

THE 'OLYMPICS' OF BEER — THE 2010 WORLD BEER CUP

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For the fourth time running, Anders Kissmeyer was a judge in the World Beer Cup in America. In keeping with tradition, he shares his experiences from the recently held beer competition.

The World Beer Cup 2010 that took place in April this year in Chicago, IL, was a record event in all aspects; quite simply the largest commercial beer competition ever held with 3,330 beers entered in the competition. WBC judging took place over two days just prior to the official opening of the Craft Brewer's Conference and BrewExpo America on 7 April at the Sheraton Hotel and Towers in Chicago (a separate article in the next issue of this magazine will cover this conference and exhibition).

THE COMPETITION

Brewers from six continents earned awards from an elite international panel of judges in this the eighth competition, held every second year, with awards to brewers from 19 countries ranging from Australia and Italy to Iceland and Japan. This year, 642 breweries from 44 countries and 47 U.S. states vied for awards with 3,330 beers entered in 90 beer style categories. The entries in each category were eligible for gold, silver and bronze awards. Judges presented a total of 268 awards. A detailed analysis of the entries and awards can be found in the 2010 Brewers Association World Beer Cup Fact Sheet.

JUDGES

Judges from 26 countries participated in this year's competition, working in teams to conduct blind tasting evaluations of the beers and determine the awards. Drawn from the ranks of professional brewers and brewing industry experts, these 179 judges came mostly from international breweries, with some 62 per cent from outside the United States.

SUCCESS FOR SCANDINAVIAN BREWERIES

At this year's WBC, the Scandinavian breweries were, yet again, well represented and also took home their share of the medals. Carlsberg Sweden took both the Gold and the Bronze in the category 'European Style Low Alcohol Lager' with 'Falcon 3.5%' and 'Pripp's Blå 3.5%', respectively. Our good neighbours Kalnypilis from Lithuania took both a Gold and a Silver ('Honey Beer' and 'German Style Heller Bock') and Egill Skallagrimson from Iceland took a Bronze in International Style Lager. But by far the biggest Scandinavian triumph this year was, to the undivided pride and joy of the undersigned, that of Nørrebro Bryghus who, by taking home two Gold and one Silver, ended up being the best European brewery and the 6th best brewery overall in the competition.

In their press release following the triumph, Kasper Larsen, Beer Ambassador of Nørrebro Bryghus, says, 'We are thrilled and honoured by this amazing harvest of medals that clearly underlines the positive development on the Danish brewing scene through the last few years. Nørrebro Bryghus is proud that our ambitions to challenge the boundaries, to play and experiment with the expressions of beer have proved fruitful in a competition in which the entire field of leaders amongst the best breweries in the world participates.'

The winning Nørrebro Bryghus beers were:

Gold Medal in 'American Style Imperial Stout' to: 'Seven Niepoort Barrel' – a very full-bodied Russian Imperial Stout at 12% ABV. Brewed in October 2008 by seven of the best brewers in Denmark (hence the name!), by a pooling of their individual recipe proposals. After fermentation, the beer has

matured for seven months on a port barrel from the house of Niepoort in Oporto.

Gold Medal in 'Barley Wine Style Ale' to: 'Little Korkny Ale 2007 Niepoort Barrel' – a 12% ABV barley wine that has matured for nine months in the fermenter and a further 12 months in a Niepoort barrel.

Silver Medal in 'American Style Sour Ale' to: 'Viking Oud Bruin' – a sour Belgian Oud Bruin at 6.5% ABV. The base beer for this was traditional Belgian brown ale brewed in September 2008 by the Master Brewer Class 08/09 at the Scandinavian School of Brewing. This fraction of the finished beer has matured further on Spanish Tempranillo barrels with several strains of *Brettanomyces* og *Lactobacillus*.

