

# ski *balkan* magazine

March 2024, N° 5

## 5. SPE BALKAN SKI Conference **Rogla, March 2024**



**SPE BALKAN**  
**SKI**

Science, Practice & Education



- **FILIP FLISAR - Interview**
- **Iceland: THE ENDLESS CIRCLE**
- **SEARCH FOR BALANCE BETWEEN SKIING AND NATURE**
- **Mt. Denali - A Nut with a Double Shell**
- **INNOVATION IN SPORTS TEXTILES**



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# INTRODUCTION – magazin 2024

## GET READY TO RETHINK SKIING IN THE NORTH BALKANS



Prof. Rado Pišot, Ph.D.  
(Chairman of the Scientific  
Committee)



Dr. Blaž Lešnik, Ph.D.  
(Chairman of Organizing  
Committee)

Rogla Ski Center in Slovenia is set to host the fifth conference of SPE Balkan Ski from March 17 to 21, 2024. The conference aims to unveil innovations in the professional, scientific, and practical aspects of snow sports.

The vision and mission of SPE Balkan Ski, outlined in the mission statement, have set high standards from the very beginning. By successfully bringing together top experts, researchers, practitioners, elite skiers, ski teachers, coaches, and industry representatives, this conference has become a benchmark for excellence in the field. Building upon the success of previous conferences, this year's event promises to be even more impactful as it moves to the northern side of the Balkans.

The impressive numbers leading up to the conference demonstrate the significant momentum that has been built. With over 130 registered participants from 14 different countries around the world, this event is highly anticipated for its interesting, informative, and enjoyable content. The conference will feature 3 plenary and 5 keynote lectures by eminent professors, as well as over 40 presentations organized into various sections, offering insights into research, professional experiences, best practices, and the latest tools and literature in the field. Furthermore, as they have in the past, representatives from national ski schools from various countries will play a crucial role in the program. The Demo Teams from 7 countries will present their innovations and practical experience in morning snow workshops and at the traditional Thursday evening Demo show. As always, it will be an unforgettable evening event for all snow sports enthusiasts in attendance.

The growing interest from future organizers further confirms the direction and success of this conference. It is a testament to its continued commitment to tradition and the high-quality work being done, especially in terms of international collaboration. The significance and contribution of SPE Balkan Ski have been recognized by Interski International and, in particular, the International Association of Education and Science in Snowsports (IAESS), responsible for developing and maintaining the quality of skiing programs in schools and universities.

**»Moving on snow is a unique feeling that has fascinated humankind for ages«** is the slogan under which Interski International directs its activities within its three pillars - ISIA, IAESS, and IVSI, ensuring that the mission of cultivating and developing skiing among ski instructors, associations, and snow sports schools is fulfilled. Those involved in the SPE Balkan Ski conference are acutely aware of this sentiment. The group of organizers within the SPE Balkan Ski Executive Board, responsible for the administrative and corporate strategy and conference management, is not only dedicated to top guests and congress content but also to socializing and, importantly, the informal exchange of skiing expertise and pedagogical research work. Networking among professionals from different corners of the snowy world and discovering the numerous possibilities offered by ski resorts in the wider Balkans is also a goal that we take seriously.

We proudly look forward to the continuation of the SPE Balkan Ski story, which will move to the other part of the Balkans or middle Europe in the coming years, reaching high-altitude areas overlooking the Aegean Sea.

### ... BETWEEN PRACTICE AND SCIENCE IN SKIING

Aside from the SPE Balkan Ski Executive Board, local organizers play a significant role in ensuring the high-quality organization of the congress. In the upcoming event in Slovenia this role has been entrusted to the Ski Instructor and Trainer Association of Slovenia (ZUTS) and the Science and Research Centre Koper (ZRS) – both highly esteemed institutions. The former, a professional association with almost 90 years of tradition and successful work in its mission, while the latter, a scientific research center, has had a longstanding collaboration with direct practice in its research work. Together, they have completed several important projects, professional literature, and more. It is evident that only through this collaborative effort can we ensure a high-quality environment with an experienced team of individuals who can contribute to the excellent organization of such events.

With the direction and content of the SPE Balkan Ski conference clearly defined by a small group of dedicated ski enthusiasts years ago, the responsibility of local organizers is to add a special touch and favor to the event's atmosphere. As a country with a rich skiing tradition and a significant role in shaping the global community of ski teachers, Slovenia is more than capable of fulfilling this task. With that being said, we warmly welcome all participants to Rogla and the SPE Balkan Ski conference – a truly special and unique experience that brings together an international community of enthusiasts of the world's most beautiful sport.

**Welcome to Rogla - welcome to SPE Balkan SKI!**





# Rogla-Pohorje

## EXPLORE, FEEL, ENJOY

EXPLORE numerous opportunities for green getaways, including the chance to rise above the treetops of the Pohorje forests and experience the urban vibes.

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## ***Dear readers, Welcome to 5th Balkan Ski conference – ROGLA, Slovenia 2024.***

*I am extremely happy and honored to welcome such a distinguished company - a gathering of researchers, practitioners, enthusiasts, and, in general - people who are passionate about alpine skiing.*

*I believe Rogla will be a splendid venue and a good host for the congress, which for the fifth time brings us together to discuss and showcase skiing knowledge from the entire Balkan region.*

*As always, in all previous conferences, we have gathered in good spirits to expand our knowledge, exchange experiences, and showcase our skills on the snow.*

*Slovenia, with its organizing team, will host participants, lecturers, and members of Demo Team teams from the USA, Austria, Germany, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, San Marino, Croatia, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, and Macedonia.*

*In the snow workshops and the demo show evening, you will see all the best teams from the entire Balkan region, ready to showcase their skiing knowledge and technique.*

*In the phase of organizing and preparing for the conference, we encountered many challenges due to the mild winter, which almost jeopardized the execution of this event. Despite the inter's challenges, we have prepared interesting content and presentations that will leave no one indifferent. We hope that the positive energy of the conference will outweigh the weather conditions accompanying this winter season.*

*Once again ... welcome and enjoy reading this magazine.  
We strongly believe that the congress will resonate with innovations in the development of ski pedagogy and with the desire to meet again at a new conference in two years.*

*Damijan Ambrožič, CEO  
Marketing Coordinator of the Conference*



### **ABOUT THE MAGAZINE:**

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Radovljica, Slovenia**





# Rogla 2024



Rogla stands out as a natural treasure on top of (atop) Pohorje. During winter, it is renowned as the hub of snow adventures, while in summer, it transforms into a green paradise for hikers, cyclists, and adrenaline enthusiasts.

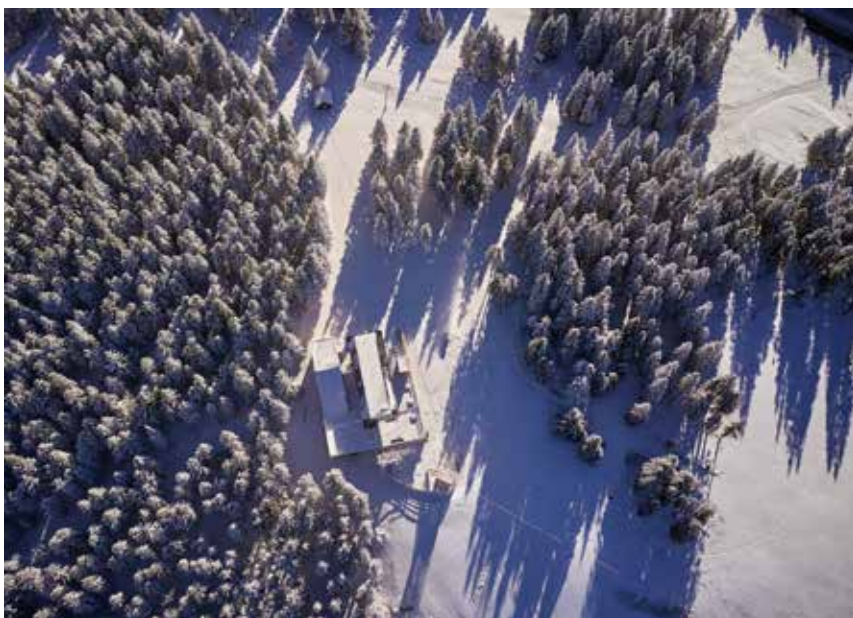
It continues to attract those who value nature, physical activity, a sense of home, and comfort.

Rogla not merely a ski resort; it's a winter wonderland where families come to create lasting memories. Nestled amidst the serene beauty of the Slovenian countryside, Rogla offers an exceptional mix of family-friendly skiing, modern amenities, and unforgettable experiences suitable for all ages.

The resort spans elevations from 1050 to 1517 meters and boasts approximately 15 kilometres of well-groomed ski trails, including two designated for night skiing. Cross country skiing enthusiasts are provided with 28 kilometres of trails.







## Key features of Rogla:

- One 6- seater covered heated chairlift, two 4-seater chairlifts and 10 lifts on well-maintained slopes of different difficulty levels,
- Night skiing available from Thursday to Sunday on two ski slopes,
- Well-maintained cross-country tracks.  
In addition, visitors can partake in various winter activities they may not have considered, such as:
- Experiencing the adrenaline sledding area Zlodejevo,
- Riding the longest Flying coaster in Park Mašinžaga,
- Snowshoe walking (also possible in the evenings with torches),
- Husky sledding,
- Winter hiking to the Lovrenc lakes, a Slovenian natural gem,
- Night sledding (Fridays and Saturdays) and
- A visit to the picturesque Pohorje Treetop Walk.



# Scientific programme - 5th SPE BALKAN SKI Conference



## Sunday, 17<sup>th</sup> March 2024

16.00 – 20.00  
19.00 – 20.00  
20.00

REGISTRATION - Lobby of the Hotel Rogla  
DEMO TEAMS LEADERS MEETING – conference room - Hotel  
WELCOME DRINK – Lobby of the Hotel Rogla



## Monday, 18<sup>th</sup> March 2024

8.00 – 10.00  
10.00 – 13.00  
13.00 – 14.00  
16.00 – 16.30  
16.30 – 17.15  
  
17.15 – 17.45  
  
17.45 – 18.15

Conference room

REGISTRATION - Lobby of the Hotel Rogla  
Snow workshops – meeting point  
Lunch  
**OPENING CEREMONY** – Addresses by local and national authorities  
**Plenary lecture: John Seifert (USA) - CAN OLDER SKIERS IMPROVE THEIR FITNESS AS THEY GO DOWNHILL?**  
**Invited lecture: Pete Allison (USA) - ALIGNING ASSESSMENTS WITH JOBS: WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT**  
**Invited lecture: Saša Pišot (SLO) - TRACKS IN THE SNOW: EXPLORING THE SOCIALIZATION OF ALPINE SKIING**

18.30 – 19.45

Conference room

Conference room      Coffee BREAK & Scientific session 1  
Petar Iankov & Deyan Todorov: CHARACTERISTICS OF INCIDENTS AND INJURIES IN PAMPOROVO SKI AREA AND BOROVETS SKI AREA FOR SEASON 2019-2020  
Krstio Zgurovski & Milena Zdravcheva: THE EFFECT OF EXPERIMENTAL TRAINING IN BUILDING ALPINE  
SKI SKILLS IN THE "BULGARIAN SKI SCHOOL"  
Miloš Kalc: INVESTIGATING NEUROMUSCULAR ACTIVITY IN ALPINE SKIING: THE TRANSITION FROM BIPOLAR TO HIGH-DENSITY ELECTROMYOGRAPHY  
Almajan-Guta Bogdan, et al.: RECOVERY METHODS AND PRE-HAB EXERCISES IN REDUCING THE INCIDENCE OF INJURIES IN ALPINE SKIERS  
Samo Rauter, et al.: THE INFLUENCE OF POLE LENGTH ON UPHILL PERFORMANCE IN SKI MOUNTAINEERING  
Kaja Teraž & Boštjan Šimunič: TENSIOGRAPHIC CONTRACTILE PROPERTIES OF SKELETAL MUSCLES OF YOUNG ALPINE SKI RACERS  
Zoran Milanović, et al.: TRANSFER OF KNOWLEDGE TO SOLVE INJURY PROBLEM: FROM TEAM TO SNOW SPORTS  
Uroš Marušič, et al.: YEAR-ROUND INTERGENERATIONAL SKI PREPARATION: TRAINING ADVENTURES FOR CHILDREN AND OLDER PEOPLE  
DINNER  
SOCIAL EVENING

20.00 – 20.30  
21.00 – 23.00



## Tuesday, 19<sup>th</sup> March 2024

8.00 – 10.00  
10.00 – 13.00  
13.00 – 14.00  
15.30 – 16.15  
  
16.15 – 16.45  
  
16.45 – 17.15  
  
18.00 – 20.00  
20.30

Conference room

REGISTRATION - Lobby of the Hotel Rogla  
Snow workshops – meeting point  
Lunch  
**Plenary lecture: Martino Franchi (ITA) - HAMSTRINGS MORPHOLOGY AND FUNCTION IMPORTANCE IN YOUTH AND ELITE SKIERS - A MISSING PIECE OF THE PUZZLE?**  
**Invited lecture: Siniša Kovač (B&H) - OCCURRENCE AND TRENDS OF ACCUMULATED AND ACUTE INJURIES OR PAINFUL SENSATIONS AMONG SKI INSTRUCTORS**  
**Invited lecture: Matjaž Vogrin (SLO) - ARTHROSCOPIC TREATMENT OF KNEE INJURIES IN SKIING**  
DEMO SHOW  
DINNER



