

THE SKIING SEASON 1987 : RECORDS ALL ROUND

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FORMER SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE FIS

Right now, as this article is being written, a couple of weeks of the new year have gone by and the winter cold has laid an iron hand on Europe. Cold, snow and storms, with temperatures of minus 20—30 degrees celsius — falling to 40 below or even 50 ! Daily life in cities and villages has been paralysed.

Maria Walliser



Naturally, the cold has also struck the sport of skiing. On many occasions, the competition programme, compiled with such great efforts — has had to be amended over and over again. The ski officials regret that this has been necessary, but as the winter season 1986-87 includes such great highlights as the 29th World Alpine Ski Championships in Crans-Montana (SUI) from 25th January to 8th February and the 36th World Nordic Ski Championships in Oberstdorf (FRG) from 11th to 21st February, special care must be taken. These two world events constitute, together with a great number of other important competitions, the final tests for the world elite, men and women who are aiming at participating in the struggle for Olympic medals in Calgary (CAN) in the winter of 1988.

We can only hope that the weather gods will relent. Optimistically, we count on them to look with favour and compassion on the coming qualifying events. This goes especially for the very comprehensive World Cup competitions and national championships, so important for all those who have shouldered the burden of selecting the national Olympic competition teams.

At the moment, the weather does not look too promising. The snow still keeps Europe in its grasp. The snow in Paris seems practically to have made it possible to go dog-sleigh riding down the Eiffel tower ! In the county of Kent, England, cars are being dug out from under the snow. In the streets, men and women hide their faces in woollen scarves, which, according to a Swedish newspaper, caused "the inhabitants of Stockholm to look like a cross between a muslim woman and an operating surgeon".

Oh yes, the winter is all-powerful, sometimes brutal. But skiers are a tough breed. All the difficulties will be overcome. I venture to maintain that the old phrase "all's well that ends well" may well apply when the FIS' 64th competition season is behind us, providing another convinc-

ing demonstration of the truth of the slogan “skiing conquers the world”.

Let us proclaim this from the roof-tops in all countries and on all continents, as a token of esteem, too, for the FIS President Marc Hodler, who, in 1987, can celebrate his 35th winter as the leader of a Federation in which the work is carried out in a spirit of cooperation and harmony. “The FIS family” remains a true concept for friends of skiing all over the world.

And now, let us look at the FIS International Ski Calendar for 1986-1987, 246 printed pages filled with hard facts about the current ski season.

Everything seems to be in record numbers this year — the number of events and individual competitions (an “event” may comprise four, five six or more individual races).

The Alpine calendar lists 527 events in 31 countries in Europe, North America, South America, Australia, New Zealand and Asia. To this figure of 527 should be added 23 freestyle events in eight countries on three continents and further competitions for citizen and university racers, corporate racers, veterans, children, lowlanders and grass-skiing racers. This last competition means that a new discipline has been included in the FIS’ activities.

However, there are hundreds, perhaps even thousands, of competitions — nobody knows the exact number — which are not included in the International Calendar: club competitions, purely national events, school competitions, etc. Taken all round, there is enormous activity taking place on ski tracks and downhill courses.

The FIS Alpine season is a very lengthy one indeed, as the southern hemisphere has winter when we in Europe have summer. Thus, the 1986-87 Alpine season started on 5th August 1986 in Thredbo (AUS) and will not close until 25th September 1987 at Mount Hutt (NZL).

Even if the World Ski Championships form the natural climax of the season, the skiing world’s Interest is also focused on many other big events with great traditions, for instance classic competitions such as the 47th Hahnenkammrennen in Kitzbühel (AUT), the 57th Lauberhornrennen in Wengen (SUI), the 52nd Arlberg-Kandahar (AUT) events, to name but a few.

The FIS likes to observe traditions, but is at the same time very open to new developments in competition activity, for example the first World Cup competition ever on South American

snow — two downhill races at Las Lenas (ARG) in August 1986, a premiere which whetted the appetite.

Right now, we are awaiting two World Cup premieres in Australia and New Zealand. The word “World” included in a race’s name is a strong challenge and a stimulus.

On the Nordic side — cross-country, ski jumping and Nordic combined — the FIS Calendar shows 220 events on four continents. Here, the same interpretation goes as for the Alpine disciplines: an ((event)) may comprise several individual competitions over different distances, jumping from a normal or giant ski-jump, individual races, relay races, etc.

