

Hot competition for Musgrave and Young at championships

Skiing by Wendy Clarihew

HUNTLY skiers Andrew Musgrave and Andrew Young had mixed fortunes in the Norwegian National Championships in Tromsø.

The action began with a 15km classic. Musgrave skied well and finished in a highly respectable seventh place. Despite a slow start, Young picked up pace and finished 32nd of 140 entrants.

In the skate sprint, both Musgrave and Young qualified for the quarter-finals. In the first heat, with 20 metres to go, they were able to create a gap up front alongside winner Sindre Skar.

It became a personal battle between the two Andrews as they fought to secure a place in the semi-final and Young came out on top.

He said: "I had a bit of luck in the sprint. Muzzy had been pushing and bullying his way past me. I decided to give him some space so we didn't take both of us down and out of the race.

"Muzzy got a few metres on me and it was looking like I was going out. Then he fell over and I could cruise into second and advance to the semi-finals.

"Of the 12 skiers in the semi-

finals, 10 had a podium finish in a world cup skate sprint. That says something about the level of skiing in Norway.

"I had nothing to give and ended up last in my semi-final and 12th overall."

The 30km skiathlon drew the biggest crowd and Musgrave was feeling confident.

He said: "I felt like the pace was pretty easy. The lead group thinned out to six skiers by the end, but I still felt like the speed was pretty leisurely.

"I was feeling so fresh that I was confident of making it on to the podium.

"Going into the last hill I moved to the front and put on a full sprint, hoping to get a gap on the rest of the field. The group splintered and four of us moved ahead, but I didn't get the gap I had hoped.

"A bit of bad positioning and a really strong headwind round the last corner led to the other three guys gliding past me.

"I couldn't quite make it as we moved into the final straight and I ended up gliding across the line a couple of metres behind Petter Northug, the winner.

"I was pretty annoyed with myself

that I hadn't been better tactically at the end. Even so, fourth place was a good result."

On the final day of the championships, Young was happy with his Team GB performance in the club relay.

He said: "Our first and second leg skiers had done a solid job. They handed over to me in 38th. I ended up passing 25 people. It was snowing like mad and it was nice and fast.

"I ended up with the third fastest time for the third leg and sixth fastest out of everybody, only 10 seconds behind the fastest time.

"The team ended in 13th but were promoted to seventh as several teams were given three-minute time penalties for skating on the classic leg.

"Some teams then appealed and had that overturned, so I'm not sure where we've ended up now. Regardless, it was a good day for us."

In the relay Musgrave was racing for his Norwegian club Røa IL. With 150 skiers all setting off at the same time, there was some chaos at the starting line.

Musgrave's team-mate Lars Amund lost his ski four times during the race and the team finished in 41st place.



Andrew Musgrave and Andrew Young competing in the 15km skiathlon at the Norwegian National Championships.