# Scientific programme - 5th SPE BALKAN SKI Conference



Wednesday, 20<sup>th</sup> March 2024

8.00 – 10.00	REGISTRATION - Lobby of the Hotel Rogla
10.00 – 13.00	Snow workshops – meeting point
13.00 – 14.00	Lunch
15.30 – 16.15	<b>Plenary lecture: Matej Supej (SLO) - SKIS AS A POTENTIAL RISK FACTOR IN ALPINE SKIING</b>
16.15 – 16.45	<b>Invited lecture: Ronald Kipp (USA) - ANALYZING MOVEMENT ANALYSIS</b>
16.45 – 18.10	Coffee BREAK & Scientific session 2 Matej Švegl & Lana Ružič: HEART RATE VARIABILITY AS A POSSIBLE STRESS INDICATOR IN RECREATIONAL ALPINE SKIING Gaja Jančar, et al.: ALPINE SKIING INJURIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THEIR PREVENTION IN PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOL PROGRAMS Boštjan Šimunič & Kaja Teraž: SKELETAL MUSCLE TENSIOMYOGRAPHIC PARAMETERS IN ALPINE SKIERS Stojan Puhalič, et al.: CONNECTION BETWEEN PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS AND COMPETITIVE PERFORMANCE IN FAST DISCIPLINES OF ALPINE SKIING Ana Cikač & Saša Pišot: DENIAL OF PAIN AND SPORTS INJURIES Rado Pišot: DECODING MOTOR CONTROL AND LEARNING: BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN SCIENCE AND PRACTICE WITH INOVATIVE TECHNOLOGY Ahac Istenič et al: SHAPING THE FUTURE OF SNOW SPORTS: A COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW OF SUSTAINABILITY IN SNOW SPORTS Luka Šlosar: VIRTUAL REALITY IN SKIING: COACHING, SKILL ACQUISITION, AND APPLICATION: A REVIEW Matej Majerič et al: STRUCTURING OF THE FEAR QUESTIONNAIRE IN LEARNING PROCESS OF ALPINE SKIING
18.25 – 19.20	Coffee BREAK & Professional session 1 Aleksij Kuzmin & Snežana Jug: DIDACTIC FILMS AS INNOVATIVE TOOLS IN TEACHING ALPINE SKIING Mina Kotnik: ACQUIRING AND CONSOLIDATING KNOWLEDGE THROUGH A DIDACTIC GAME – FROM DARING HOPES TO MASTERING THE SLOPES Nika Šuc & Blaž Lešnik: ANALYSIS OF FIFTEEN YEARS OF SITSKI DEVELOPMENT CAMP IN SLOVENIA Tomaž Šegula: SKI HARD – NO BASE NO RACE Ruben Salerno & Corrado Sulsente: THE HISTORY OF SKI INSTRUCTORS
19.30 – 20.30	DINNER
21.00 – 23.00	FAREWELL SOCIAL EVENING



Thursday, 21<sup>st</sup> March 2024

10.00 – 10.30	CLOSING REMARKS – Lobby of Hotel Rogla
10.30	DEPARTURES



# 2024

5th SPE BALKAN SKI Conference

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# Iceland: **THE ENDLESS CIRCLE**



The wild, rugged nature of Iceland inherently carries a melody that connects people and fosters strong friendships. In these circumstances, a unique adventure was born, named The Endless Circle.

In Slovenia, after the unexpected loss of my close friend Jure, I felt lost and empty, but I wanted to honor his legacy, support his family, and find some sort of closure. Thus, the idea came to me to climb six mountains in one day, each representing one of Jure's

documentaries. Rožle, who had previously collaborated with Jure on a documentary, introduced me to Aleš Česen, and together we embarked on the project. The experience of honoring the memory of our friend and supporting his family forged a strong bond among us. Years later, I proposed an adventure in Iceland to Aleš and Rožle. Together, we explored a new side of this fascinating land, engaging in outdoor activities along the way and strengthening our precious friendship. Despite the challenging weather, we were determined to begin our adventure by exploring the eastern fjords, a region I had never visited in winter. In the Borgarfjörður Eystrí area, we absorbed the beauty of the surrounding mountains. We continued our





journey along the southern coast, stopping to explore the glacier lagoon and ice cave before overnighing in Höfn. Due to a storm, a mountain pass was closed, so we took the opportunity to explore the eastern fjords, encounter reindeer, and visit lighthouses. When the pass for Borgarfjörður Eystri became accessible, we arrived at the Blábjörg hut, which would be our home for the next few days.

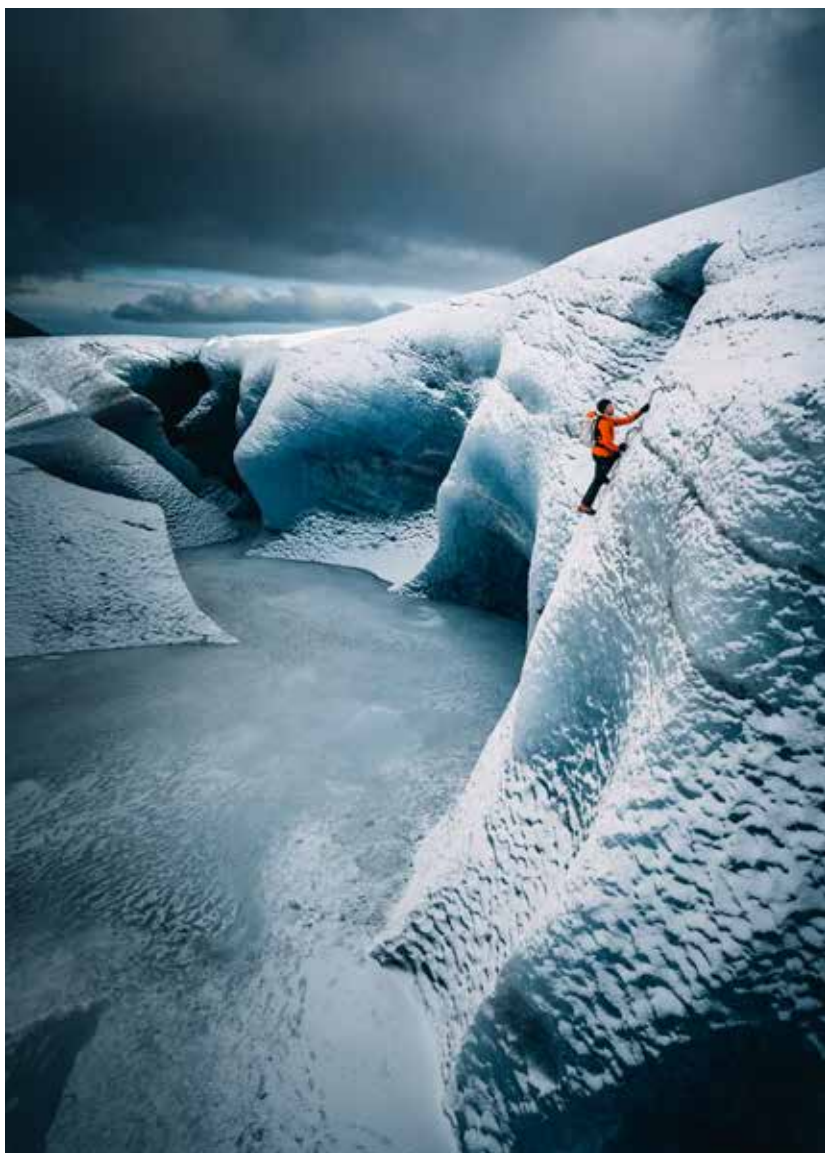
The Blábjörg guesthouse, with its stunning surroundings, was an excellent base for our adventure. Our accommodation provided enough space to organize equipment and plan our journey. We assessed the weather conditions and noticed a narrow window of good weather in one part of the fjord the next day. With knowledge of Icelandic microclimates, we set out early the next day on skis to explore a remote fjord. Skiing provided us with a sense of complete freedom and solitude in Iceland's remote areas. In these authentic moments, our close bond grew even stronger. During the tour, we observed the terrain, noted the aftermath of the storm, and gathered valuable information for our plans. As we ascended gentle slopes, traversed ridges, and skied into valleys, we reveled in the raw beauty of the surroundings. Seven hours passed quickly. Fulfilled and satisfied, we returned to the hut. Despite an approaching storm, our wonderful day in the field filled us with immense satisfaction.

In the evening, amidst the storm, we ventured out to explore the surroundings, invigorated by the fresh snow. We drove along a mountain road to experience the changing conditions immediately after sunset. The wind deposited 30 cm of fresh powder, creating perfect skiing conditions. On our way back, we reminisced about the magical day and the incredible snowy conditions. Suddenly, I remembered skiing with a rope attached to the vehicle. Aleš and Rožle enjoyed skiing while I drove and



plowed through the fresh snow. This amusement led to another hour of unforgettable skiing.

We refueled, stocked up on supplies, and bid farewell to the Blábjörg guesthouse. The storm was expected to calm down in northern Iceland by evening, which







cross the Icelandic Highlands from north to south with friends and attempt skiing in the beautiful Kerlingafjöll mountains. Crossing the mountain road, called Kjölur, took us all day, but we were rewarded with views of stunning landscapes and excellent driving conditions. We arrived at Kerlingafjöll just before sunset and found a beautiful location for our next skiing adventure. We were greeted by an incredible northern lights display that made us forget about the cold (-20 degrees Celsius) and wind.

The next day, we woke up to a crystal-clear morning promising exciting exploration. With skis on our backs and crampons on our boots, we set out for the highest peak of Kerlingafjöll. These mountains are

characterized by geothermal areas and a volcanic system in the central highlands. Steam rose from the surrounding valleys. Observing the contrast created by heat and cold was surreal. From the summit, we had a view of the entire central highlands, and more importantly, we gained insight into the conditions for our plan to cross further east into the highlands and reach our family mountain hut. Conditions seemed excellent, and the low temperatures created ice bridges over rivers on our way to the hut.





As we reached the top and took a moment of silence for meditation, we were ready for the ascent and skiing pleasure. As we removed our ski skins, switched the bindings to downhill mode, put on our boots, and started skiing, we felt the speed, turns, and crusty snow under our skis. Geothermal steam, sun, views, wind, and smiles created an incredible kaleidoscope of sensations. Amidst the thrilling experience, we felt like we were on the edge of the world. Although the skiing didn't last long and the conditions weren't the best, we experienced this magical world together, called Iceland. And it needed to be celebrated.

Since childhood, I learned from my grandparents the tradition of grilling lamb, which we enjoyed during mountain trips. During grilling, we always made sure that no trace was left in the untouched wilderness, and the experience with friends brought us closer together. During dinner, we joked that our day would be even more perfect if the northern lights appeared. To our surprise, immediately after dinner, we witnessed an incredible aurora borealis show. This further heightened our enthusiasm for the beauty of nature. At the same time, we realized that we can truly appreciate it by accepting it with an open heart.

A long journey awaited us to conclude our endless circle in the remote parts of Iceland. We wanted to reach our family mountain hut, where we could relax and reflect on our experiences. The weather was calm, but due to heavy snowfall and

zero visibility, driving on the frozen terrain was unique and challenging. With the help of GPS and barely visible tracks, we safely reached the mountain hut, built by my grandfather and his brothers 40 years ago. It is a simple dwelling with a fireplace for heating, water from a nearby spring, and electricity from a small solar cell. But this is my favorite place in the world. In this almost sacred place for me, with friends, we can reflect on our shared journey and memories. We talked about how unique our friendship is and how nature can help us heal even in difficult times. We honored the memory of Jure, who connected us and somehow enabled us to have this experience. With respect for fellow human beings and nature, we always find true fulfillment and happiness. The time spent in the hut was a perfect conclusion to our endless circle.

**Siggi Bjarni Sveinsson**

**Foto: Rožle Bregar**





# FISCHER CELEBRATES A CENTURY OF EXCELLENCE IN SPORTING GOODS

Fischer, a global leader in the sporting goods industry, is thrilled to announce the celebration of its 100th anniversary. Since its inception in 1924, Fischer has been at the forefront of innovation and quality in the world of sports equipment, and this milestone is a testament to the company's unwavering commitment to excellence.



Founded in Upper Austria by Joseph Fischer, and still headquartered there, Fischer has grown from humble beginnings to become one of the world's largest manufacturers of ski equipment and a trusted name in skiing, hockey, and outdoor sports. Over the past century, Fischer has continuously pushed the boundaries of technology and design to deliver superior products that enhance the performance and enjoyment of athletes at all levels, following its vision to be the athlete's number one choice.



## **Driven by innovation, quality, and passion for sports**

As Fischer celebrates its centenary, the company reflects on a rich history of remarkable achievements. From pioneering advancements and groundbreaking technologies in ski and boot manufacturing, such as FISCHER VACUUM®, Hole Ski Technology, Fischer CROWN®, Air Composite Core, Cold Base Bonding and TURNAMIC®, to introducing high-end hockey and outdoor equipment, Fischer has consistently demonstrated its ability to stay ahead of the curve to meet the evolving needs of athletes worldwide.