Sixty long-distance cross-country competitions in 15 countries are an eloquent indication of the every-increasing popularity of the long-distance races. The number of competitors is imposing: starting fields of fifteen, twenty or twenty-five thousand! The longest distance is the historic Vasa Race in Mora (SWE), at 89 km, followed by “La Transjurassienne” (FRA), 76 km, Finlandia Hiihto, 75 km, and Oulun Tervahiihto (FIN), also 75 km. This last race is being organised for the 98th time!

Gunde Svan.





Pirmin Zurbriggen

As far as Nordic competitions are concerned, the season started on 23rd November at Lötén (NOR). The last event on the Calendar, jumping on a plastic-covered jump, takes place on 12th September 1987 at Frenstat pod Radhostem (TCH). In the Nordic disciplines, too, there are CIT-races, corporate races, veterans' races, etc.

In the group of classic Nordic events for 1987, we may mention the 88th Holmenkollen Ski Festival, the 76th Kiruna Ski Games (SWE), the 62nd Salpausselkä Games in Lahti (FIN), the 58th Miyasama Games in Sapporo (JPN) and the 50th Birkebeinerrennet in Lillehammer-Rena (NOR).

No peace for the wicked... "We" are out to conquer the world.

A very important detail in the FIS programme is the homologation of Alpine courses and ski jumps. Homologation is required for the organisation of international competitions. The current calendar accounts for 2,341 homologated Alpine courses in 31 countries (over 300 courses in the USA, over 200 in Australia, the FRG, Canada, France, Italy and Switzerland).

The corresponding figures for ski jumps are 176 in 19 countries. Here, the FRG is the leading nation with 27 homologated ski jumps, followed by Austria 26, Finland 18, Norway 16, Switzerland and Czechoslovakia 13 and USA 12.

Young skiers are the future of the skiing world. The national ski associations have a very important task, insofar as they are responsible for the training and schooling of young people. Naturally, the World Ski Championships for Juniors form part of the FIS programme.

The 1987 World Junior Alpine Ski Championships, number 6 in the series (from 1972 to 1981, nine European Junior Championships were organised), take place from 20th to 26th March in Hemsedal (NOR) and Salen (SWE). The 10th World Junior Ski Championships in Nordic disciplines (European championships were held from 1968-1978) will be held from 2nd to 8th February in Asiago (ITA).

The World Cup competitions are always followed with the greatest possible interest all over the world. The most important Cup finals take place at the following sites and times :

Alpine World Cup, men : 20th - 22nd March, Sarajevo (YUG), slalom, giant slalom, parallel ; women : 21st - 22nd March, Sarajevo (YUG), slalom, parallel.

Nordic World Cup: 21st - 22nd March, Holmenkollen (NOR), men : 50 km, 4 x 10 km ; women : 20 km, 4 x 5 km.

World Cup, Jumping: 20th - 22nd March, Raelingen, Oslo (NOR), 70 m, 90 m.

World Cup, Nordic combined: 21st - 22nd March, Oslo (NOR).

European Cup, Jumping: April 11th, Passo Rolle (ITA) 70 m.

Alpine Nor-Am, men and women : 2nd - 5th April, Mt. Tremblant, Stoneham and Chanteclair (CAN).

Finally, the Lowlander Championships for men and women take place at Altenmarkt (AUT) (Alpine) from 7th to 9th January and in Isny (FRG) (Nordic) from 2nd to 8th March.

It is quite in line with our time and age that an unusually large number of national championships have achieved international status.

Who will become Ski King of the year 1987 ? This question is on the skiers' agenda every year. Traditions count for much in skiing. To arrive at a correct result, the judging concerning the election of the Ski King is primarily based on the outcome of the World Championships and the World-Cup events.

In mid-January, the lists of results were dominated by three names : Pirmin Zurbriggen (SUI) in Alpine disciplines, Gunde Svan (SWE) in Nordic disciplines and Maria Walliser, the Swiss skier whose name shines brightest among the ladies. But competition is keen, and much will happen before the final events are recorded. There will be much excitement and many thrills, many sources of delight and also of disappointment. This, of course, is the charm of competitive sports at all levels.

Well met at the many venues of the international ski world.

May the best man win.

S. B.