



## **Kitzbüchel Hahnenkamm-Race 2008**

### **The Race**

When you first arrive in Zermatt, the Matterhorn is the thing that impresses you the most. When you arrive in Kitzbühel, it is the Streif that commands your attention. From the start at 1665 metres (5465 feet) above sea level, to the finish at 805 metres (2641 feet), the length of the course is 3312 metres (10,866 feet). Behind these naked numbers is the greatest ski spectacle in the world: the Hahnenkamm Downhill on the Streif in Kitzbühel! Man continually searches for superlatives to adequately describe the race but it is not always possible. The simplest way to describe this annual event down the most fearsome slope on the World Cup tour is: The Race. This says it all.

### **From the early races to the spectacle it is today**

The first race was small and amateurish and was run down the Hahnenkamm between the wars in 1931. From its conception to today, the race has developed into a huge event. What Wimbledon is to tennis and Monaco is to Formula 1, "Kitz" is to ski racing: unparalleled and unique! What is certain is that at Kitzbühel only the best is good enough. From Infront, one of the largest Sporting Rights businesses in the world, to the WWP Agency of Harti Weirather and Hanni Wenzel, a sponsorship agency of world renown, to the prestigious Swiss watchmaker Rolex, the image of the race is embodied with what the racers on the Streif depend on: Precision, Elegance and Reliability!

With the combined skill of the Kitzbühel Ski Club, the host broadcaster ORF, and 500 million TV viewers, the perfect show has been carefully nurtured and delivered to sitting rooms around the world. Around 1000 journalists and photographers, fans from all the teams ringing cow bells like an alpine celebration, celebrities from business, culture and sport, the young and old, workers and aristocrats mix together in the largest social gathering, all looking for one thing: to have a place to watch the greatest show in the mountains.

30,000 people gather to watch the Super G on the Friday, 20,000 for the Slalom on the Sunday and for the Downhill on the Saturday around 40,000 people cram in between the final dash and the finish area!

And up at the start the racers are all alone, just them and their thoughts: How do I get down there? Bernhard Russi was already a World Champion when he first competed at the Hahnenkamm in 1972: "I stood at the top of the 'Mousetrap', staring down, and I asked myself: Is this real?" Then his great adversary, Karl Schranz, came up and tapped him on the shoulder to give him confidence: "Come on, there are many other jumps further on down the hill!"

When the Swiss star was standing at the start later on, he lost his confidence again. Russi wanted to back out of the start hut but behind him stood the next racer ready and waiting to go! The only way to escape was to go forwards. A journey into the dark unknown as the sun does not shine at the start. The ski racing heroes come into the sunlight, into the spotlight in the truest sense of the word, for the first time at Hausberg when all those at the finish have them in view. 40,000 spectators watch in admiration of their journey down the ice and bumps.



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### **Only the best win on the Streif**

Only the best win on the hardest downhill in the world. The names of past winners read like a who's who of ski racing, from Killy, Schranz and Collombin, to Klammer, Read, Weirather, Girardelli, Zurbriggen, Heinzer, Aamodt, Strobl, Maier, Eberharter, Walchhofer and Rahlves.

But in Kitzbühel there are not only racers and winners. Exceptional people compete in this exceptional arena. In 1985 Pirmin Zurbriggen won the first two downhill's of his career on the Friday and Saturday. In the second of the two races he injured his knee in the compression after the final dash. The winner left the arena on crutches and in the ambulance. To this day it is the only time in the history of the World Cup that the prize giving ceremony has taken place without the winner on the podium!

Then what about in 2002? Everybody knew that Hermann Maier would not be able to compete at the Olympics after his horrific motorbike accident. Maier and the Austrian Ski Federation waited to release the official communication until deciding that the venue and race at Kitzbühel fit the billing. The press conference will go down in the annuals of history: never have so many journalists, photographers and camera crews fit into the press conference room! And never has a non-starter received so much more attention and coverage than the winner, Stephan Eberharter that year!