»We are immensely proud to reach this momentous milestone in our company's history,« said Franz Föttinger, CEO of Fischer. »For 100 years, Fischer has been driven by a passion for sports and a dedication to providing athletes with the tools they need to succeed. Our commitment to innovation, quality, and customer satisfaction remains as strong as ever, and we are excited to continue shaping the future of sports for the next century.«

## **Ready to face the future**

With its Austrian development center and production plant; a brand-new factory in the Ukraine equipped with state-of-the-art machinery; a team of motivated and passionate colleagues; plus a roster of athletes with a strong personal bond to the brand, Fischer is ready to face the future with confidence. Quality and innovation remain the focus areas for the company as it strives to deliver the best products and services to its customers.

## **Employees and partners vital to the company's success**

In addition to celebrating its own achievements, Fischer recognizes the vital role of its employees, partners, and customers in the company's success. The centenary celebrations will provide an opportunity to express gratitude to all those who have contributed to Fischer's growth over the years.



# SINONIM ZA ODLIČNOST.

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# Ski Trainers and Instructors Association in Bosnia and Herzegovina **(ATUS in B&H).**

## **ASOCIJACIJA TRENERA I UČITELJA SKIJANJA U BOSNI I HERCEGOVINI**

Bosnian snow sports tradition is related with mountain area round Sarajevo and alpine skiing as major sport. After the Winter Olympic Games 1984 in Sarajevo, the skiing becoming an important and organized sport in our country. Based on those facts ski enthusiasts established the Ski Trainers and Instructors Association in Bosnia and Herzegovina (ATUS in B&H).

Ski Trainers and Instructors Association in Bosnia and Herzegovina is the only institution in the country of that kind, which is educating and training alpine skiing and snowboard instructors. ATUS in B&H is a full member of the INTERSKI, IVSS and International Ski Instructors Association (ISIA), the world body for professional ski instructors, and meets all the requirements to train and educate snow sport instructors. Moreover, the Instructor's program of ATUS is also in full compliance with all of ISIA's established norms.

Key activities of Ski Trainers and Instructors Association in Bosnia and Herzegovina are snow sports instructors and trainer's education, organizing the lifelong learning seminars for different snow sport related aim groups and snow sports health benefits dissemination. All the activities are organized in cooperation with Sarajevo and Banja Luka Universities – Faculties of Sport and Physical Education. Ski Trainers and Instructors Association in Bosnia and Herzegovina have 750 ski instructor and trainer members in different skill levels. Most of the educators as well as ATUS in B&H exam commission members are PhD and mr sci. in field of Kinesiology.





# MONTENEGRO

(Montenegrinterski – MASI)



By its location Montenegro belongs to the Middle Mediterranean region, that is, to southern Europe. It is located between 41°52'-43°42' north latitude and 18°26'-20°22' east longitude. Montenegro to the southeast borders on Albania, to the north borders on Serbia, to the south it shares the Adriatic Sea with Italy, and to the west its neighbors are Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The high mountains of Montenegro include some of the most rugged terrain in Europe. They average more than 7,000 feet in elevation. Among notable peaks is Bobotov Peak in the Durmitor Mountains, which reaches 8,277 feet. The Montenegrin mountains were the most ice-eroded section of the Balkan Peninsula during the last glacial period.

## Over 100 years of Alpine and Nordic skiing in Montenegro

Norwegian Captain HENRICK AUGUST ANGELL visited Montenegro in 1891 for the first time with one pair of ski.

The first ski club was established in 1892 on capitol Cetinje, Montenegro, named "Cetinjsko skijaško društvo". (France Profesor, Diplomat in French Ambasa. on Cetinje).

Captain Henrick Angell visited Montenegro for the second time in 1893, bringing with him 100 (hundred) pairs of skis and started with the ski school.

By the book ".....1893. Norwegian Captain Henrick August Angell organized school of skiing for Montenegrin army and citizens according to the demand of King Nikola I, Ruler and Lord of Montenegro and Mountains, due to military, practical and sporting reasons. Skiing exercises were held on the slopes of Lovćen. That was the first school of skiing in Montenegro.



*Skiing in Montenegro has been practised up to this very day. Beside military, practical and sporting reasons further development of skiing is in connection with tourist development of Montenegro. One of the vital interests of Montenegro country is the prospective expansion of snowsports....."*



MASI is an official association of the Montenegro established on November 26th, 1994, the delegates of all ski instructors from the Montenegro decided to found M.A.S.I. that would have the same rights and obligations as the former Association of Ski Instructors and Coaches of Montenegro. The main purpose for its establishment was the wish to develop and promote world trends in snowsports on the mountains of Montenegro, since Montenegro is mainly mountain country where snow lasts for at least 6 months, while on some peaks it lasts all year round. Our aim is to improve, through development of Winter tourism, the quality of local people's life who have been living in these mountain regions for centuries. Development of Snowsport in Montenegro, would certainly influence on stopping moving local people from mountain.

M.A.S.I. at the moment has 418 members. Active over 100 alpine instructors, over 10 nordic instructors, over 40 snowboard instructors.



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Dušan Medenica  
Demonstrator



Dženis Nurković  
Demonstrator



Janik Rumež Miletić  
Demonstrator



Milka Žugić



Zorica Bujanja

MOGUĆI  
DEMONSTRATORI  
poslije školovanja

Službena Lica



## The Association of Snow Sport Instructors of North Macedonia-MAISS

Established in 2009, the Association of Snow Sports of Macedonia (MAISS) has been a cornerstone of the SnowSports landscape in Macedonia. Operating in cooperation with Ski Federation of Macedonia and Faculty of Physical Education Sport and Health (Skopje, Macedonia), MAISS shoulders the responsibility of training Alpine and Snowboard Snow Sport instructors.

The past two years have marked significant strides for MAISS. In 2022, MAISS gained membership in the prestigious International Ski Instructors Association (ISIA), swiftly followed by full integration into INTERSKI International the subsequent year (2023). These affiliations have seamlessly woven MAISS into the fabric of the global snow sports community, alongside esteemed organizations like IVSI, IAESS, ISIA, and INTERSKI International.

MAISS remains steadfast in its commitment to local snow sport instructors, offering essential educational programs, facilitating job placements, and fostering international collaboration.

Despite the challenges posed by global warming on winter sports, MAISS consistently provides Continuing Professional Development (CPD) opportunities and innovative courses for its members. Since 2019, a total of 201 snow sport instructors have successfully completed education across three levels:

**Level 1: National Stamp**

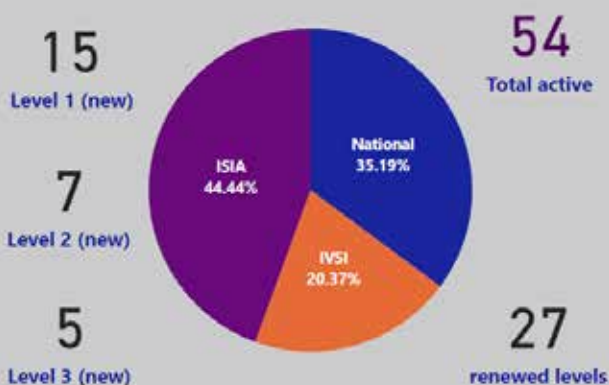
**Level 2: IVSI Stamp**

**Level 3: ISIA Stamp**

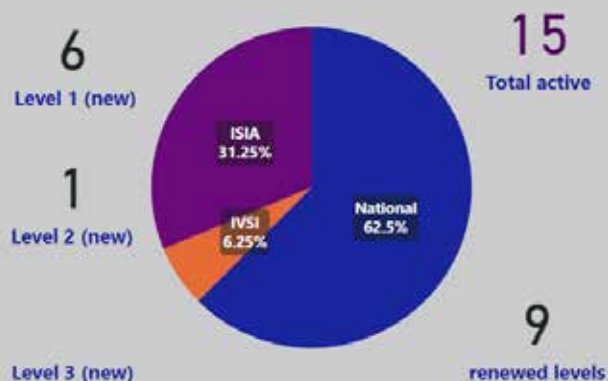
**In 2023, MAISS boasted a roster of 54 Alpine Ski and 15 Snowboard instructors, further underscoring its dedication to nurturing talent and excellence in snow sports instruction.**



### 2023/24 Alpine S.

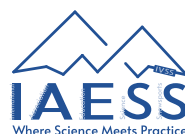


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## DEMO TIM INTERSKI SRBIJA

Od prošlog susreta prošle su dve godine u kojima je naša Demo vrsta imala puno akcija.

Prethodne dve sezone smo iskoristili za održavanje kurseva za sticanje zvanja instruktora skijanja kako na Kopaoniku, tako i na Staroj planini i Zlatiboru. Za vreme održavanja kurseva paralelno se radila i overa licenci postojećih instruktora skijanja, gde kroz ovu akciju pokušavamo da ubacimo mlade nade (potencijalne buduće demonstratore) u vatru i iznedrimo nove demonstratore.

Trening koji smo imali tokom Decembra u Livinju nam je poslužio da spremni uđemo u skijašku sezonu i odgovorimo na sve izazove. Tokom sezone Demo vrsta je trenirala na Kopaoniku spremajući se za predstojeći Balkan SPE.

Što se tiče tehnike skijanja, naš fokus je stavljen na praćenje i inkorporiranje savremenih skijaških trendova u našu Nacionalnu školu skijanja.

Metodika je takođe stvar koja se menja iz sezonu u sezonu! Stare metode više nisu efikasne jer se broj dana koji turista provede na snegu smanjuje svake godine. Iz tog razloga fokusirani smo na pronalaženje novih „alata“ koji bi ubrzali obuku i dostizanje žejenog nivoa skijanja.

Jedan od osnovnih ciljeva i zadataka Demo tima i naše strukovne organizacije jeste implementacija međunarodnih pravila i minimuma standarda u oblasti edukacije instruktora skijanja u Srbiji odnosno sistemsko uspostavljanje statusa struke unutar skijaškog saveza Srbije (nadležni nacionalni granski savez) na čemu se intezivno angažujemo kao član ISIA.



# Hungarian Interski Demo Team



<https://sioktatas.hu/rolunk/hungarian-demo-team/>



focuses on ski technique and methodological development but also strives to build a strong skiing community. Its members are open-minded, eager to learn individuals who are internationally active in the professional skiing community as well.

**The Hungarian Interski Demo Team,** established in 1990, comprises highly qualified ski instructors from the Federation of Hungarian Ski Instructors. Traditionally, the demo team serves as the »witch's kitchen« of the SMSZ, functioning as a professional workshop from which Examiners actively engaged in ski instructor training activities of the SMSZ emerge. In short, this is the Hungarian skiing innovation hub.

The members of the Demo team have been the actors and creators of numerous technical books, supporting materials, and educational films intended for professionals and the general public. The current team does not only





# DEMOTEAM

# SAN MARINO

**Welcome to the ancient land of freedom.** This phrase greets visitors as they cross the border of the Republic of San Marino. Ours territory is very small but has survived the great upheavals of history by clinging to its own values, often at odds with the spirit of the times. In our own small way, as Demo Team, we have tried to honour those values and that history, ever since our first steps on the international scene. With an average age of 28, our demonstrators make up one of the youngest teams present at Interski, ambassadors of new messages adapted to today's world, where ethics and behaviour can meet and embrace teaching and education, with an eye to tourism and social opportunities.



As Demo Team San Marino, since its foundation, we have also taken part in the Isia World Championships (Maribor 2009, Pamporovo 2013, Samnaun 2017), always distinguishing ourselves for the cheerfulness with which we tackled the technical tests, sometimes excelling (Gold Medal in GS in 2017) sometimes studying our defeats to learn from the performances of the best in the world. After the result of the first participation in Maribor, penultimate, hidden in the woods beside the slope to learn from the trainings of the best demo-teams, the exploit was in Pamporovo 2013, where we classified second in the overall ranking. In 2021, at the Isia World Forum, we ranked fourth in all tests, presenting a teaching model aimed at overcoming generational barriers between students and instructors. Can't wait to take part to SPE Balkan Ski 2024 to continue our professional growth!

In St. Anton 2011 we presented a team consisting of 50% women, something that, only 12 years ago, was still generating a stir in the world of skiing. The workshop on the other hand focused on the text ***Insegnanti Efficaci*** and put the synthesis of propiocity and psychology at the centre of motor learning. 2015 in Ushuaia was the year of 'Teach Different', the method developed in San Marino ski schools to reduce the distance, including physical distance, between teachers and pupils. At that Interski, two of the team's demonstrators were skiers with motor disabilities, proving that integration, through sport, is and can be a fact, not just a rhetorical device. In 2019 in Pamporovo, the topic brought forward by our delegation was that of safety on the slopes, now more than ever a topical issue. At Interski Levi 2023 we introduced in the technical demos ***our Natural skiing philosophy***.



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# Bulgarian Ski School

Bulgarian Ski School is an organization of winter sports instructors in Bulgaria. Created to educate teachers, now it is bringing together the snow sports instructors and the ski schools in Bulgaria.

The main goal of the association is to maintain current programs for personnel training and to introduce and implement new global trends in service delivery "training in winter sports". Bulgarian Ski School seeks to inspire and maintain a passion for snow sports.

We thank colleagues all over the world for trusting us to host the 2019 INTERSKI Congress.

One of the most spectacular parts of the congress was the presentation of demos. We are proud of the demo team of Bulgaria. "Snow angels" is very important to us and therefore we pay special attention to its preparation and manifestations.

Our demo team is the fifth at the ISIA World Championships 2017 in Samnau.

The team consists of ski instructors from the three major resorts of Pamporovo, Vitosha and Borovets.

