

XXVIIIth WORLD ALPINE SKIING CHAMPIONSHIPS

ALL THE SPORTING VALUES

by MICHEL CLARE

The World Alpine Skiing Championships, which took place from the 30th January to the 10th February in the Valtellina, a high valley in Lombardy, in Bormio and Santa Caterina, will be remembered as among the most exciting in the history of the FIS.

Perfectly organised by the Italian federation, which was able to adjust skilfully to changes in the weather in a disconcerting winter skiers will not forget in a hurry, these championships opened up whole new vistas in the development of a sport which has been making non-stop progress ever since the first world championships some fifty years ago.

These championships were the first in a new cycle. The FIS has decided to hold the World Championships in odd years, the year before and, as in this case, the year after the Games. It was noticeable this year that the two big names absent from the Games in Sarajevo, Stenmark (SWE) and Girardelli, were present this time, the latter competing under the Luxembourg colours, which, given the high level of his ambitions, did not seem to bring him particular luck.

The great "hero" of these Championships was the Swiss Pirmin Zurbriggen, who won the combined event (downhill and slalom as in the combined nordic event), won the downhill with incredible mastery and took the silver medal in the giant slalom. The most astonishing aspect of his exploit was to see an athlete who, three weeks before, has undergone a meniscus operation, back in top form so soon. But the young twenty-two year old, trained in the legendary Saas Almagell valley, is a man of faith, the kind of faith that moves mountains and is drawn from the seemingly inexhaustible resources of sports psychology.

Another interesting aspect of Zurbriggen's achievement is the return to diversification in skiing, to which we feared the World Cup had put an end with the hyper-specialisation it has encouraged.

To be a winner here or to mount the podium at all, it was necessary to possess both an irreproachable skiing technique in the subtle transition from the downhill to the uphill ski, using the two legs almost independently, and absolutely peak physical condition. The best example of strength and finesse combined in this way was the German (FRG) Markus Wasmeier, winner of the giant slalom, an event which pushes the capacities of the human body to their very limits. That is why we saw such young winners : Wasmeier at twenty-



two and Diann Roffe (USA), winner of the women's giant slalom – the biggest surprise of these World Championships – at under eighteen. Among the youthful victors were also Jonas Nilsson, winner of the special slalom, and Michela Figini, truly the queen of downhill, the one she won with the considerable margin of 1'61.

Experience too played a part, however, and by no means a small one, in the success of Erika Hess (SUI), who successfully defended her title in the combined event, and that of the French girl Perrine Pelen, who swept to victory in the special slalom ahead of her countrywoman Christelle Guignard.

Perrine and Erika, the two best female slalom skiers of the past decade, made their world competition debut together in Garmisch-Partenkirchen in 1978, and have gained the same number of World Cup victories (15 titles). These two young women, who never cease to excel themselves, are always inspired by the most important motivation, the love of competition, which never seems to fail them.

These World Championships, Italian style, truly ran the gamut of the values cultivated by world-class sport at the highest possible level.

M. C.

We publish below the results of this 1985 Alpine World Championships :

MEN

Downhill

1. Pirmin Zurbriggen (SUI) ; 2. Peter Müller (SUI) ;
3. Douglas Lewis (USA).

Giant Slalom

1. Markus Wasmeier (FRG) ; 2. Pirmin Zurbriggen (SUI) ; 3. Marc Girardelli (LUX).

Special Slalom

1. Jonas Nilsson (SWE) ; 2. Marc Girardelli (LUX) ;
3. Robert Zoller (AUT).

Combined

1. Pirmin Zurbriggen (SUI) ; 2. Ernst Riedelsperger (AUT) ; 3. Thomas Burgler (SUI).

WOMEN

Downhill

1. Michela Figini (SUI) ; 2. Ariane Ehret (SUI) ;
3. Katrin Gutensohn (USA).

Giant Slalom

1. Diane Roffe (USA) ; 2. Elisabeth Kirchner (AUT) ;
3. Eva Twardokens (USA).

Special Slalom

1. Perrine Pelen (FRA) ; 2. Christelle Guignard (FRA) ; 3. Paoletta Magoni (ITA).

Combined

1. Erika Hess (SUI) ; 2. Sylvia Eder (AUT) ; 3. Tamara McKinney (USA).

