



New slope stages FIS Alpine Ski World Cup Finals showdown

Lenzerheide (SUI) will become the center of attention for the world of alpine skiing when the idyllic Swiss village stages the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup Finals from 9th-13th March. The 25 best placed athletes of the Mens' and Ladies' World Cup standings in each of the disciplines, as well as competitors who have gained at least 400 points and the newly-crowned world junior champions in the respective discipline are qualified to take part in the event which will mark the debut of the Silvano Beltrametti piste, named in honor of the former Swiss skier who was tragically paralysed in a ski racing accident. Construction was begun last summer and was completed by beginning of December 2004. It has a total length of 3,6 km and starts at 2'500 m above sea level.

The Finals promise one of the closest races in the history of the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup with both the Mens and Ladies overall titles up for grabs. Enjoying a narrow 63 point gap with four races to go and 400 points to ski for, Sweden's Anja Paersson is the favourite to capture the overall Ladies' World Cup title in front of Croatia's Janica Kostelic, with both athletes in fine form. In the Mens' battle Bode Miller (USA), trying to become the first American since Phil Mahre in the 1983/1984 season to win the men's overall title, leads Benjamin Raich (AUT) by an even smaller margin of 52 points (1,348 points to 1,296) with four races left. The complete program for the FIS Alpine World Cup Finals may be found here: http://www.fis-ski.com/uk/604/1228.html?event_id=15990&cal_suchsector=AL

Ruka welcomes FIS Freestyle World Championships (FIN)

After the FIS Snowboard World Championships in Whistler (CAN), the FIS Alpine World Ski Championships in Bormio/Santa Caterina (ITA) and the FIS Nordic World Ski Championships in Oberstdorf (GER), all attention now switches to Ruka (FIN) as the 10th FIS Freestyle World Championships will take place at the Finnish resort from 13th-19th March 2005. Indeed the organisers have been working hard putting the last touch on preparations for the event which will be the biggest FIS Freestyle World Championships ever with two more disciplines added to the list of competitions. As such HalfPipe and Ski Cross, which was successfully introduced into the Freestyle FIS World Cup calendar since 2002/2003, will feature in the program for the FIS Freestyle World Championships for the first time with the traditional disciplines of Moguls, Dual Moguls and Aerials.

Since June 2002 when Ruka was awarded the championships at the FIS Congress in Portoroz (SLO), new slopes and the jump site have been under construction. The moguls course, which is 29 degrees steep and a full 240 meters was already finished three years ago along with the jumps for aerials. In addition the Ski Cross course that was used for the 2003-2004 FIS Freestyle Europa Cup has been slightly altered while the HalfPipe slope was ready for use already at the beginning of the 2003-2004 season.

The FIS Freestyle World Championships was launched in 1986 in Tignes (FRA) and since 1989 has been staged every second year. No less than 33 nations have taken part in the championships since in the first event in 1986, while 19 nations have earned

a position the podium during the 20-year history of the event. Judging from history the United States team will probably travel home with a fair share of the medals as American athletes have claimed 47 medals since 1986 while Canada in second spot have won 40 pieces of silverware. In total Scandinavians have accounted for 28 medals in the history of the competition and they will no doubt aim to improve that result in their own backyard. No less than 380 athletes from 29 countries will take part in the event which thanks to the excellent coverage of Finnish host broadcaster MTV3 will be shown in around 20 countries. Around 150 members of the media have been accredited for the event. In the Ladies' events, China's Nina Li, who has already won the Ladies' FIS Freestyle World Cup overall title this season ahead of the final competition on Friday 11th March 2005 in Madonna di Campiglio (ITA), could well steal a significant part of the show while Jennifer Heil (CAN) and Orphelie David (FRA) could also have big roles to play. In the Mens' disciplines American competitors, Jeremy Bloom and Jeret Peterson are expected to dominate while Tomas Kraus (CZE) could also take the honours in at least one of the disciplines. You may find the complete program for the championships here: http://www.fis-ski.com/uk/604/1228.html?event_id=15257&cal_suchsector=FS

Atle Skaardal appointed as FIS Chief Race Director for Ladies

Atle Skaardal (NOR) has been appointed to the position of FIS Chief Race Director for Ladies. He will commence his new position officially from 1st May 2005. After 14 years of loyal service to the International Ski Federation in the role as FIS Chief Race Director for Ladies, Kurt Hoch has decided to look for other challenges. FIS is extremely grateful for the outstanding service he provided throughout the years and wishes him all the best in the future.