One of the participants in the team Deyan Todorov is the ISIA World Champion 2017 in a team event. Another Rosen Gergov is among the best coaches of children in Bulgarian ski clubs.

All of them »our angels« give their hearts and work to to inspire and maintain a passion for snow sports.





# The thriving legacy of 80 years tradition

Three years ago several generations of ski instructors and trainers – members of the largest professional sports association in Slovenia – celebrated the 80th anniversary since their establishment. Firstly, we have to thank our senior colleagues who imparted the positive attitude towards the snow filled nature to younger generations, and especially the need and desire for snowy adventures. Despite the fact that the development of skiing has been part of many changes through time, we are convinced that the generations of instructors and trainers – each in their own way – did everything possible to make this sport a relevant symbol of recognisability for the Slovene nation and help it to remain so.

Although we fondly remember the so called golden times of Slovene skiing, today we are facing a completely different reality. In these uncertain times that are less inclined to skiing we are still steadfastly striving to put every child as well as adult on skis. We are doing this to the best of our abilities – which are too often restricted by snow conditions, resources, lifestyle, and many other factors. The reasons behind the decreasing number of Slovene skiers are well-known but despite everything we – like our predecessors – aim at introducing the most beautiful sport in the world to every person. We realise that without the right role models – the best and brightest – this is not possible. Besides parents these can be the best ski competitors and ski instructors who encourage children and young people to pursue skiing implementing modern teaching techniques and by providing the right example.

In our 80 years of existence we have trained over 20,000 instructors and trainers in various skiing disciplines. There are many among them with over 40 years of professional instructor longevity. We take particular pride in those who put over 16 thousand students on skis. We are known for the best instructors and trainers in the world. Even though many of our older colleagues are unfortunately no longer with us, they leave behind an important contribution to the truly rich Slovene skiing tradition. It is common knowledge that the Slovenes are skiing fanatics. Using our know-how and top





results we acquired the status of an important contributor in the field of developing the skiing methodology techniques, ski gear, dangers in mountains, laws, and other content connected with skiing. In addition to the cooperation with various institutions we have to highlight the strong connection with the Faculty of Sports. It reflects the highest standards of pedagogic work as well as results from studies by the best scientists in the field of skiing. I believe that the latter is becoming our greatest advantage in this time of rapid progress and digitalisation. We can notably take pride in the work of our demonstrators – not merely alpine, but also snowboarders, cross-country skiers, telemark skiers, freestyle skiers, and lately also demonstrators of Nordic walking and running. And a total of over 50 members from six demonstrator disciplines would not be able to perform their missions at the highest and most professional level without the support of our indispensable business

partners. Collectively, 113 basic organisations with over 3300 active members also require adequate support in the central office. I know that we collaborate well within the most successful sports association in Slovenia. We will do our best to keep it that way. And herewith, I would like to thank everyone who contributed their share to the rich mosaic of ski knowledge of the SIAS of Slovenia. Despite multi-branched activities of the SIAS the essential mission remains the same: training young people, and high-quality ski instructors and trainers. Let us not forget that we carry great responsibility – towards everyone who helped achieve what we are today, and towards all of those to come and carry on with our work in the future. We should comprehend skiing as we know and can – each person individually and everybody together – collectively as a skiing nation. This is in us and represents something that no one can take away from us.

**Dr. Blaž Lešnik**, Director and Chairman of the Ski Instructors/Trainers Association of Slovenia (SIAS)





# SEARCH FOR BALANCE BETWEEN SKIING AND NATURE

The snowy areas of the European mountains are thoroughly explored from a skiing perspective. Some space can still be found in Alaska, Patagonia, and the Andes, but slowly everything is shifting towards Asia, specifically its vast range - the Himalayas. We've become accustomed to drooling with excitement over various fluffy ski films in the last decade, with the backdrop tantalizing us and penetrating our hearts with the gleaming white expanses of Alaska or Canada, the Alps or Dolomites, Lofoten or the Caucasus, and many more. »Freeride,« »freestyle,« ski touring, regardless of the style, have completely taken precedence over alpine skiing. Similar to how alpinism once did, defining the Himalayas as the toughest, most desirable mountain range, mountain skiing has found the same goal there. The immense, almost endless expanses of the Himalayas, the thousand-kilometer wall stretching from Pakistan to Bhutan, where all these peaks and walls await adventure-hungry skiers, are still an unwritten page. One undoubtedly media-overlooked skier, not only in the US but also internationally, as he doesn't engage in filming movies, chasing Instagram likes, or self-promotion online, is American Luke Smithwick. At the age of 43, he has approximately 80 expeditions under his belt - nearly all of them in the Himalayas, where he has conquered or skied from four eight-thousanders; in the US, he's considered the foremost expert on the Himalayas and skiing in the Himalayas, without competition! Living the life of a sort of sports nomad and a special mountain guide since the age of 18, he also holds a degree in anthropology. The Himalayas are his sandbox, his modus operandi, where he's not just interested in snow and mountains but also in the culture of people in its remote and secluded areas. Occasionally returning home to Denver, his native city, he's greeted by a California model van, which he resides in and travels around the US. In three Asian cities - Kathmandu, Manali, and Leh - he has rented warehouses for residence and equipment storage. His current and greatest life motto is named - Himalaya 500. With this project, he set himself the goal of skiing five hundred first descents in the mountains and walls throughout the Himalayas. Most recently, in this spring, he was stringing corridors in the Annapurna range, and before that, he enjoyed the fluffy slopes of Kashmir. He's constantly on the hunt for good snow conditions. He comes immediately when the mountains shed avalanches, and the weather stabilizes. But skiing isn't the only thing that interests him in life.



**IN LOVE WITH THE HIMALAYAS FOR MORE THAN 20 YEARS** He first visited the Himalayas in 2001 and fell deeply in love with them during that climbing expedition. Ten years later, he became a true »local« and a master of weather and snow (avalanches) in the Himalayan range, forecasting avalanches in Kashmir for several years. His knowledge of conditions in the Himalayan mountains is thus almost intimate. »Let me give you an example. The daily weather pattern in the Annapurna region is that mornings are clear, convective clouds come around noon, and the sun sets around 6 or 7 p.m. Such a precise weather pattern that I can tell the time by it. Some days the clouds hold more moisture and cause snow showers. Every time 5 to 30 cm of fresh snow, with thunder and lightning with hail,« he quickly uttered during our conversation. After skiing in Annapurna and being there, he returned to India and went to the Lahaul and Spiti region. A remote area that was closed in recent years due to the pandemic, where they built a new 9-kilometer Atal tunnel. In winter months, it now connects Kullu with Lahaul and Spiti. In the past, you could only reach these places through the Rohtang Pass, so that area was closed until the end of May or the beginning of June. Now it's possible to ski early powder there, and due to snow stability, it's not avalanche-prone. »The only problem is the frequent crusty snow above 4,000 meters,« Luke added, as if I were going there next week.



## STARTING AT 12 YEARS OLD

Yes, Luke Smithwick really lives a different life from us ordinary mortals. He claims his turnaround happened on a trip to the San Juan Mountains in Colorado, USA, at the age of 12: »When my father and I climbed some high mountains and did a more challenging ascent of Wild Horse Peak, I knew what I would do with the rest of my time on Earth.« Purpose can be a very powerful thing, and Luke Smithwick didn't waste any precious time. »I live simply,« he says. »After my first trip to the Himalayas, everything changed for me. Nothing was the same anymore. The local mountains (Colorado) seemed simply too small to me. I got a strong urge for all the preparations required by the big mountains. I also lived in Alaska for eight years, and I'm actually just becoming an alpinist now, but the Himalayas are my true home...«

He admits that for alpine skiing, you need more experience and knowledge of the mountains, and even now, he's learning something new every day. But in the Himalayas, you can't afford to make mistakes. There's no space for error here. At every step, there's the danger of ending up in an ice crevice or being caught in an avalanche. And just because Luke skis almost 200 days a year, his training and preparation never stop.

## STORYTELLER

In the past, his life was a bit different. He wasn't always on skis. From a young age, he felt a strong urge to be in the mountains. He climbed and explored them. He also hiked many days from one place to another, only in sandals, just to feel the rock under his feet. In the last decade, however, his priority has been skiing. »I lived in the Alps for a while, and then moved to Alaska for eight years, where I met my wife, and then I met the Himalayas. I was overwhelmed by the potential of the place and immediately started exploring them. At that time, not





many people went there. The skiing was incredibly beautiful, and there were still some areas that no one had visited before. I wanted to get away from civilization, from all the people, to be free...» Luke also understands the media's influence and the importance of telling the story. He's already thinking about writing a book about his expeditions. He has an impressive collection of photos, some of which he sells to the media.

## **BLOG ABOUT EXPEDITIONS IN THE HIMALAYAS**

His ambition is also to create his website, where he will tell stories from his expeditions, offer practical advice, and suggest which peaks to visit and when. In the future, he plans to organize guided tours for ski tourists. Although he's mainly interested in skiing, he also knows a lot about climbing in the Himalayas. He's very familiar with the climbing areas of this mountain range. »Skiing and climbing are very close to each other. They are similar in many ways, but the difference is that climbing is more dangerous. I try to be careful and respect the mountains. I never do anything risky. If I don't feel safe, I stop, turn back, and come back some other time. The mountain will always be there,« he says.

Luke's life is a real adventure. He's doing what he loves most, and he's good at it. It seems like he's living his dream. Although he's not very well known in the US, he's definitely a legend in the Himalayas. He's been skiing there for over 20 years, and he's conquered some of the most challenging peaks. He's a real expert in his field, and he's always looking for new challenges. He's also a great storyteller, and he's planning to write a book about his adventures. He's truly living the life of his dreams, and he's an inspiration to all of us who love adventure and the great outdoors.

As mentioned, in 2010 he started the project HIMALAYA 500. But the idea of skiing 500 new lines is not all. He also wants to share the story of the Himalayas, its people, and climate change with the world. He says this project is more about humanity, as he wants to showcase the great skiing potential of the Himalayas, where at lower altitudes - around 4,000 meters, there's a lot of excellent skiing on good snow; from Pakistan, Kashmir, all the way to Bhutan. The lines he skis as part of the 500 project vary greatly. In terms of difficulty and type. From bowls to tree runs, to challenging, steep technical couloirs at higher altitudes, which require good snow conditions and can only be safely skied in spring or summer. Smithwick loves these the most and wants them to represent the largest proportion of all lines. Although he has already skied from an eight-thousander, Shishapangma, and plans to conquer more mountain giants, he is most focused on lines at altitudes between 4,000 and 6,500 meters. He admits that not every one of these lines will be a »historic descent,« but his desire is to showcase the diversity of the Himalayas; from touring and skiing powder, to alpine and freeride skiing. It's also interesting that he never repeats existing descents; all lines are new.



In searching for these lines, he relies heavily on his knowledge of geology, and in assessing the safety of each descent, he draws on his rich experience. »In the remote areas of the Himalayas, daily avalanche forecasts don't exist. I do snowpack profiles, observe carefully, and thoroughly assess the terrain. I am too remote (from civilization) to afford a mistake!«

In the 500 project, he has encountered a variety of snow conditions, but he prefers the mid-altitude and snowy climate with lots of snow. »I love Kashmir and Humla in the far west of Nepal because those two areas get the most snow.« Although skiing in the Himalayas is possible all year round, the best season for snow is from February to April, when good powder can be found. In summer, he skis mainly on glaciers at around 5,000 meters and emphasizes that even though he makes a living from guiding, it's not a business for him, but rather a way of life. Even if nobody signs up, he still goes to the mountains. For example, last year (also because of Covid), he led only six expeditions and had only one client on three of them, but that didn't stop him or worry him. »I may have been in a business deficit. But at least I went and skied some new lines. I think people are captivated by my passion, which is evident in my guiding, and that's why most people come back!«

## **DANGERS OF SOLITUDE**

We were naturally very interested in how he manages such descents so far from civilization and whether anything has ever gone wrong. »In most of the Himalayas, there are options for helicopter rescue, but without the technical rescue support, like in Chamonix, for example. So, you have to have the mindset of Alaska, where you don't rely on others, you are dependent on yourself, and if you get injured, you save yourself. When I get injured, sometimes I ride a yak or a horse. I always go into the mountains with a plan of how I will take care of myself in case of an accident.«

But in reality, he has not had negative skiing experiences in the Himalayas. According to him, because he maintains a safe, conservative approach to skiing, realizing that he can be happy just having all those places to himself. »Venturing into unknown areas, meeting locals, observing wildlife, that's a real expedition. And if we maintain that mindset, every day is like a gift!«



## CONSTANT EXPLORER

It seems to me that Luke Smithwick has found an exceptional and elegant balance. Between something that allows him to live abroad through mountaineering and skiing all year round, while also following his own goals. How did he succeed in this? »I think it's because I'm a very curious person. If you look at my computer or phone, I have a lot of lists, various lists. And in the Himalayas, I'm drawn in many different directions. I love skiing when skis are like a vehicle for me; as if I took a fishing rod that takes you to the river. Given my anthropological background, I'm interested in languages and socio-economic changes. So, when I'm on an expedition, I'm not holed up in a tent with a mask on my head, focused only on skiing. I talk to shepherds to learn, for example, about word usage. For example, I found a word in northeastern Pakistan that is the same as in southeastern Nepal. I want to know how this happens. How these trade networks arise and how they have historically changed. If you ask me how I see myself as an adventurer-explorer, I see myself more as a student...«