All three medal winners belong to Nørrebro Bryghus' 'Limited Release' series, initiated by Brewery Director Anders Kissmeyer and Head Brewer Shaun E. Hill (now at Hill Farmstead Brewery in Vermont, USA) and creatively, dedicatedly and meticulously managed by the latter. This series is a comprehensive programme (in total, 10 beers have been released until now) of barrel aged and bottle conditioned beers produced at the Nørrebro Bryghus brewpub in Copenhagen. As the name implies, these beers are produced in very tiny volumes, typically around 250 litres corresponding to one single barrel.

More information about Nørrebro Bryghus' 'Limited Release' series can be obtained through Kasper Larsen at kl@noerrebrobryghus.dk. →



A FEW PERSONAL OBSERVATIONS

I had the pleasure this year of judging the WBC for the fourth consecutive time, meaning that I have been able to follow the amazing growth of this event. For anyone not having been a part of it, it is utterly impossible to imagine what the organisational and logistical challenges of having 179 judges working through 3,330 beers in just two days represent, but they are huge. Obviously, not even the slightest error or mishap is acceptable in such a competition, and they do not occur! On the contrary, everything runs so smoothly, pleasantly and effectively that the judges never even notice the 'machine' behind the scenes. If I were ever given the task of organising the 3rd World War (sorry for this absurd comparison!), I would insist on having Competition Manager Chris Swersey as my commanding officer!

Any one judge cannot get an overview of all the trends in the popularity of some beer styles over others. Nevertheless, through my two days of judging and the exposure to beers presented by US brewers around Chicago's beer scene plus from the popularity of the CBC seminars on these topics, I can safely say that the new 'megatrend' on the US beer scene is sour ales. Both those very closely inspired by their Belgian counterparts like Lambics, Geuzes, and Oud Bruines, and the ones developed by US brewers themselves and, thus, simply named American Sours. So, the news to the 90 per cent plus of Scandinavian beer drinkers that run away screaming when exposed to sour beers is: You might as well get used to it as it will be all over you soon... And from such a beer drinker only 'converted' to the love of sour ales a few years ago, I can only say: You are going to love it!

The Galla Awards Dinner on the Saturday turned out to be the world's biggest ever beer dinner on record with 2,200 guests. The five-course dinner was extremely ambitious and complicated, and to a European, it seemed in an almost absurd contrast to the total time of around 45 minutes set aside for it. The permanent stress of waiters waiting to serve the next course while the guests were only half way into the previous one was not doing justice to either the food or the guests. A thing that the organisers might want to consider for the next World Beer Cup in 2012.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Press releases from both the Brewer's Association and from Nørrebro Bryghus have been quoted in this article. ☺

FACTS ABOUT THE WBC 2010

Highlights from the competition:

- 3,300 beers from 642 breweries in 44 countries and 47 US States divided into a total of 90 different style categories.
- Over two days, 179 judges from all over the world – all highly professional and skilled beer judges, 62 per cent from outside of the US – awarded 268 medals in total.
- The average number of beers entered per category was 37.
- The category with the most entries was Wood and Barrel-Aged Strong Beer, with 113 entries. The second most entered category was Herb and Spice Beer or Chocolate Beer, with 108 entries. The German-Style Sour Ale category had the fewest number of entries at 9.
- The 2010 World Beer Cup saw the growth of sour category beers to 85 entries in four categories (46 entries in 2008). Wood- and Barrel-Aged Sour nearly tripled in size (39 entries in 2010 vs. 14 entries in 2008); American-Style Sour Ale more than tripled (14 vs. 4).
- Certain categories essentially doubled in size: Coffee Flavored Beer (47 vs. 24); Baltic Porter (28 vs. 15).
- The American IPA (106 vs. 77) and Imperial IPA (71 vs. 39) categories continue to grow. American IPA was the third most entered category, relinquishing its spot as most entered category over the past several World Beer Cup competitions.
- Two new categories came in with very strong showings in 2010: Out of Category/Traditionally Brewed Beer (48 entries) and American-Belgo-Style Ale (46).

The complete list of award winners is available for download, and more information can be found at the website: www.worldbeercup.org. The 2010 World Beer Cup was sponsored by Partner Sponsors Barth-Haas Group, Kronen, Sahm, and Siemens AG.