

# Arctic Midnight-O

**Greenland, Ilulissat  
June 25-28, 2003**

*By Olav Odgaard*

The Arctic Midnight Orienteering Run is an individual event with a touch of the extreme. It takes place in very physically-demanding terrain during the Arctic night, in nearly-deserted-but-grandiose scenery, with no trees and a lot of barren rocks - though headlamps are not needed, due to the midnight sun.

This open, hilly area with barren rocks or topsoil covered with moss, lichen, and grass is situated near Ilulissat, a city of 4,000 inhabitants, a city that has Greenland's only Orienteering club. With only 80 participants, which meant fewer participants from Europe than last year, the race was very small in size: nevertheless, it was unique in several ways. For instance, at AMO there is daylight for 24 hours, and the temperature is normally between +5 and +15 degrees centigrade.

This 3-days consists of an introductory run (a chance to become familiar with the terrain), an unofficial Greenland Championship, and a midnight final run. Interestingly, while the first two were held in clear and sunny weather, with temperatures up to 20 degrees - the second, the midnight run, was held amid clouds and wind, with temperatures down to 3 degrees, which required gloves and caps. Arctic Midnight Orienteering, the final race, began at 12:00 p.m. sharp, and was a mass-start event on a range of hills east of Ilulissat, and was an event with several loops. The longest course is about 20 km, which provides an excellent sun-at-midnight experience. Normally, experienced foreign runners (namely from Denmark) take the first places, but Greenland's

runners are steadily doing better and better. During this edition, they developed into worthy competitors on home terrain: in particular, Bernhardt Olsen, who won the "Greenland Championship" (Day 2), as well as scoring an overall win.

## This happens nowhere else ...

Two D21 runners participating in the unofficial Greenland Championship took a shortcut through an airport runway, and were quickly sent back into safe terrain by airport personnel.

Refreshment points were established in the terrain by the use of sledge dogs. A couple of dozen dogs delivered drinks to refreshment points in the mountains.

The Arctic Midnight Orienteering run had a time limit of 5 hours. After 51 hours, 3 runners were still missing, and a search was mounted after they did not pass various radio-controls. After an hour's search, they were all found in good condition and on their way home. Two of the runners had passed a radio-control without seeing it: the remaining unaccounted-for runner was off the map entirely, having had difficulties due to the character of the terrain, particularly its steep cliffs. As a precaution, all participants in the midnight run were equipped with whistles, and there were radio-controls on all 10, 15, and 20-km courses.

The local inhabitants were warmly spontaneous, which meant that they expressed their feelings: it was common for them to clap their hands at both the start and finish, and one group even starting to sing!

*A race full of bizarre points just about to start.*

## Arctic Midnight event

### Men

1. Bernhardt Olsen	IOG	3:12:24
2. Esben Dalgaard	OK Fros, Denmark	3:23:52
3. Agissiaq Mathiassen	IOG	3:41:30

### Women

1. Else Hansen	IOG	3:18:15
2. Rigmor Villadsen	IOG	3:18:15
3. Ida Madsen	IOG	3:18:37



*Photo by Olav Odgaard*



*Photo by Olav Odgaard*



*Photo by Olav Odgaard*

*First enjoy scenery then go on!*



*Photo by Olav Odgaard*

One participant from Denmark left his shoes outside to dry, which resulted in a couple of sledge dogs almost making a lunch from them. New shoes had to be purchased before the next run.

The awards celebration wrapped everyone in a garland of traditional Greenland. The closing events in the local Cultural Hall began with a prize-giving ceremony, consisting mainly of works of Greenland art made from sealskin or polar bear claws, and Tubilakker (bone figurines made from whale or reindeer). A banquet of local delicacies was served: a truly gourmet experience. And, to add the final touch, a local choir and a drummer/dancer provided entertainment.

This event requires a journey by plane. To get to Ilulissat, participants usually travel from Copenhagen via Kangerlussuaq-Sdr. Strom, which is possible daily - during summer. Strikingly discounted tickets are available. ➤





# Grønlandsmesterskab 2003

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Ækvidistance 5 meter.