How does he find or choose lines for the 500 project? »The process of finding lines for the 500 project is multifaceted. In recent years, I've been getting messages and emails from all over the world. When people are in the Himalayas, they send me photos, usually with a comment or question like, have you skied this already, check out this 'flank', or would this work, and so on, which I really like. To see that people look at the Himalayas, where before the thinking was only alpinistic, also through the eyes of a skier. That's a nice change and development.« As mentioned, Google Earth is very useful for getting a general idea, for planning skiing, while Gaia GPS app is used for detailed planning. »In searching for ideas, I also use the American Alpine Journal, a publication known to most Americans, I browse climbing magazines in India, Nepal, Japan, Great Britain, Austria, Germany, France, and even from Slovenia. Then there are climbing films, trekking films, Youtube. Nowadays, there are plenty of media available that are excellent sources for finding snow lines and general exploration of the Himalayas. Plus social media, as a relatively new tool.«

How does he stay motivated for such a nomadic skiing life? »Ha ha. I was never called a skiing nomad. You really got me there. Personally, it feels like I never have enough time for everything. When I'm here in the mountains, there's never a dull moment. I can't get tired of all forms of skiing. There are too many options and ideas. My background, cultural anthropology, and environmental biology, require a lot of exploration. I'm discovering various layers of culture. I'm looking for where paths and traces lead. I ask how certain words are called in the local dialect, compare them with the neighboring valley, and then talk to local shepherds about the amount of snowfall. It's simply too much of everything, and that's why I can't get enough of it all!«

**Author : Dejan Ogrinec**

## FUTURE OF SKIING IN THE HIMALAYAS

Is there a community of Himalayan powder skiers, do they have a vision, and where is it heading? »When most people think of the Himalayas, they think of climbing eight-thousanders or trekking. But the Himalayas have an exceptional future for skiing. Skiing's popularity is growing in Asia, and it's expected that the Himalayas will soon be a top skiing destination. The Chinese claim to be currently building 800 ski resorts, mostly in Asia. They have a vision to become a global power. Powder skiing in the Himalayas currently mostly happens around the Pir Panjal range (Kashmir, Manali) and in selected areas of Pakistan (Karakoram) and the Nepalese Himalayas. For now, considering all the possibilities, there's still a little bit of that. Personally, I hope skiers come and explore the Himalayas, draw some beautiful lines, try apples from village orchards, learn some words of the local language, get inspired by all this potential,« and added: »I believe that mechanized development of skiing in these areas is not only likely but also important. If we look at the history of skiing in the USA, the community grows from skiing with chairlifts, and ski culture is triggered by the installation of chairlifts. There is interest in Nepal, and gondolas and chairlifts already exist in Pir Panjal in Pakistan and India.«

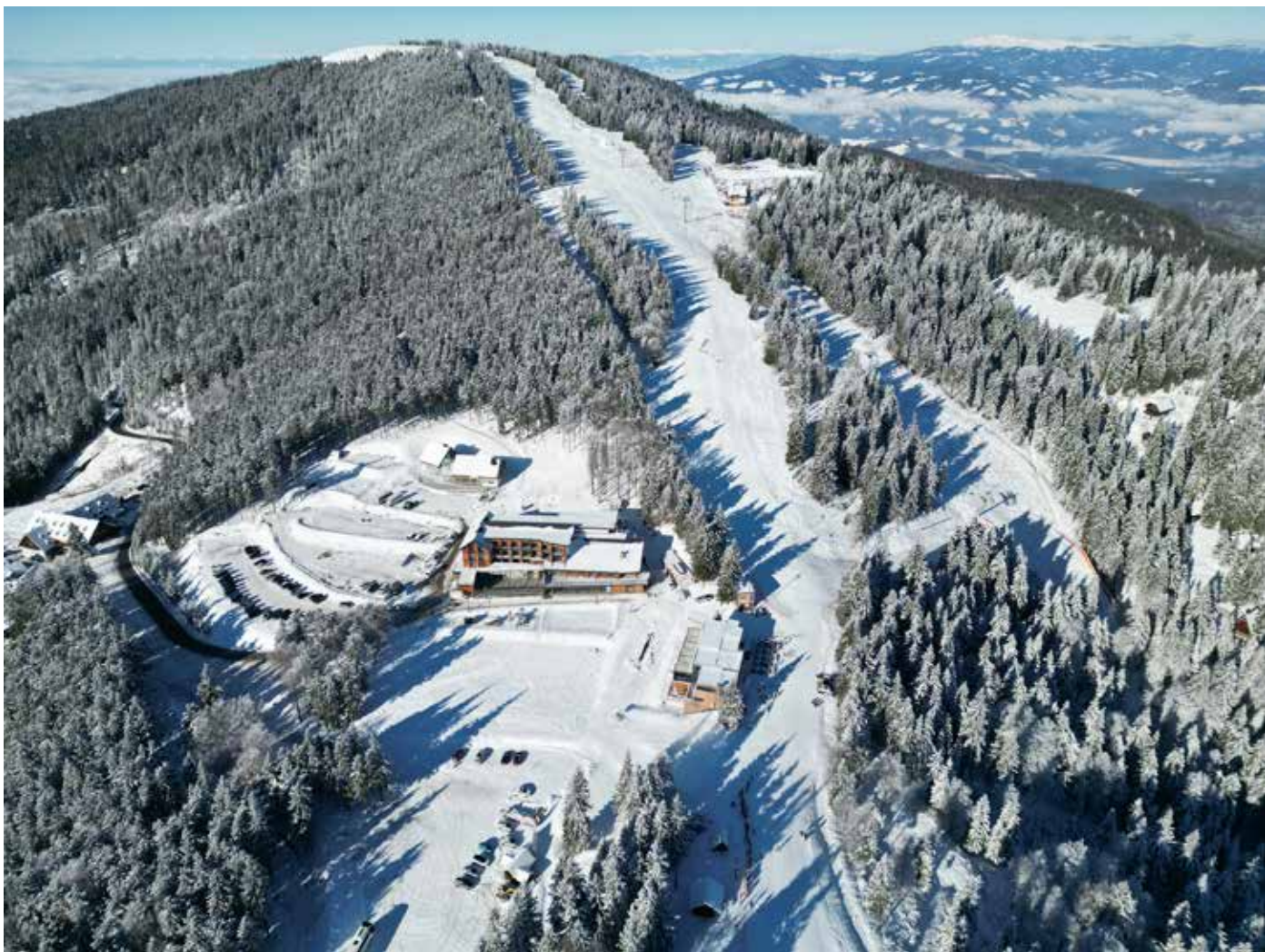
## GUIDE'S LIFE

How does he manage as a guide and as a climber and skier and how can he spend most of the year in Asia? »I try to do what I enjoy and what pulls me. I've never been, for example, on the south side of Everest. I've never climbed Ama Dablam. In fact, I don't even know many people who work as guides there. Personally, I choose areas where mountains often don't even have names or I randomly get a photo or gather information during a random conversation in a pub. Finding ideas is what I'm focused on. Only the unknown pulls me. I also think that's why people choose me as a guide. Because those who have already climbed Everest or have done a lot around the world are looking for something new, and those are the ones who join me on my trips. They are people with a lot of experience. But I also never repeat expeditions, as I don't return to the same mountain, and every time it's different, it attracts them.«

Luke Smithwick is truly focused on exploring everything new, as most of those places have had very few or no Westerners before. »Advertising for me goes from mouth to mouth. Or random searches on Google. Every year or every other year, the same (clients) come back to me. We get to know and discover everything as we go, and it's not unusual for me not to even know the base camp location. Only basic information based on Google Earth snapshots.«

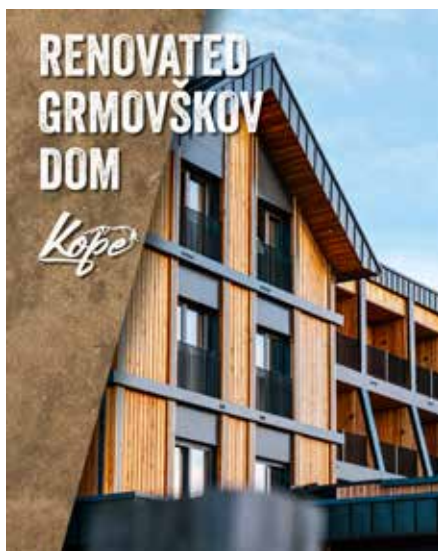


# KOPE – Slovenia's best-kept secret.



On the westernmost and highest part of Pohorje, above the town of Slovenj Gradec, lies an unspoilt mountain resort KOPE. It spreads among spruce forests and was notably named **BEST SKI CENTER** and a **FAMILY FRIENDLY SKI CENTER** by SLOVENIA'S BEST competition.

With recent enhancements and investments, Kope proudly offers 12 kilometers of meticulously groomed ski runs across 80 hectares, seamlessly interconnected by four chairlifts and three tow lifts. The trails cater to a full spectrum of skiers, from novices to seasoned experts. The esteemed Kaštivnik FIS slope ranks among Slovenia's finest, while the other runs provide, among their many charms, breathtaking panoramas of the surrounding undulations. Advanced snowmaking technology ensures a dependable 100-day skiing season each year.





Beyond its recreational offerings, Kope serves as a training ground for ski clubs, where emerging talents refine their techniques under the tutelage of veteran instructors. The resort also stages corporate competitions, fostering team-building and the endorsement of active lifestyles in the workplace. Kope's allure extends to its vibrant social scene, featuring a dynamic array of concerts and the region's top APRES SKI gatherings at the renowned Holcer pub.

Even with skiing's reputation as being a pricey endeavour, Kope offers BOOM WEEKENDs, an affordable weekend packages, where guest can enjoy Kope's ski slopes as well as the APRES SKI music events. Guests can choose from accommodations in Lukov dom, Grmovškov dom, Hotel Slovenj Gradec or self-catering Apartments Kope, with a ski pass inclusive of nocturnal skiing adventures. Nearby Grmovškov dom, the resort can also accommodate up to 60 motorhomes, providing comprehensive amenities for a restful retreat.

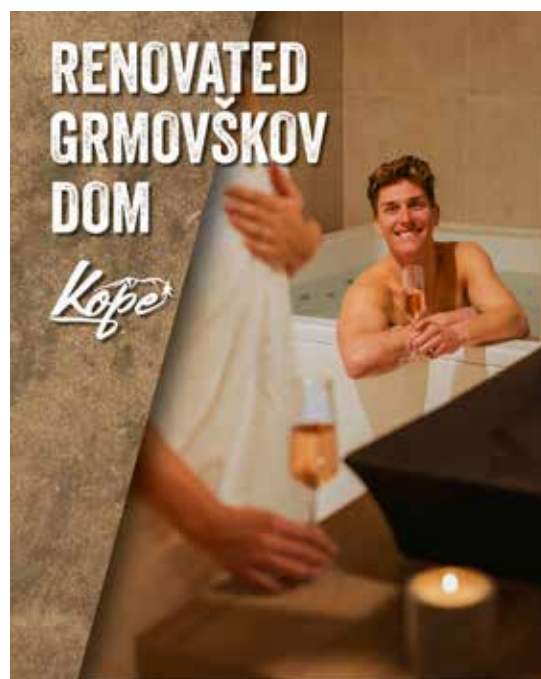
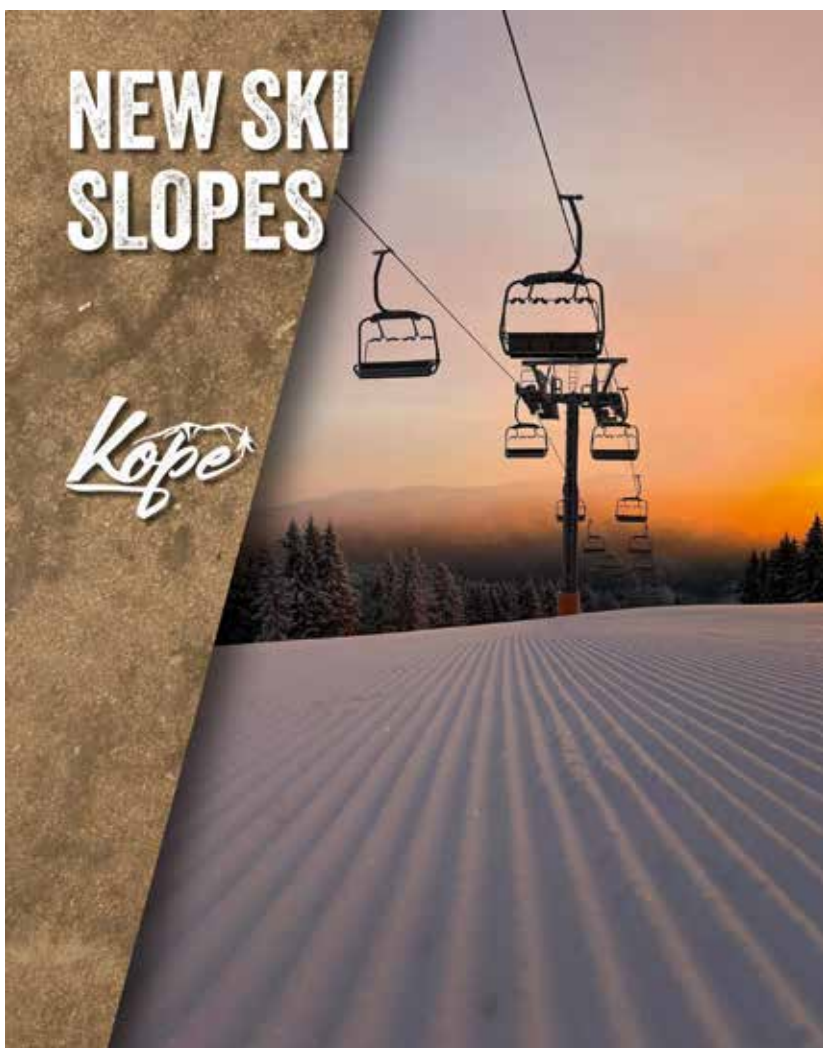
In its stride towards sustainability and competitive mountain tourism, Kope is rounding off a significant investment phase in 2024. This includes the overhaul of Grmovškov dom, the addition of two quad chairlifts - Pahernik and Kopnik, a new Velika Kopa lift, as well as the creation of an adrenaline park, cycling paths, and an expanded Bike Park.

