

Snow in Sarajevo a guarantee of success

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At the moment at which these lines are being written, on the eve of the new year 1984, we have one month of international skiing competition behind us. This year, the FIS is celebrating its 60th winter of competitions. It would also be correct to say that it is enjoying its 74th season, seeing that the International Ski Commission, which became the International Ski Federation (FIS) during the Olympic skiing week in Chamonix in 1924, was founded in 1910.

It would certainly be an exaggeration to say that the weather gods have been kind to the FIS during the first part of its jubilee season. During virtually all of December, Europe has suffered from lack of snow. Competitions have been cancelled or transferred to different sites. Snow cannons and the increased efforts of civic and military authorities have played the role of saviours.

But worst of all, recent reports speak of mild weather and lack of snow in Sarajevo. This is the most discouraging situation possible for the sport of skiing. Therefore, we may well need to turn to the powers above and ask them to provide our Yugoslav friends with large

quantities of good snow, and low temperatures. Eleven days of Olympic events depend on it. And natural snow is needed for these competitions. Using snow cannons is not sufficient.

World interest in skiing grows with every year that passes. One look at the FIS competition calendar easily confirms this. The 1983-84 season holds a record number of events. Close to two thousand international competitions of all kinds are due to take place. Here are a few figures: four hundred and twenty-five Alpine skiing events with one thousand one hundred and fifty competitions taking place in twenty-seven countries; two hundred and fifty Nordic skiing events with six hundred and seventy-five competitions in twenty-one countries. And these are only figures dealing with international competitions, We could add all the events organised by the national skiing associations and their clubs. It would then be impossible to say what the figure would be : 10 000 perhaps ? Which countries organise the greatest' number of events? The answer can be found in the December issue of the FIS Bulletin which gives the number of competitions organised in the different countries during 1983 : Alpine skiing : ITA 62, AUT 51, USA 45, FRA 43, SUI 42, FRG 34 ; Nordic skiing : FIN 35, NOR 26, ITA 24, SWE 24, AUT 23, FRG 22.

Of course, Sarajevo constitutes the very climax of the season. There is every reason to believe that the organisation at all the skiing venues - Igman-Veliko Polje (cross-country), Igman-Malo Polje (jumping), Bjelasnica (men's Alpine skiing) and Jahorina (women's Alpine skiing) - will satisfy everybody involved.

In the afore-mentioned FIS bulletin, FIS President Mr. Marc Hodler explains that "preparations are ahead of schedule, and Sarajevo seems to offer all the guarantees for the full success of the Games". In the same issue of the Bulletin, FIS Secretary General Mr. Gian Franco Kasper writes : "All reports (by the FIS Technical Delegates who once again inspected the Olympic sites in the autumn of 1983) are positive without exception, though minor corrections must still be made with regard to the organisation and constructions on different courses, tracks and ski-jumps". This news is certainly encouraging for us all. Eighteen skiing competitions are to be organised within eleven days. This implies a heavy strain on the Yugoslavs' organisational machinery. The women's 20 km cross-country competition is a new Olympic event.

For the first time in the history of the Olympic Winter Games and of the FIS, and following the IOC President's wishes, a disabled men's skiing competition will be held in Sarajevo as a demonstration event, in which will participate thirty of the best racers of the 111rd World Winter Games for the disabled which will take place in Innsbruck at the end of January. The FIS has accepted to assume responsibility for the technical organisation of this competition, which will consist of a giant slalom.

Of the fourteen Olympic individual gold medal winners in the skiing competitions in Lake Placid in 1980, half will attempt to defend their titles in Sarajevo. Ingemar Stenmark (SWE) and Hanni Wenzel (LIE), who both won two Olympic golds (in slalom and giant slalom) four years ago, will be among those missing as today, they are considered ineligible because of their so-called B-licenses.

As decided at the 1983 FIS Congress in Sydney, World Ski Championships (WSC) in the Alpine and Nordic disciplines will be organised every other year ; the skiing competitions in Sarajevo therefore no longer have the status of official FIS WSC.

The winter of 1984 will not be without FIS World Championships. Engelberg (SUI) has issued an invitation to World Team-Jumping Championships on 26th February, and Rovaniemi (FIN) is organising World Team Nordic-Combination Championships on 17th and 18th March. The Nordic events of the traditional junior WSC will take place in Trondheim (NOR) from 3rd to 5th February, while the Alpine events will be held in Sugarloaf (USA) from 26th February to 4th March.

During the summer and fall of 1983, the FIS General Secretariat in Berne printed new issues of all of the competition rules, which, according to the decisions taken at the Sydney Congress, hold a large number of amendments and modifications which will be valid for Sarajevo. The experience gained from 1984 events, especially at the Games in Sarajevo, will be discussed at the 1985 FIS Congress in Vancouver (CAN).

S. B.