

# Vegard Bitnes named US Biathlon Men's Head Coach

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The US Biathlon today announced the hiring of Norwegian Vegard Bitnes, as Head Coach of the Men's National Team. Bitnes will take over the program at an exciting time, following a successful season that saw new successes and career bests for **Sean Doherty** and **Jake Brown**.

After spending nearly a decade in the Norwegian sports system, Vegard moved to central Europe in 2011 to help coach the Engadin Nordic and Biathlon Team. During his tenure, Engadin athletes experienced a period of unprecedented international success, with athletes like the Selina Gasparin breaking Swiss international records to medal at the Sochi Olympics and other international events.

After his success in Switzerland, Bitnes took the helm at the Austrian Biathlon Federation, where he worked to build a successful women's program at the World Cup and IBU Cup levels. Vegard and his family live in Ramsau, Austria.

High Performance Director, **Lowell Bailey** said of Vegard, "He is a phenomenally talented coach with the experience and attitude that really fits our National Team culture. In an individual sport like biathlon, athletes only succeed through team work. Vegard's ability to foster this collaborative environment will be a huge benefit to our team."

Commenting on his role, Vegard said, "Throughout my years of coaching internationally, I have always looked at the US Biathlon Team as a great example of how teamwork and team spirit can drive program success. This approach, combined with a professional attention to athlete development and support is extremely motivating to me. I am confident we can reach the next level, and I am extremely excited to get to work!"

The US Biathlon Men's Team saw many highlights over the past season, with **Sean Doherty** reaching his first top-ten world cup performance at the Soldier Hollow, Utah IBU World Cup in February. With many young and talented athletes at the beginning of their world cup careers, the team is poised for success in 2019, with the ultimate goal of winning America's first Olympic medal at the 2022 Beijing Olympic Games.

"With Vegard on board the US Biathlon Team is fully staffed and ready to dig in for the season ahead," said Max Cobb, US Biathlon President and CEO. "It is an exciting time for US Biathlon and I know Vegard's experience will bring a lot to the team."

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#### **Sean Doherty**

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