As the snows recede, Kope transforms into an idyllic landscape for summer sports and nature enthusiasts. Over 380 kilometers of marked biking trails ribbon through the verdant forests and meadows, connecting Kope to Ribniško Pohorje, Rogla, and extending to Maribor. Catering to fervent mountain bikers and leisurely family excursions alike, Kope promises an outdoor experience in all four seasons for everyone.



The Bike Park Kope annually wows with fresh tracks and, following recent expansions, now includes the Pahernik and Kopnik runs, catering to everyone from beginners to adrenaline seekers. All necessary gear for these adventures, along with hiking equipment, is available for hire at the Kope Sports Center. A wealth of hiking trails crisscross the mountain, all well-maintained, signposted, and supported digitally to navigate explorers to their chosen destinations safely.

A highlight of the summer is the adrenaline-fueled KOPE Park and the treetop walk, nestled within the oxygen-rich Pohorje woods, offering an exhilarating yet serene family escape.







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# Mt. Denali – A Nut with a Double Shell



»Breathe, Kuki, breathe,« I tell myself, half kneeling on one knee, half sitting on my side, my gaze turned towards the top of the pass that marks the end of the slope. My skis don't grip the ice patch, and I fall. After catching my breath, I analyze the situation. Sitting on my side feels safe. The moment I move, I risk slipping and tumbling down the slope, past open crevasses ... or into them. Grip on touring bindings on ice is poor, and the over 20 kilograms in my backpack shift my center of gravity in a rhythm completely unfamiliar to me. Should I stress my knee, injured for 20 years, by 100%, or is it better to stress the carbon pole? Which will give out first – my knee or the pole? I need both for the rest of the expedition.

Motorcycle Hill, about 400 meters above Camp 3, presents a beautiful, tense slope on the way to Camp 4. It culminates in the steepest part with a pass, combed to blue ice by hurricane winds. Gathering myself, I summon energy from my heels to my jugulars, distribute it between the pole and my knee, and in one swoop, I stand on my skis. Just ten more vertical meters, cautiously, like walking on eggshells, to the plateau.

»Where have you been?« asks my colleague, already donning crampons for the next leg. »Oh, nowhere, just took a few pictures!«

Denali National Park is situated in the heart of Alaska, with Mt. Denali at its center. The quickest access from Europe is by flying to the port city of Anchorage, then driving about 3 hours to the starting village of Talkeetna. The park covers an area slightly larger than the entire country of Slovenia. Initially named Mount McKinley after a 19th-century U.S. president, it was renamed during Barack Obama's presidency. In the local indigenous language, Denali means »high.« Standing at 6,200 meters, it is the highest peak in North America. Climbing it is the goal



of many mountaineers worldwide, especially those pursuing the »7 Summits« challenge – conquering the highest peaks on all seven continents.

Movement within the park and mountaineering ascents are regulated by park ranger services. They operate out of the small village of Talkeetna, the starting point for all climbing expeditions. Climbers must register and pay a fee to attempt the ascent. The rules are highly ecologically oriented. Each expedition



We walk for about 6 hours to the first camp. We set up camp in an orderly fashion, dig in the tents, make a latrine, and ceremoniously place a pot in the center to aim for until it's full. The first task is cooking – melting snow to fill thermoses and prepare dinner. The first night also brings the first signs of altitude – shallow breathing and the cold penetrating the armafex under the buttocks. A long night, from eight in the evening until the morning sun's rays, sleeping in segments. Nothing new. We continue towards the second camp. In a similar rhythm, all day. The terrain is very steep in some places, and the sleds are not as obedient anymore. With every step, you pull them nicely, but then, of course, with all thirty kilograms and more, they pull

undergoes a briefing where park staff explain glacier travel rules and highlight mountain hazards. Emphasis is placed on waste management, including human waste disposal. Every expedition is assigned a registration number and receives an appropriate number of waste containers, which the group must carry up the mountain and return to the station in Talkeetna.

Mt. Denali has a completely unique approach. While in Europe, most mountains have organized mountain huts and shelters, Denali is entirely barren. In the Himalayas, South America, and most mountain ranges, climbers are accompanied to base camps by pack animals or porters to higher camps by high-altitude porters. There is no such assistance here. Climbers on Denali are entirely self-reliant. They carry all their equipment – mountaineering gear, climbing gear, clothing, tents, food, cooking utensils, cooking fuel... And this equipment adds up to over 50 kilograms. The only way to start the ascent is by air.

After completing formalities and obtaining permission to climb, the action begins with weighing luggage at the airport in Talkeetna. For the flight to the base camp on Kahiltna Glacier, each person is allowed 56 kilograms. After an hour of scenic flying and an adrenaline-filled landing on the snowy glacier, the adventure begins.

We also brought sleds on the plane, which we attach to our climbing harnesses. We securely fasten all the gear onto them; a third of the gear, about 20 kilograms, goes into the backpack. We courageously attach touring skis and march in a single file. The landscape is incredibly beautiful – an endless sea of snow and ice. And the snow is literally – snow white. Initially, the glacier gently rises, and the sleds obediently follow, breathing is at 2,200 meters, where we landed, with a slightly elevated frequency. In sunny weather, at a temperature of around minus 5 degrees – just like on countless ski tours we've done in recent years.







back. Well, this rhythm is new to my body. When the slope becomes steeper and the skins on the skis no longer have good grip, most of the weight remains on the arms. The whole body is involved. Initially confidently, then impulsively, after eight hours of pulling, painful in some places. There is less and less time to admire the beautiful surrounding peaks and vast glacier plains. Breathing thickens, steps slow down, conversation dies down. And thoughts start creeping in – this isn't a joke anymore, or rather... do I really need this?

Everyone works for themselves, waiting for a flat spot to appear, where we'll set up camp for one night. Throughout the day, we experience all kinds of weather – sun, wind, cloudy, snow, fog... We set up camp in the snow, dig in the kitchen – a gasoline stove with a large pot for water, we dig it in nicely so the wind doesn't carry the flames away from the pot. While waiting for the water to boil, we flatten the space for setting up tents. With frozen hands in heavy gloves, we secure the tents, the latrine is already stand by, ... by evening, the temperature is already below minus 20 degrees. Tea really hits the spot, dinner even more so. Packs of dehydrated food, to which you only add boiling water, have truly simplified cuisine in these conditions. And no need to wash dishes either.

We must adapt hygiene to the new conditions – toothpaste, creams, intimate wipes – anything containing liquid is completely frozen and hard as a rock. The night is even longer and brings new revelations. I put underwear, shoes, hats, and gloves in my sleeping bag, to keep them warm. At an altitude of 3,500 meters, tiredness quickly lulls me to sleep. And... I wake up quickly too. From experience, I know that when my body falls asleep, I start breathing shallower, my lungs demand more oxygen, so I wake up and immediately gasp for air. Well, here, on Denali, I discover another dimension of sleeplessness. When I'm awake, my body produces heat to keep me warm. When I fall asleep, my body relaxes, stops warming up, the cold from the snow, just 3 cm below me, cools my body, making it start shivering. So I wake up, gasp for air, and slowly stop shivering. I turn on my side, fall asleep, and... repeat the exercise all night, every night, for about 12 hours. At minus 16 inside the tent, it's a double hassle, air for breathing and

shivering for warmth. But we're made of stern stuff and take it in stride. It will only last for 14 nights, then back to warmth.

Advancing in height with sleds is no longer wise, as there are many parts in the slopes that are windblown and show ribs of green ice. Distances are not great anymore, but the altitude difference we need to cover to reach the next camp is greater. We decide to move with crampons on our feet. We load as much gear as possible into backpacks, attach skis to them, and slowly make progress. At these altitudes, there's about 25 kilograms of gear in the backpack, plus skis, which the wind moves back and forth, a significant weight. The body groans from exertion, every step is deliberate. Near the spot for the next camp, we make a storage – a depot. We dig holes in the snow, put gear in them, cover them with snow, and mark the depot with probes. Then we ski back to the starting camp. This is a good acclimatization, which helps make the nights more bearable too. Well, the rhythm of sleep and turning remains the same – left side, back, right side, back, ... After a day of rest, we pack up camp and carry everything past the depot to a new location, about 1000 meters higher. This is already the starting point for the assault on the summit. Cold squeezes during the day, even more at night.

The weather on Denali is truly unpredictable. Every evening, we receive a weather forecast via walkie-talkie – but only for the next day. No one takes risks or provides longer forecasts. Denali, a recluse near the Arctic Circle, in the middle of tundra, creates its own weather. It changes from hour to hour, following an entirely unpredictable and unique script. At the 4,500-meter camp, it can be sunny and minus 25 degrees, while 300 meters higher, the wind blows in fog to the feeling of minus 40 degrees. As a result, planning an assault on the summit is extremely difficult – because you never know what awaits you a few hundred meters higher. An odd mountain.

In the starting camp, we made ourselves a whole haven. Tents dug in, a wall of snow bricks around them, the kitchen protected from the wind, the latrine deepened so only heads are visible. Defecating in these conditions is a story in itself. We have various squatting techniques at minus 25. I always take an ice axe with me. At the last moment, when I feel it's time, I drop my pants, squat, and grab the ice axe in the snow in front of me, like a bull by the horns. There's no greater joy than a nice sausage in the ranger's container. The paper is as hard as sandpaper, but if you plan ahead, you can warm intimate wipes on your skin in your pocket during the day. Well, then this part of hygiene is also on a higher level.

Passing by, on our rest day, various groups of fellow climbers move. From Americans to Russians, from Canadians to Spaniards and Italians. They go for acclimatization to the Football Field plateau; some try for the summit – more or less, they all return tired to the starting point. By mid-May, when we arrived on the mountain, no one had reached the summit that year. Weather, wind,





where the metal bird ensures a return to civilization. Various parts of the classic route up Mt. Denali have interesting names. From the top down, they follow different slopes with characteristic names – for example, Crow's Nest (the last high camp before the summit), Windy Corner (this year, the wind has combed it to blue ice), or Hartbreak Hill, the last climb before the base camp where planes land before returning to the valley.

Climbing Mt. McKinley, or Denali, is truly specific. As I wrote in the title – it has a double shell. In the sun, the mountain appears as a beautiful sculpture of ice and snow, inviting with its skiable slopes and fantastic landscapes, and deceiving with its height and technically undemanding approach. This is one shell. But when Denali brews its weather, it shows its inner shell – the mountain is, with its climate, weather, temperature, and winds, equivalent to the Himalayan eight-thousanders.

Navigating the non-utilitarian world has its rules, known to those who engage in it. Mt. Denali has double rules – the general ones known to all climbers, and completely its own, created anew every day. Climbers who have been on Denali know this story. This one is written for those who will probably never be there, with some drama in the text. Every good story needs a bit of spice, and this one will stay in my memory wonderfully.

Damijan Ambrožič  
Photo & Text

temperature, combination... So our days pass between acclimatization climbs, gazing at the fantastic frozen landscape, warming up frozen limbs, modest eating, cold nights, conversations with fellow climbers, options and combinations for summit attempts, but mostly at night in conversations with our shivering ego.

After ten days on the mountain, fully acclimatized and determined in mind and body, it's time for the summit attempt. This can take from 8 to 15 hours depending on walking conditions, weather, physical fitness, and the route of ascent. Plus, you need to add about 5 hours for the descent to the camp at 4,300 meters. After resting and spending the night, it's just a descent to the beginning of the glacier, towards the base camp,







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# INTERVIEW FILIP FLISAR

## **How did you start competing in ski cross and what attracted you to this sport?**

Thank you for the invitation and interesting questions. As a former alpine skier, I didn't quite agree with the established training and competition system in alpine skiing. I was more of a wild child, so I felt constrained; I needed more freedom. After ending my competitive career, I found myself in freestyle skiing, competing in slope style and becoming a national champion. Then I discovered ski cross. I liked it from the beginning because it encompassed elements that always suited me – jumps, pushing, adrenaline...

## **Could you share memories of your beginnings in competitive ski cross and how they influenced your career?**

The beginnings were tough, mainly due to the unfamiliarity with the discipline, lack of finances... Three former alpine skiers formed a team. We operated entirely independently. With our own means, we attended races and ventured into the unknown. We had a lot of determination, quickly learned, and eventually became core competitors in the World Cup circuit.