"We are extremely grateful to Kurt Hoch for his dedication and loyal service to FIS though 14 years and we are very excited to have a former athlete with such immense experience within the FIS Alpine skiing

circuit join us" says FIS President Gian Franco Kasper. "We are convinced that Atle will do a great job for us in the years to come and that he will be a great initiator in the continuous development of ladies' alpine skiing". Atle Skaardal was one of Norway's leading skiers and a member of the national team from 1983 – 1997. Aged 39 year old, born in Lunde (NOR), Skaardal won 7 FIS Alpine World Cup Ski races (6 Downhill's and 1 Super-G) and finished on the podium in 26 FIS Alpine World Cup ski competitions, claiming the FIS World Cup Super G title in 1995/96. In 1996 he crowned his career winning the FIS Alpine World Ski Championship Super G competition in Sierra Nevada (SPA), a feat he repeated one year later in Sestriere (ITA). You can find Skaardal's complete skiing biography here: <http://www.fis-ski.com/uk/604/613.html?sector=AL&listid=&competitorid=56863&type=result>

Maier (AUT) ties Tomba (ITA) for second spot

Austria's Hermann Maier set a remarkable record when he won the FIS Alpine World Cup Super G race at Kvitfjell (NOR) on Sunday 6 March to tie Italy's Alberto Tomba for second place in the career victory list behind Ingemar Stenmark. Maier and Tomba now both claim 50 FIS Alpine World Cup victories while the Swedish great leads with 86 wins, all in Slalom and Giant Slalom. "There are still chances to win some more," the 32-year-old Maier said. "I'm still younger than Tomba when he reached the 50 wins." Maier, the four-time and defending World Cup overall champion, completed a double on the Kvitfjell course in Norway, adding the Super-G to his victory in the Downhill on Saturday -- a repeat of his two wins in 2001. Maier's double victory means he also has a remote chance of retaining his overall title when the FIS Alpine World Cup finals start in Lenzerheide (SUI) on Wednesday 9th March with one race remaining in each discipline - the Downhill, Super-G, Slalom and Giant Slalom. With 1,166 points against Bode Miller's 1348 points, Maier still has a mathematical chance to successfully defend his overall title.

Hans Knauss (AUT) commits anti-doping violation

On Tuesday 1st March 2005 the FIS Doping Panel issued its' decision in the case of Alpine skier Hans Knauss (AUT) who has committed a doping violation in accordance with clause 2.1 of the FIS Anti-Doping Rules, Presence of a Prohibited Substance. The Panel found however that whilst the Athlete did not act intentionally, he clearly acted negligently. In particular given the known risk in connection with nutritional supplements, the Athlete did not exercise adequate caution by deliberately choosing to use supplements different from the ones recommended by his Association.

Having carefully considered all aspects of the case, the Panel decided to reduce the period of Ineligibility from two (2) years to 18 (eighteen) months, commencing on the date on which the anti-doping violation occurred, namely from 27th November 2004 until and including 26th May 2006. According to Article 9 of the Rules, Automatic Disqualification of Results, and to Article 10.7 of the Rules, Disqualification of Results in Competitions Subsequent to Sample Collection, the Athlete shall be disqualified as from (and including) the FIS Alpine World Cup Downhill competition in Lake Louise (CAN) on 27th November 2004.

Dear Friends of FIS,

Should you have any feedback, comments, you are most welcome to send them to me at: frandsen@fisski.ch. "FIS Newsflash" will not only be distributed via e-mail but also be published in the News section of the FIS Website.

Best regards

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