



Sizzling World Championship Freestyle program in freezing Finland

While temperatures were well below zero, the action was sizzling hot when the 10th FIS Freestyle World Championships took place in Ruka (FIN) from 17th-20th March. After the FIS Freestyle World Cup season came to a thrilling finish in Madonna di Campiglio on Friday 11th March, the best of Mens and Ladies Freestyle skiing set their sights on Ruka for the World Championships which for the first time staged Ski Cross and Halfpipe as part of a program that includes Moguls, Dual Moguls and Aerials.

FIS Freestyle Race Director Joe Fitzgerald was full of praise in his overall evaluation of the World Championships. "We are really happy about these competitions. The decision to add Ski Cross and Halfpipe as new disciplines was made six years ago and we saw it realized in Ruka. In total I can only give the sites, the competitions and the organizers the highest possible scores for a championship which brought very positive memories", he said.

As expected the U.S. and Canada claimed 11 out of 30 possible medals while host nation Finland was left to celebrate the silver medal Sami Mustonen won in Dual Moguls. 13 out of 29 participating nations were able to earn a spot on the podium in this year's championships. 380 athletes took part in the event which with the excellent coverage of host broadcaster MTV3 was shown in around 20 countries.

The winners of the individual Mens' and Ladies disciplines were:

FIS Freestyle World Ski Champions

Men:

Halfpipe: Matias Wecxsteen (FRA)

Ski Cross: Tomas Kraus (CZE)

Aerials: Steve Omischl (CAN)

Moguls: Nathan Roberts (USA)

Dual Moguls: Toby Dawson (USA)

Ladies:

Halfpipe: Sarah Burke (CAN)

Ski Cross: Karin Huttary (AUT)

Aerials: Nina Li (CHN)

Moguls: Hannah Kearney (USA)

Dual Moguls: Jennifer Heil (CAN)

JOSKA trophies the ultimate FIS award

Olympic winners in ancient Greece were wreathed with laurels, the Joska crystal globe symbolizes the ultimate prize for athletes who make life-long dreams come true by finishing at the top of the podium in the FIS Alpine Skiing, Cross-Country, Ski Jumping, Nordic Combined, Freestyle and Snowboard World Cups. At the 2005 FIS Alpine and Nordic World Ski Championships, the trophies were also produced by Joska in the form of an extraordinary piece of hand-made artwork that connects traditional glass making art with modern trends. Indeed out of a 1200° glowing, molten mass of glass, the large World Cup globe weighing 12 kg is formed into a raw form. After cooling off for ten hours, the globe is then brought to the glass cutter, who, with diamond discs, cuts the unmistakable design of the snow crystals into the globe. The high quality standards demanded by FIS and Joska decide in the controlling process, which globe is actually handed over to a winner or thrown back into the glass melt because of minor irregularities.

Thrilling Ski Jumping Finale in Planica (SLO)

Slovenia Ski-jumping resort Planica has over the years established itself as a venue where spectacular competitions take place. In 1821 Jozse Pogacar made a record jump of nine metres and became the first ski jumping champion and world record holder. Indeed over the next 184 years over 60 "world records" were broken in Planica, including the first jumps of over one hundred and two hundred metres. In 1934 the Austrian Sepp Bradl was the first man in history to fly 100 metres on a pair of skis, while in March 1994 the Finn Toni Nieminen became the first double-centurion with a 203 metre catapult.

On that background nobody could be surprised when "The Giant", as the ski jumping hill is often referred to, provided the scene for four unofficial record jumps as the FIS Ski-Jumping World Cup competition came to a thrilling finale. Whilst 40'000 spectators watched Matti Hautamaeki (FIN) seal his 6th successive FIS World Cup win on the first day of action on Saturday 21 March, Norway's Bjoern Einar Romoeren stole most of the headlines on Sunday 22 March when a second jump of 239 metres allowed him to finish top of the podium in the last competition of the season.

Janne Ahonen (FIN) had already captured the overall FIS Ski Jumping World Cup title before traveling to Planica. Ahonen, who has 12 World Cup competitions this season, is the fifth jumper from Finland to win the Overall World Cup and after Matti Nykaenen (1983/1985/1986/1988), Ari-Pekka Nikkola (1990), Toni Nieminen (1992) and Janne Ahonen (2004/2005), it is the 8th time a Finnish jumper has captured the prestigious trophy. In the Nations Cup Austria prevailed with 5102 points ahead of Finland (4711) and Norway (4124).

Switzerland recover lost pride in FIS Snowboard World Cup While Switzerland have some way from the prestigious position they once enjoyed as one of the absolute "superpowers" of alpine skiing, the alpine nation may take heart from

the fact that they captured no less than seven podium spots in the overall Nokia FIS Snowboard World Cup standings for the individual disciplines when Tandadalen (SWE) staged the Nokia FIS Snowboard World Cup Finals from 16th-19th March 2005.