## **Which moment in your ski cross career stands out the most in your memory?**

There were many great moments. Of course, the standout among them was the Ski Cross World Championships in Kreischberg, Austria. It was unforgettable because I had a huge number of fans from my home region of Styria there. It was a unique day, irreplaceable. A day when everything falls into place.

## **How has ski cross evolved from your beginnings to today, and what changes have you noticed in the sport?**

At the beginning, everything was more modest. Then sponsors came into the discipline, courses became much better groomed and challenging, and the level of competition significantly increased. Currently, the discipline faces some problems because the International Ski Federation (FIS) imposes certain restrictions in the rules that aren't beneficial to the sport.

## **How did you prepare physically and mentally for important ski cross competitions?**

I had an excellent coach for physical preparation. We followed Olympic cycle programs. The work was top-notch organized, but I was aware that everything depended on me. I worked hard, introduced some novelties into training that helped me always be excellently prepared. Of course, I also worked on the mental aspect, especially on self-motivation. A mental coach helped me with all of this.



## **How would you describe your competitive philosophy and approach to racing in ski cross?**

I've always believed that I'm entirely reliant on myself. I always questioned myself, analyzed my work, my training, and races. Where am I good, what do I lack... And I tried to correct as many mistakes as possible. But I missed being part of a system that would make my job easier. Instead, I was always on my own.

## **How did teamwork affect your experiences and successes in ski cross?**

At the beginning, there were just three friends seeking their way into ski cross. Then, at one point, we truly formed a team of three with a support team – a coach, a technician,... However, it didn't last long because injuries disbanded the team. Later on, I joined the Italian team and then the German team. A strong team would have helped my career. Unfortunately, it didn't go in that direction, as I was always a »Jack of all trades.« That's quite a burden, as you burn out over time.

## **How did you handle the pressure of high-level competitions and maintain focus?**

I always coped well with pressure. I did mental training. I never lacked motivation in important competitions. The bigger problem was the fact that, in addition to competitions, I had to take care of traveling, finances,... all the parallel logistics. That's stressful, and it often distracts you from focus. Sometimes, it was really difficult to focus solely on the result.



**How did your training differ between the season and off-season during your competitive ski cross career?**

In terms of training, there's no difference from other skiing disciplines. Cyclically – after the season, regeneration, then classic progression from basic to specialized preparations.

However, I had some challenges because during the skiing offseason, I was a member of a professional cycling team. So for several seasons, I practically jumped from skis directly onto a bike. There wasn't much time for regeneration, and after a few seasons, my body became very tired and somewhat worn out.

**Which ski cross slopes or courses stand out the most in your memory, and why?**

In recent years, the best slopes were in Russia – Summit Valley... I also enjoyed competing in Innichen, Italy. I always loved competing on Olympic tracks. The upgrade and the greatest pleasure for me were competing at the American X Games.

**How did you deal with potential injuries or obstacles, and how did they affect your competitive plans?**

As an athlete, I always supported diversity in training. Acrobatics, cycling, gymnastics... they all gave me an excellent foundation for a strong body. As a result, I never had typical skiing injuries like torn knee ligaments...







**How would you describe the dynamics and tactics of ski cross, and how do you adapt to different conditions on the course?**

The discipline doesn't have predefined tactics. There's no straightforward answer. That's the charm of ski cross – unpredictability. You have to be extremely attentive to what's happening on the course and react swiftly to individual situations. Above all, you have to be physically and mentally maximally prepared so that your body follows the brain's instructions. Because once you fall behind the opponents, there's no help for you.

**What role did equipment play in your ski cross success, and how did you choose your gear?**

As a technical person, I have an affinity for equipment. I invested a lot of time and thought into developing my equipment. Equipment is crucial because you're 100% dependent on it, and at the same time, you have to trust it 100%. Especially in times when results aren't good, questions about the suitability and reliability of equipment often arise.

**How has the competitive scene in ski cross evolved during your career, and what do you expect for the future of the sport?**

It's hard to assess which direction the discipline will take. But it seems to me that it's currently in a slight crisis, mainly due to concerns about safety, speed, and jumps. All of these are the biggest attractions for viewers, and if they're limited, the discipline becomes less interesting for the media and viewers.

**What are your favorite memories of traveling and experiences at international ski cross competitions?**

I've always enjoyed traveling and changes of scenery. Now, that's what I miss the most – the lifestyle, friends... that's the most sports has given me.

**How do you balance competitive life and private life?**

As an athlete, you don't have much of a private life. Competitions are a priority, and you miss out on a lot of private life. However, you always have to be careful not to neglect »normal« things – school, friendships, relationships...

**How did your goals and motivation change during your ski cross competitive career?**

I'm a competitor who values new challenges the most... New achievements are most important to me... first wins, first championships... I always strive for new accomplishments. Routine, even winning, is not for me.

**How do you see ski cross's role in popularizing skiing and attracting new winter sports enthusiasts?**

Ski cross is an extremely attractive discipline. Ski cross is a game and, through its attractiveness, could attract many young people to snow and snow-related sports disciplines.

**How does weather affect your preparations and races in ski cross, and what challenges do different weather conditions bring?**

Weather affects competitiveness and placements in qualifications. For example, in case of wind, there are huge differences in times, as some qualifiers have wind, and others don't... Especially climate change affects ski cross, because the tracks are built and require suitable conditions, a lot of snow for course preparation and maintenance. A winter like this one is a disaster for our sport.

**Can you share a funny or unforgettable anecdote from your ski cross career?**

There are, of course, a lot... for example, a major goof-up at the beginning of my career... we borrowed a van, flipped it in France... then we hitchhiked back home with all the equipment...



**How did participation in ski cross affect your relationship with competitors, and did racers become friends off the track?**

There are no friends on the track. Outside of competitions, we were all friends, and I formed lifelong friendships with some of them...

**How do you view the role of fans and their support in ski cross, and what impact do they have on your performances?**

Fans always lifted me up, and my greatest successes were when I had friends and fans by the track. Many competitors have issues with this because it creates pressure for them. But I enjoyed it the most.

**How do you manage stress and pressure during competitions, and how do you maintain calmness in critical moments?**

You try to keep stress within normal limits, conversations with psychologists help, but mostly with real friends. In critical situations, stress helped me focus more.

**What are your passions and interests outside of skiing that help you maintain balance?**

My passions are well known – food, entertainment, cycling, motorcycling, speed, a good partner,...

**How do you see your role and contribution to the ski cross community after your competitive career?**

I haven't ventured into coaching yet. But I'm always ready to share the knowledge I've hardly gained through many bitter experiences. Currently, I share my experiences and energy in some projects with young people through the Olympic Committee; I'm always ready to advise and participate in well-intentioned projects.

**What are your tips for young people who want to follow in your footsteps and enter the world of ski cross?**

Those who don't work shouldn't eat, and those who don't work won't be good. There are no secrets... lots of training, setting realistic goals, and striving for perfect execution... Follow your heart.

**What are your personal goals and projects after ending your competitive ski cross career?**

My goals were high as an athlete, and they remain so now. In life, I want to do as much good as possible. I have many projects on the grill – from **Pohorska šunka** (a Slovenian delicacy), through Elan, to Red Bull, shooting commercials, ... **Pohorska šunka** is the priority and currently the first love







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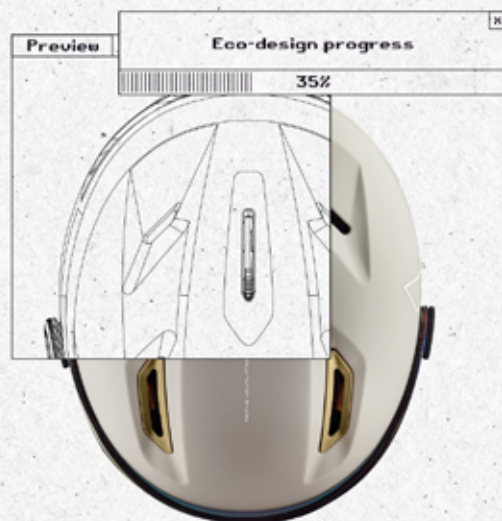
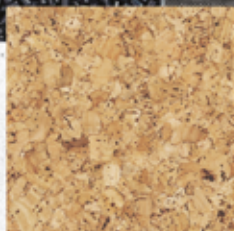
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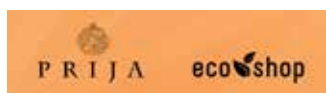
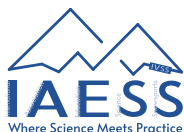
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# UNIFIED and EASY – SKI EASY

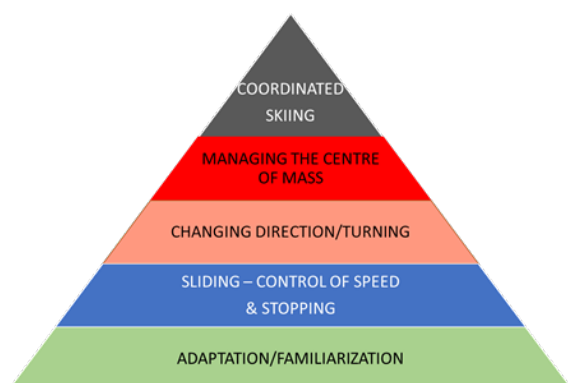
## Educational materials of the project SKI EASY

At the end of the year 2023, the international project ERASMUS+ SPORT: EASY (Educational, Accessible, Simple, Youthful) approach to the acquisition of skiing skills in the learning process – SKI EASY concluded. It brought forth valuable educational materials designed to assist ski teachers and students in the initial steps of acquiring skiing skills.

All of this was achieved through three years of discussion and the exchange of best practices, resulting in the development of:

### 1. SKIING SKILLS DEVELOPMENT through the preparation of:

- **SKI EASY UNIFIED TEACHING MODEL (SKI EASY UTM) for students – ski beginners with 5 steps/triggers of motor skills defined by the following: psychological, biomechanical, motor control, and didactic aspects.**



- **Accompanied by a POCKET MANUAL available in 8 partner languages and online manuals for ski instructors .**

(Free access on the project website:  
<https://www.skieasy.eu/>)



### 2. OVERCOMING LANGUAGE AND CULTURAL BARRIERS:

An innovative approach to applying the UTM on the slope and overcoming language obstacles in communication with students who speak foreign languages is facilitated by the SKI EASY Mobile Application. It includes dictionaries of ski terminology in 15 languages for use on smartphones.

To download the application  
(for Ski easy icon on smartphone):

<https://skieasy.eu/app/>  
password: interski23



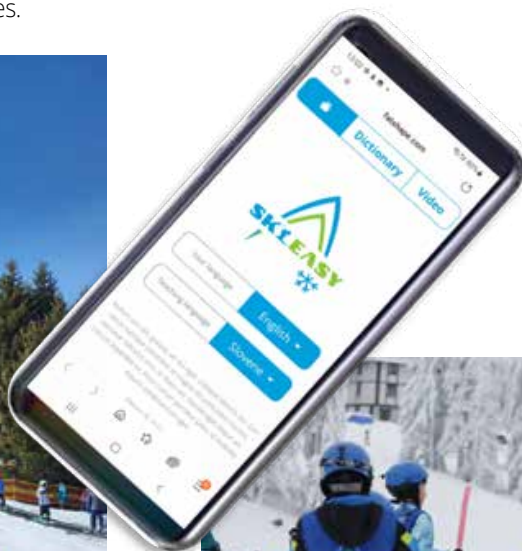
The project consortium:





# UNIFIED and EASY – SKI EASY

As the **SKI EASY** project reached its successful conclusion, it contributed to the satisfaction of over 150 children who experienced their first snow adventures during three SKI EASY snow days. Additionally, more than 110 ski instructors were awarded SKI EASY training certificates. The project's impact on the educational landscape of skiing has proven to be far-reaching and significant. Beyond the creation of valuable educational materials, it has offered a practical and easily accessible solution for teaching and learning skiing. This has benefited both instructors and students seeking to enhance their skiing abilities.





# INNOVATION IN SPORTS TEXTILES

## LESS IS (COULD BE) MORE

**Sports textiles are constantly improving year by year. Not only are there changes in color or design elements, but entire usage concepts are being reimagined. What does this mean for athletes? It means that sports clothing is becoming increasingly »technical,« precisely tailored to specific activities, and truly helps enhance our performance. But does all of this improvement translate directly into better sports performance, such as faster times, achieving more, or better protection against the elements of nature?**

Essentially, this article aims to persuade you not to buy clothing tailored for each specific sport, but rather to focus on the technical performance of fabrics and their quality. It's better to have fewer pieces and use them across multiple sports, whenever possible. It's better to spend money on visiting new locations and having new experiences.

Engaging in this kind of cross-discipline clothing usage is easy nowadays and, considering all the options available, the most sensible choice. Firstly, there's already too much of everything, and secondly, while there are textiles that genuinely enhance our sports performance, there's no guarantee that you have them even if you paid a »lot« for them. Even a pricey brand isn't a guarantee that they've incorporated what you need. It's good to know what's in the product, what all these terms mean, why they work, and when they don't. But I admit, it's not a straightforward story.

It's hard to navigate. Salespeople, influencers, blogs, »experts« all have their opinions, each pushing their own story, each claiming expertise. Discounts, buy-one-get-one-free deals, sales, clearances – all designed to make us buy everything. But remember, most sales and clearances in sports textiles are just about getting rid of stock and »outdated technology.«

### WE DIDN'T USED TO HAVE SO MUCH

Personally, I engage in many, perhaps too many, different outdoor sports, so my closets are already overflowing with sports clothing. Whitewater kayaking, sea kayaking, skiing, alpine and backcountry freeriding, cross-country skiing, climbing, winter mountaineering, all kinds of cycling, you name it...