This is typical of the exceptional personality of Rolex Ambassador Hermann Maier, a man with incomparable charisma and an amazing aura about him. When you sit with Hermann you get the feeling that there is an electric spark in the air. What this man has achieved in his career is exceptional and extraordinary. Before his motorbike accident he won two races in two different disciplines in two days: the Downhill and Super G in 2001. Only Jean Claude Killy had managed this feat with the Slalom and Downhill before him in 1967, the first year of the World Cup.

There is not much more impressive than Maier's performance in 2003. One year after his infamous Press Conference in Kitzbühel, Maier had a last chance to qualify for the 2003 World Championships. One week after the races the World Championships began and this was Maier's last chance to qualify. His best chance was the Super G. Disaster struck for Maier as the weather deteriorated and the race had to be postponed. The World Championships without Maier? The Austrian Ski Federation left no stone unturned as they discussed with FIS the possibility of running the race anywhere and anyhow. Eventually it was announced that the race would be run on the Monday. A race for Maier! That Monday it snowed, visibility was poor and the course was harder than ever. Hermann Maier, with an injured calf, little feeling in his foot, and less training than the other racers could surely not win but win he did! This was one of the biggest and most memorable wins in ski racing history and Kitzbühel was the ideal arena for this spectacle. Hermann Maier, this rock of a man, cried uninhibited at the finish.



## **Kitzbühel Hahnenkamm-Race 2008**

### **Only the best win on the Streif** *(Continued)*

Only the best win on the Streif. But this does not mean that there is an ideal ski racer for the course. While Maier can put his successes down to his exceptional strength, aggressiveness, and his willingness to risk everything, Jean Claude Killy was the exact opposite and was also successful. Killy raced with elegance, greater precision and a distinct feeling for the piste, the slope and the race course. The Frenchman had, incidentally, ski contracts with two different ski firms: one for Slalom and one for Downhill. Killy became a three-time Gold Medal winner at the 1968 Olympics in Grenoble and he retired when he was only 24 years old! Killy also became the Organising Committee President of the 1992 Winter Olympic Games in Albertville and today is an active and respected Executive Member of the International Olympic Committee.

### **The key to winning on the Streif**

Whether a racer races with the guile of a Maier or the fine technique of a Killy, the key to winning on the Streif is to master both qualities. After just 100 metres of the course, racers meet the Mousetrap and at 85 degrees in steepness, the racers fly up to 60 metres down the hill. On landing the racers must be ready to immediately turn left as well as cope with a compression. A mere ten seconds later the racers have to be ready for the Steilhang, one of the most revered sections on a downhill course the world over, covered in sheet ice making it a fight between skis, the piste and physical abilities. Racers shoot out of this section down the Bruckenschuss or they land in the safety fencing!

After Alte Schneise, Seidlalm and Lärchenschuss the racers reach Hausberg. Then there is the jump before the Hausbergkante and then a first sighting for the crowd of 40,000 screaming fans. After landing and tackling the delicate left hand turn across the Traverse, racers can barely stop as they reach the turn that leads to the finish jump. With speeds approaching 150 kmh (93mph), racers head towards the finish jump that was only built a few years ago. In 2004 the crowd held their breath when Italy's Kristian Ghedina made a spread eagle jump here!

### **The uniqueness of the stadium**

If Kitz would not be there, it would have to be invented. This is a downhill course set amidst a town of almost 8500 inhabitants. To watch the race you do not need a car or a cable car. It is not necessary to ski or snowboard in order to go to the theatre where "The Race" happens. While the VIP's settle down in the grandstand wrapped up in a mass of blankets, the fan clubs gather along the side of the course where there is competition for creating the best atmosphere. When the race starts at 11.30am those at the front of the netting have been standing there for over three hours in order to get the best vantage points!