Indeed Switzerland's Danila Meuli and Phillip Schoch were the only contestants who had secured their respective Crystal Globes before the final showdown in the Swedish skiing resort. The talented Meuli might take a well-deserved rest after a busy season with the knowledge that out of all the athletes who won gold at the FIS Snowboard World Championships at Whistler Mountain (CAN) earlier in the year, she was actually the only one who could defend her top spot position in the overall rankings of one of the disciplines. The overall winners in the individual snowboard disciplines were:

FIS Snowboard World Ski Champions

Men:

Parallel GS: Phillip Schoch (SUI)

SBX: Xavier Delerue (FRA)

Halfpipe: Mathieu Crepel (FRA)

Big Air: Jukka Eretuli (FIN)

Ladies:

Parallel GS: Daniela Meuli (SUI)

SBX: Doresia Krings (AUT)

Halfpipe: Mero Narita (JPN)

Big Air: Daniela Meuli (SUI)

FIS Ladies Ski Jumping Continental Cup off to a bright start

At the 44th FIS Congress in Miami in June 2004 it was decided that FIS would aim to develop Ladies Ski Jumping starting off with the Continental Cup and already in its infancy the event is revealing potential.

In its inaugural year, the competition saw no less than around 60 participants from 10 nations compete against each other in their individual quest to capture the overall title, whereby 54 managed to score points for the overall standings. The athletes, who are still all amateurs, traveled to the U.S. and across

Europe as six nations took part in staging the 12 competitions that made up FIS Ladies Ski Jumping Continental Cup. On two occasions the FIS Ladies Ski Jumping Continental Cup events were organized at the same venue with the Men's Ski Jumping Continental Cup and one occasion with the Men's Ski Jumping World Cup which provided platforms for the media as well as the public to familiarize themselves with the new discipline.

Norway revealed that it's not only within Men's Ski Jumping that they have a bundle of talent to make their selection from as Anette Hagen ran away with the overall title with a 145 point gap down to USA's Lindsey Van who finished second ahead of Daniela Iraschko (AUT).

Falun (SWE) closes out FIS Cross Country World Cup Season

All cross-country skiing enthusiasts had their eyes on Falun (SWE) when the picturesque Swedish ski resort staged the final FIS Cross Country World Cup races of the season for men and ladies from 19th-20th March.

After Rene Sommerfeldt captured the prestigious Crystal Globe for Germany last season, team-mate Axel Teichman took over the overall top spot on the podium in front of Vincent Vittoz (FRA) who had to battle hard to maintain a narrow four-point gap to Norway's Tor Arne Hetland who came in third. With four athletes ranked in the first eleven in the overall FIS Cross Country World Cup standings, Germany once more displayed their current all-round strength while Sweden's Per Oloffson is still struggling with mental fatigue and the Norwegian men aren't quite living up to the previous performances by Bjorn Daehlie and Thomas Alsgaard.

This is, however, not the case in the Ladies FIS Cross Country World Cup where Marit Bjoergen who won no less than six medals at the FIS Nordic World Ski Championships in Oberstdorf (GER) earlier in the year took one more step up the podium to replace last season's silver medal with a gold medal for her efforts in this years FIS Cross-Country

World Cup campaign. Indeed her dominance was so profound that she won by the biggest margin ever in the history of the FIS Ladies Cross Country World Cup. "It's been an incredible year and all my goals have been reached", said Bjoergen. The overall winners in the individual cross country disciplines were:

Viessman FIS Cross-Country World Cup winners

Men:

Overall: Axel Teichmann (GER)
Distance: Axel Teichmann (GER)
Sprint: Tor Arne Hetland (NOR)

Ladies:

Overall: Marit Bjoergen (NOR)
Distance: Marit Bjoergen (NOR)
Sprint: Marit Bjoergen (NOR)

Injury-haunted Haeusl ends career

One of alpine skiing former top skiers, Regina Haeusl (GER) has decided to bring down the curtain on an impressive career which was sadly regularly haunted by a series of injuries. 31-year old Haeusl, who announced her decision in connection with the FIS Alpine World Cup Finals in Lenzerheide (SUI), had originally planned to end her career at the 2006 Winter Olympic Games in Turin but after sustaining her second cruciate knee ligament injury at the FIS Giant Slalom World Cup competition in Lenggries in February this year, she was forced to end her career ahead of time.

Haeusl managed to claim a spot on the FIS World Cup podium on 13 occasions and as a 19-year old she celebrated her first and only FIS Alpine World Cup win in 1993 in Cortina d'Ampezzo (ITA) when she prevailed in the downhill run. Haeusl's biggest triumph of her career was undoubtedly when she captured the overall FIS Alpine World Cup Downhill title in year 2000. However, her triumph was bitter-sweet after breaking her leg at the FIS Alpine World Cup finals in Bormio (ITA) and was forced to receive the prestigious Crystal Globe from her hospital bed.