



FIS NEWSFLASH

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Fédération Internationale de Ski

International Ski Federation

Internationaler Ski Verband

Four-Hills Tournament: Ahonen aims for the fourth victory?

The 54th Four-Hills Tournament for ski jumping will start in Oberstdorf (GER) on Thursday, 29th December 2006. Although still without a win this season, 28-year-old Janne Ahonen (FIN) who will be aiming at his fourth victory after 1999, 2003 and 2005 appears to be the man to beat in his 14th tournament. In fact, most of the World Cup coaches named him as their tournament favorite. But there are several challengers: Jakub Janda (CZE), the current World Cup leader and four-time winner this season; Andreas Kuettel (SUI) who won in Lillehammer and Harrachov; and many others, including Michael Uhrmann (GER), Thomas Morgenstern, Andreas Widhoelzl (both AUT), Adam Malysz (POL) or the Norwegians, such as Lars Bystoel.

Noriaki Kasai (JPN), participating in his 15th tournament, will be the most experienced jumper in the field. The best-known newcomers include the FIS Junior World Champion 2005 Joonas Ikonen (FIN) and the bronze medal winner of the FIS Junior World Championships Jurij Tepes of Slovenia, who will celebrate his World Cup debut in Oberstdorf.

11 countries will broadcast live from Oberstdorf, including Denmark, Spain and Greece. The New Year's competition in Garmisch-Partenkirchen, traditionally one of the most watched sports TV broadcasts in Europe, will be available live on 12 TV stations in addition to Eurosport.

A special highlight of the Oberstdorf event will be an official farewell to Sven Hannawald, until now the only jumper to win all four competitions in a single tournament. He achieved the "Grand Slam" in

2001/2002, in honor of the 50th anniversary of the tournament.

The official honorary guest of the 54th edition of the tournament is Reinhold Bachler of Austria who ranked 3rd in 1975.

Nordic Combined: Start of 2nd Period with the Warsteiner Grand Prix Germany

On this coming Friday, the FIS Warsteiner Grand Prix Germany will launch the second period of the FIS World Cup Nordic Combined. This year's "Three Hills, Three Tracks" tournament - established in the 1993/94 season - features events in Oberhof (the so-called Thüringen Cup; December 30th, 2005), Ruhpolding (Ruhpoldinger Bär; January 3rd, 2006) and Schonach (Schwarzwaldpokal; January 6th, 2006). While distinguishing the best athlete in these three races, the German Grand Prix is also one of the most important, remaining opportunities to qualify for the Torino Olympics. In addition, the 2006 *Schwarzwaldpokal* (The Blackforest Trophy) in Schonach represents the 40th anniversary of this time-honoured competition, one of the most renowned in the discipline.

During the first World Cup period, six nations and 11 individual athletes stood at least once on the podium. The same internationality can be seen on the current World Ranking List and in the World Cup standings where the top ten athletes represent six different nations. The pre-holiday sprint race in Ramsau (AUT) also included, for the third time, the new starting method known as the hurricane start: "We are very pleased about the positive feedback on the hurricane start, both from the media and the athletes. It is definitely here to stay!" noted Ulrich Wehling, FIS Race Director Nordic Combined.

The conclusion of the first period of the World Cup season was also marked by reconciliation between Ronny Ackermann (GER) and Hannu Manninen (FIN) whose rivalry on the race course has made headlines recently. Showing exemplary sportsmanship, the Finn accepted an invitation to present Ackermann with his trophy as the "Best German Sportsman 2005" at a gala in Baden-Baden (GER). "What a great gesture from him: I am still speechless!" commented Ackermann.

Impressive organisers' effort guarantees alpine action on the verge of Christmas

With Christmas around the corner Kranjska Gora played host to the Men's Alpine FIS World Cup Slalom and Giant Slalom competitions on 21st and 22nd December.

The picturesque Slovenian ski resort, located at the foot of the Julischen Alps, at an altitude of only 800 metres offered great conditions for the 45th World Cup anniversary which was celebrated in style by the attendance of former winners on the side of the slopes of the Vitranc, (1,215 m) – among them Alberto Tomba, Marc Giradelli, Jure Košir and Bojan Križaj – as well as Slovenian Minister of Education and Sport, Milan Zver. Local volunteers under the leadership of Janko Pirc, one of the numerous instrumental figures in the organization of the event, had been working consistently on the piste since the end of October to provide the best possible conditions for the athletes who enjoyed competing in front of a passionate crowd on both competition days.

Spindleruv Mlyn (CZE) hosted the action when the Ladies Alpine FIS World Cup Slalom and Giant Slalom competitions took place on 21st and 22nd of December. Wednesday's GS and Thursday's slalom were the first alpine World Cup races ever held in the Czech Republic (7 FIS Alpine World Cup events took place previously in the former Czechoslovakia), although races were scheduled two years ago but canceled due to poor snow cover. The resort has previously held FIS World Cup Freestyle

competitions, as well as numerous FIS Alpine European Cup races. More than a meter of fresh snow fell on the mountain in the days leading up to the events and it took a remarkable effort from the race organizers to get the Cerna run ready for the competitions. In the end it was Janica Kostelic and Anja Paersson who grabbed the headlines by finishing top of the podium with Kostelic claiming her first ever World Cup Giant Slalom in her illustrious career. The Czech fans appreciated the performances of their own athletes with World Championship bronze medalist, Sarka Zahrobska 8th and Lucie Hrstkova 30th in the Slalom whilst Zahrobska, 28th pipped Eva Kurfuerstova, wearing bib 66th, who qualified for the second run for the first time in her 10-year World Cup career. You may find the complete results from Kranjska Gora and Spindleruv Mlyn on www.fis-ski.com

FIS Honorary Member Rössner passes away

FIS Honorary Member Prof. Fred Rössner (AUT) passed away on 25.12.2005. Rössner made a name for himself when he became head coach of the Austrian National Team in 1951, and was rightfully considered a leading coach of the 1950s. Rössner was the first coach who created training programs for developing explosive strength and speed endurance. His innovative coaching methods and techniques were instrumental in the success of Austrian Team during those years. Indeed Toni Sailer's three Olympic medals at the 1956 Winter Olympics at Cortina d'Ampezzo could be credited in large part to Fred Rössner. Rössner became a member of the FIS Council in 1971 and was elected a FIS Honorary Member in 1985.

Snowboard World Cup competitions to debut in Leysin (SUI)

The Nokia Snowboard FIS World Cup Halfpipe competitions in Morzine-Avoriaz (FRA) will be moved to Leysin (SUI). Dates remain as scheduled in the official FIS World Cup Calendar (January 19. – 20. 2006). It will be the first time that Snowboard World Cup competitions will take place at Leysin.

The Swiss ski resort has earlier hosted FIS European Cup Snowboard competitions.

All changes to the FIS Calendar are updated immediately on notification and can be viewed on the FIS Website www.fis-ski.com

Dear Friends of FIS,

We are approaching the end of the year which at the same time signals the end of my spell at FIS. May I take the opportunity to wish our Newsflash Editor, Riikka Rakic, the best of luck in her new position and at the same time wish you all a Happy New Year.

Best regards

Svend Frandsen
INTERNATIONAL SKI FEDERATION
Communications Manager