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### **The uniqueness of the stadium** *(Continued)*

No other ski race in the world attracts so many media and press. There are representatives from newspapers, magazines and TV shows, many who do not attend any other ski events, yet they are two, three or four deep at the finish area. The atmosphere in the Media Corridor is especially exciting: nowhere else is it so difficult to speak to the winners! "I am never doing Kitz again," one experienced journalist was overheard saying, yet there he was a year later never the less. The fascination of Kitzbühel is there for all to see. It is impossible to get used to Kitzbühel as each edition is unique.

### **When the prize money is risked in the casino**

Kitzbühel at night is as spectacular as during the races. With a variety of snow bars and Schnapps bars, one can choose to meet in Waschküchl, Stamperl, Fünferl or in the Chizzo. Yet the biggest party is the winner's party at the Londoner. When the hero of the race and his entourage enter the jam-packed pub by the side door around midnight, the horn blows. The racers then go behind the bar and start serving the fans beer, often pouring it over their heads! 1994 American Olympic Champion Tommy Moe cut his hand on a broken beer glass in the Londoner. Since then only plastic cups have been used!

Before the stars have found their way to the Londoner, they were cheered at the prize giving ceremony by some 20,000 spectators representing the most impressive celebration in winter sports. Then they survived the media marathon and eventually may risk a special trip to the casino. There the winner of the race can increase his winnings, normally around 30,000, by sitting at the roulette table betting on their start bib number. A few have been tempted to try and double their winnings in this way but many end up marching into the Londoner with empty pockets!

On the other side of the coin there are the jet-set, the stars, the wannabes, the athletes, business leaders, politicians and actors. Harti Weirather, 1982 Hahnenkamm winner, hosts a formal party in a tent near the finish where he entertains prominent invited guests like Bernie Ecclestone, Franz Beckenbauer, Niki Lauda, Boris Becker, Udo Juergens, Arnold Schwarzenegger, Uschi Glas,, Thomas Gottschalk and Austrian political leaders.

### **The World Cup without Kitzbühel is unthinkable**

Every sport has its corner stone, its rock. The Ski World Cup without Kitzbühel is unthinkable. The Hahnenkamm Race is the highlight of the year on the ski-racing calendar, even if the World Championships or Olympics follow. Over 40 TV stations cover the race and it is a priceless event that captivates even those who do not usually follow ski-racing.

This jewel of an event has been noticed by Rolex. For the last 80+ years the name of the Swiss Watchmaker has been synonymous with the best of sport and the arts. Providing support and assistance also in ski racing since the conception of the Alpine Ski World Cup, makes Rolex more than a sponsor -- it makes them a real partner!



## **Rolex and sports: a pioneering spirit in the name of excellence**

Precise, waterproof and robust, at its launching in 1926 the Oyster was already synonymous with modernity. Adapted to the lifestyle of a rapidly evolving society in which leisure played a more and more prominent role, this wristwatch was destined to little by little replace the traditional pocket watch.

The sports world offered an extraordinary field of validation and expansion for this timepiece of unprecedented quality. Hans Wilsdorf, founder of Rolex, had a first stroke of genius in 1927 when he equipped Mercedes Gleitze, a young English woman, with a Rolex Oyster when she swam across the English Channel. He reserved the front page of the Daily Mail to announce the event to the public at large. Although the watch had remained immersed for a number of hours in frigid seawater, it continued to keep accurate time, proof of its undeniable waterproofness and robustness. The young entrepreneur had just created the "Testimonee" campaign.

From then on, the advances of the Oyster would be inextricably linked to sports achievers excelling in developing disciplines such as Malcolm Campbell in automobile racing or Stewart Blacker and Chuck Yeager in aviation. These highly visible personalities all represented victory, prowess and adventure, and underscored the technical qualities of the Oyster.

Over the years, new fields of endeavour would be added to these first sports disciplines. Today, Rolex is involved in five major sports: golf, sailing, tennis, equestrian sports and automobile racing. All of these disciplines call for endurance and surpassing oneself to achieve success.



