times when she crossed the finish line in 2 hours, 42 minutes, 0.7 seconds on Saturday.

Melissa Lewis (2004-06), Donna Hawkins (1994-96) and Audun Endestad (1997-99) each won three straight 50K races. Endestand is the only male to win the race in three consecutive years.

Lewis has won the race a total of six times.

Konieczny won the 2014 race in 2:33:38 before setting the course record of 2:23:40.6 last year.

“I actually want to thank Ann(-Cathrin) Uhl,” Konieczny said. “Usually I follow the men for 20ishK, not even, and then I have to ski the whole race by myself. So it was really fun to ski with her and go back and forth.”

Uhl, an Alaska Nanooks sophomore from Muhlenbach, Germany, finished 5.9 seconds behind Konieczny in second.

“I was excited to ski with a couple of the UAF ladies,” Konieczny said. “Thought it would make it a little more fun for me.”

Martina Himma, another Nanooks sophomore, finished fifth in 2:54:45.9 while Hannah Rowland, an Alaska junior, took seventh in 2:55:46.5.

Sarah Freiston finished third on Saturday in 2:50:07.4.

That American Birkebeiner, which took place in Cable, Wisconsin, in late February, was a learning experience for Konieczny, who finished 360th overall in the race and 38th in the women age 25-29 group.

“That was the first marathon I had done outside Alaska so the whole thing was an experience,” Konieczny said. “I enjoyed every minute of it. It could have gone a little better at the end. But yeah, it was a lot fun and I learned something and hope to go back next year if I have the opportunity.”

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2016 Sonot Kkaazoot

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