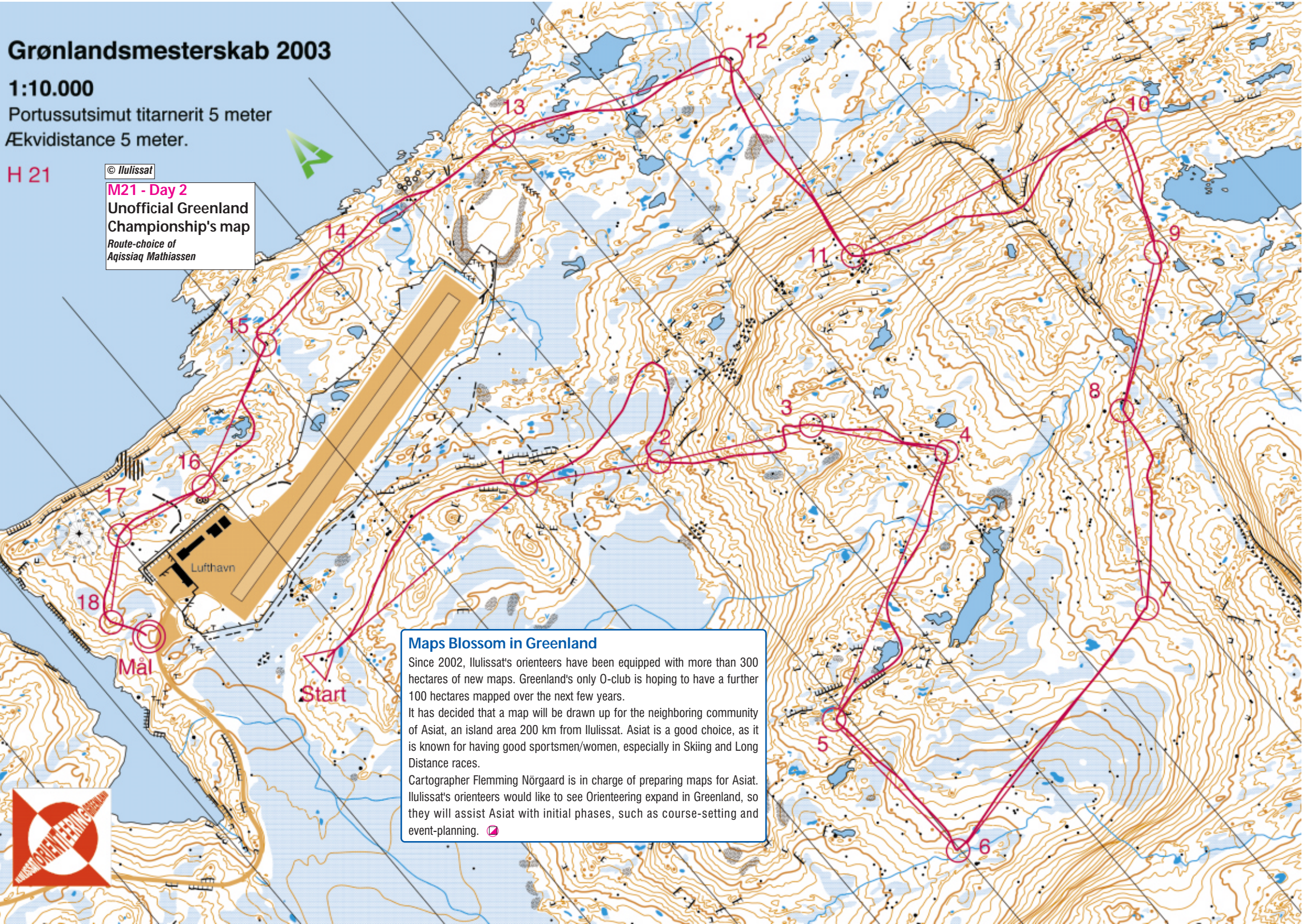
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© Ilulissat

M21 - Day 2

Unofficial Greenland  
Championship's map


Route-choice of  
Aqissiaq Mathiasen



## Maps Blossom in Greenland

Since 2002, Ilulissat's orienteers have been equipped with more than 300 hectares of new maps. Greenland's only O-club is hoping to have a further 100 hectares mapped over the next few years.

It has decided that a map will be drawn up for the neighboring community of Asiat, an island area 200 km from Ilulissat. Asiat is a good choice, as it is known for having good sportsmen/women, especially in Skiing and Long Distance races.

Cartographer Flemming Nørsgaard is in charge of preparing maps for Asiat. Ilulissat's orienteers would like to see Orienteering expand in Greenland, so they will assist Asiat with initial phases, such as course-setting and event-planning. 

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