## **Presentation of Rolex**

Rolex is recognised the world over as a leader in the Swiss watchmaking industry and enjoys an unparalleled reputation for quality and know-how.

## **The birth of Rolex**

The origins of Rolex date back to the beginning of the 20th century. At a time when pocket watches were still the order of the day, Hans Wilsdorf, a young Bavarian just 24 years old, wagered on the future of the wristwatch. The pioneering spirit of the founder is the subject of some of the finest chapters in the history of contemporary watchmaking and was the source of two major innovations. In 1926, Rolex invented the Oyster, the first truly waterproof and dustproof watch, and, in 1931, the Perpetual Rotor, the first self-winding mechanism. Over the years, Rolex created a full line of Oyster watches, with a strong identity and intrinsic features. Recognisable at a glance, this collection of timepieces includes over 170 models available in 3,200 possible combinations. The Cellini collection later enhanced the choice offered to consumers loyal to the legendary Rolex quality. The reliability and performance of the product have built the worldwide reputation of Rolex.

## **An international company**

Today led by Patrick Heiniger, Rolex is present in some one hundred countries. The company ensures the distribution of its watches and the quality of their maintenance through a network of 28 affiliates and several thousand official Rolex jewellers.

A Rolex watch is made to last. Assembled by hand, it benefits from the company's know-how and decades of cumulative expertise. An after-sales service, unique in its genre, ensures the proper functioning of the watches over time. It is based on the competence of nearly 4,000 watchmakers, trained by Rolex, who work for the affiliates or for jewellers of the Group worldwide.

A universal and timeless brand, Rolex continues to conquer new markets and expand its presence worldwide.

## **State-of-the-art technology**

Responding to a growing demand while integrating the latest technologies requires a constant evolution of the means of production. As of the late 1990s, Rolex opted for a vertical integration of its production facilities which ensured its control over the manufacture of all the watch components and guaranteed its autonomy. In the interest of coherence and efficiency, the company consolidated all its activities in Switzerland at four functional sites.



## **Presentation of Rolex** *(continued)*

### **In Geneva:**

The Acacias headquarters is home to all the administrative activities of the company as well as to those related to the final assembly of the watches, sales and after-sales service.

The Chêne-Bourg site brings together all the activities related to the development and manufacture of the dial and gem-set elements.

The Plan-les-Ouates site groups all the activities related to the development, manufacture and quality control of the case and bracelet.

### **In Bienne:**

The Bienne site is the location of all the activities related to the manufacture and assembly of the Rolex watch movements.

## **An image of excellence**

In 1927, a Rolex Oyster crossed the English Channel, strapped to the wrist of Mercedes Gleitze, a young English swimmer, and reached the French coast in perfect working order. The company then took out an advertisement in the Daily Mail proclaiming the success of the waterproof watch and the beginning of "the triumphant march of the Rolex Oyster around the world". This event also marked the start of a long association between Rolex and exceptional personalities who bear witness to the excellence of the product and are Testimonees of the brand. These associations give rise to numerous partnerships and sponsoring activities in fields as varied as art and culture, tennis, golf, yachting, equestrian and automobile sports.

## **Perpetuating the spirit of enterprise**

Patrick Heiniger, the third Chief Executive Officer since the company was founded, is today at the head of a Group having some 7,000 employees around the world. Committed to the principles that are the foundation of the brand, he is also able to break with tradition to respond to changes in an ever evolving world, thus reinforcing Rolex's position as a leader in the watchmaking industry, be it by conquering new markets or by increasing the visibility of the brand.

Official website: [www.rolex.com](http://www.rolex.com)



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To learn more about Rolex and its involvement with sports in general visit **[www.rolex.com](http://www.rolex.com)**.

For more information about the Rolex Skiing portfolio visit **[www.hahnenkammnews.com](http://www.hahnenkammnews.com)**.