The problem isn't so much the quantity or the money invested in all of this, but



rather that certain pieces of clothing might not be the best for their intended purpose, despite claims to the contrary. They might be insufficiently »technical« or not thoroughly »tested.« I often manage to deceive myself with purchases, especially when I see something special.

But I know what I'm talking about (writing) because, among other things, I once worked for the well-known company Patagonia, where in the '90s we first distributed a huge number of test pieces. It wasn't until a year or two of collecting user feedback and examining samples that the final product for sale was developed.

Patagonia was then a leading proponent of the idea: »One piece for all.« That is, one piece of clothing should serve multiple (sporting) purposes for as long as possible. We were very successful with this – I'm a textile designer by profession – but this concept didn't sit well with marketing. So, in the new millennium, we got a lot more or less »specialized« products.

Now the idea is coming back. Partly due to climate change concerns and the need to reduce all emissions – textile production is relatively harmful to the environment – but more so because there's just too much (too much) sports textile being produced that's supposed to »work« but, in reality, falls far short of what it should or could, not to mention all the unsold surplus that ends up in supermarkets and on »discount sales.«

## SOME EXAMPLES OF HIGH-TECH TEXTILES

What you're about to read isn't paid for, nor is the magazine you're holding. It's more of an example of what just one (of many) top-notch research textile companies offers today. It's true that we're talking about Polartec, which, in 1981, completely changed the view of everything we wear with its synthetic material Polartec Fleece.

In a few years, woolen sweaters and plastic tracksuits gave way to this soft, breathable, warm, and comfortable material. And since then, this name has become synonymous, an industry standard that others either follow or imitate. Of course, that was decades ago, and there have been improvements since then.

So, Thermal Pro isn't just an empty marketing word today. It's a fleece that's even lighter, nicer, less prone to pilling, and warmer than the classic version. Similarly, Power Dry is an exceptional product designed for underwear. It uses a special knitting system with multiple different threads, greatly enhancing sweat evaporation compared to regular knitting. Or Polartec Hardface, a special DWR (durable water repellency) treatment that improves the water repellency of the outer fabric layer and, due to a different approach to polymers – where a special film is applied across the entire fabric instead of coating each fiber individually – enhances the fabric's resistance to surface abrasion, durability, extends the fabric's lifespan, and makes its surface softer to the touch.

You probably haven't heard of PowerAir either, but if you're annoyed by »pills« (small fabric balls) that often remain in washing machines or dryers after washing or drying fleeces and other synthetics, not to mention on the fabric itself, which we then breathe in without anyone telling us, this technology could be a lifesaver for that »nightmare.« Because Polartec materials treated with this technology produce about five times fewer pills than those from other manufacturers. But that's not all. This treatment also significantly improves the retention of warm air, which the body needs to function, with another important improvement. Anyone who regularly uses the concept of layering during sports activities and struggles to put one shirt over another or a jacket over a shirt knows how hard it can be. This friction between fabrics causes it. This problem is also addressed by the PowerAir concept.

Then there's Alpha Direct, an improved version of the older Alpha fabric, which is a very special insulating fabric. At first glance, Alpha seems like fluffy padding, but it's not that simple. This material can be worn directly against the skin just as well as it works in layers, in combination with other fabrics. And it's this duality that sets this fabric apart from others.

The mentioned new version, Direkt, adds another feature: when the body overheats, when there's too much trapped warm air in the fabric, it »releases« it away from the body, outward, while still maintaining excellent breathability – sweat removal – of this material.

PowerWool is a fabric that combines the good qualities of both materials; synthetics and wool, with wool providing better odor control next to the skin, and synthetics providing durability on the outside. Or the almost classic, Power Grid, a synthetic or bi-material with characteristic squares on the underside (the side against the skin). This improves and adapts thermal insulation, enhances sweat evaporation, and greatly reduces the weight of the fabric. In my opinion, it's almost the most revolutionary product in the Polartec line.

**But enough of this listing. What do we want to convey to you?**

## LESS CAN BE MORE

Whether your closets are already overflowing like mine or you're a thrifty consumer, given all the textile technologies available, especially for outdoor activities, try to carefully consider what you need, for what conditions, and which material would truly bring an improvement, not just in which clothing you'll look better or which one »everyone wears« or is being »promoted« as the only suitable option. Try occasionally wearing a piece of clothing intended for one activity for another, and you might find that it works. Perhaps the »other« one is even better. It's better to have fewer but »more« with all the »built-in technologies,« if you catch my drift!

Why have specific shirts/jackets/shorts for cycling or high-altitude running, climbing, or hiking, one softshell for summer, another for autumn, and yet another for winter? And so on. It's better to combine, but buy quality, not because you can afford it, but because it's cheap, to have more. That »cheap« is just that – cheap (read: less or unusable), and more clothes mean more thinking, combining, confusion...

Perhaps one more useful personal tip to end with. If you want to move as lightly as possible in the mountains during the summer and still have everything with you so that no weather surprises you, neither heat nor cold storms, no matter what sport you engage in, let my personal minimalist clothing list help you, all of which fit into a waist pack or small backpack:

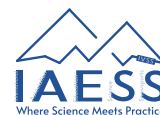
- Synthetic breathable shorts,
- Short-sleeve sports shirt,
- Ultralight synthetic insulated vest (or jacket),
- Thin long underwear, synthetic or wool,
- Thin gloves, like Polartec cPro (not woolen!),
- Ultralight windbreaker (with a hood) and pants, doesn't need to be breathable; we're talking about enough waterproofness to survive half an hour of rain or a storm,
- Buff or a thin face mask,
- Summer cap with a visor (synthetic),
- Spare (synthetic) socks,
- Space blanket.

Dejan Ogrinec Photo: Black Diamond archive



# Plenary Speakers

## Practice & Education - Shaking hands with science



### JOHN

John Seifert, PhD. is a professor in the Department of Health & Human Development at Montana State University, Bozeman, Montana. His expertise refer to the research field: Exercise Science, Exercise Performance; Cardiovascular Disease, Blood Pressure; Hypertension; Muscle Function, Physiology, Exercise Physiology and Muscle Contraction. Over the past 30 years, he has presented research data and published numerous articles in alpine skiing and alpine touring at prestigious scientific journals. His bibliography encompasses over 60 scientific articles, a lot of reviewed published conference papers, published book chapters, invited editorial, professional publications, and invited lectures. In his career, he successfully carried out over 50 research projects grants and received several significant honors and awards for his work.



### MATEJ

Professor of Sport Science Kinesiology and Head of the Biomechanics Laboratory at the Faculty of Sport, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia. He has an interdisciplinary background with a B.Sc. in Physics, an M.Sc. in Mechanical Engineering and a PhD in Sports Science. He is a former elite alpine ski racer, member of National Alpine Ski Demo Team and current member of the Technical board of the Slovenian Ski Association. His research work, which has been awarded two national prizes for scientific excellence and an international innovation prize, includes about 80 scientific papers, several invited lectures and presentations, mainly focused on alpine skiing, but also includes projects in other sports. He is President of the Organising Committee of the 25th International Congress on Snowsports Trauma and Safety and the 38th Congress of the International Society for Snowsports Medicine, 2024, Kranjska Gora, Slovenia.



### MARTINO

Martino Franchi, PhD. is an Assistant Professor in Human Physiology at the Department of Biomedical Sciences of University of Padova (IT). He obtained his PhD from Manchester Metropolitan University (UK). After a 3 years postdoc position in muscle physiology at the University of Nottingham (UK), he was appointed as a Research Fellow in the Sports Medicine Research Group at the Balgrist University Hospital (University of Zürich, CH). He was a recipient, as Co-I, of a Swiss grant (Balgrist Foundation) for implementing novel ultrasound techniques for the study of specific lower limb muscles and patellar tendon mechanical properties of the Swiss Ski National Teams and of Swiss Elite Youth Skiers. His main interests lay in muscle and tendon functional and structural adaptations to loading, disuse, and ageing, with a from-the-macro-to-the-micro approach.



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Photo: Mate Image

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ALPIN

#### Lift access

In the entry and exit area of a chairlift, good snow coverage is often in short supply. It is an area of high stress and frequent maintenance. Many hours of staff are used for pushing snow, hours which could be used for customer service.



#### Dry Ski Slope

Skiing is just as much fun to ride as on real snow and is also ecologically sensible. Because the slopes of tomorrow help to save energy, time and CO2 through short journeys, guaranteed operating times with minimal operating costs!



#### Drag lift route

Glide easily, drive uphill quickly and safely. That is the goal of a lift. Manual labor plus high energy costs to produce snow makes it economically difficult to maintain.



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### Nordic

#### Cross-country skiing

When it comes to professional cross-country skiing training, there is no way around training on skis. Train all year round directly on the club premises and with the highest possible winter simulation. Both classic and free technique can be trained with your own equipment at any time.



Nordic

#### Ski jumping

TexSnow, a unique ski jumping system, developed in close cooperation with Alpina and the International Ski Association FIS for use up to K90, is designed for all four seasons. This revolutionary covering keeps water for several hours - that means a saving of up to 90% on irrigation and is partly made from recycled material.



#### Biathlon

What is more effective than studying the original technology and processes? And gain impressive training effect. In contrast to the ski roller, there is no loss of performance when switching to snow. Training is no longer a question of the weather, but only of the training times. So optimally prepared, there will be a perfect start to the season next winter.



#### Alpine special

Textile snow can be used to equip small rail setups as well as professional training facilities. Backyard setups, entire jib lines or a well-shaped park landscape can be prepared individually. Without melting.





## SPE BALKAN SKI – PARTNER CONFERENCE

From **March 10 to 16, 2024, Slovenia hosted another international event** in the field of snowsport science. Kranjska Gora was the venue for two scientific congresses - the **25th International Congress on Snowsports Trauma and Safety**, which celebrated its 50th anniversary, and the **38th Congress of the International Society for Snowsports Medicine** ([www.ISSS2024.com](http://www.ISSS2024.com)), which celebrated its 70th anniversary and was **organised by the Faculty of Sport of the University of Ljubljana**, Slovenia. The event was held under the honorary **patronage of the President of the Republic of Slovenia, Dr. Nataša Pirc Musar**.

About **INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR SNOWSPORTS SAFETY (ISSS)** – The International Society of Snowsports Safety was founded with the primary purpose of providing a forum for discussion and education concerning skiing safety. The Snowsports Trauma and Safety Congress have brought together a wide variety of individuals interested in all aspects of skiing safety. These meetings have served as a format for the presentation of a multitude of subjects concerning snow sports, including the means to reduce the risk of injury, improve various aspects of the sport, and treat injuries.

About **INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR SNOWSPORTS MEDICINE (SITEMSH)** Société Internationale de Médecine des Sports d'Hiver (SITEMSH) is the oldest European Scientific Society dedicated to studying winter sports pathologies, treatments, and prevention. The inaugural SITEMSH meeting occurred in 1954 in Chambéry-Courchevel, France, where knee ligament injuries, often with tibia fractures, were prevalent. Knee surgery was less effective then, often leading to permanent disability and the end of skiing activities. SITEMSH's history parallels ski injury evolution.

Participants from all over the world attended a series of invited lectures and contributions from participants during the conference week, which addressed various areas of injury incidence and safety factors in snow sports. Together with the **partner institution, Science and Research Centre Koper, a special session on Didactic Safety in Snowsports and a round table** on the same topic were organised, addressing snowsport safety from the perspective of human factors and the management of the learning and training process in alpine skiing.

**ROUND TABLE DIDACTIC SAFETY – prof. Rado Pišot, Institute for Kinesiology Research, Science and Research Centre Koper, moderated** the discussion and addressed the concerns of all invited speakers. The round table brought together outstanding experts from various fields and countries with a rich history in snow sports: **prof. Dieter Bubeck International Association of Education and Science in Snowsports (IAESS) – President; Germany;** **prof. Pete Allison, IAESS vice President; UK;** **prof. Lana Ružič Švegl; Faculty of Kinesiology, University of Zagreb, Croatia;** **prof. Blaž Lešnik, Ski instruktor and trainer Association of Slovenia, President, Slovenia;** **prof. Saša Pišot; Science and Research centre, Koper, Slovenia;** **prof. Ron Kipp, Team Palisades Tahoe Education & Development Manager, Olympic Valley, California, USA.** Each speaker conveyed a clear message from their own field of expertise.

### Round table topic: Didactic safety in Snowsport

Injuries are a constant in winter sports. If we know the mechanisms of injury occurrence, we can have a significant impact on reducing the incidence, but due to many factors that we cannot control or predict, we will never be able to completely prevent them. We know a lot, and many studies and articles prove that the specifics of weather conditions, slope preparation, snow type, ski and protective equipment have a significant impact on injury incidence, but there is very little or almost nothing in the area of didactic approach, methodological steps, roles and the importance of leadership style on the part of ski instructors or coaches. The use of didactic tools and resources as well as the influence of other stakeholders (parents, ski school or ski club leaders, media, ...) can also have an important impact on safety teaching, training or competition. However, how skiers behave also depends on whether and how they learn different important elements/types of skiing and motor skills triggers.

Univerza v Ljubljani  
Fakulteta za šport



Matej Supej, PhD., Faculty of Sport,  
University of Ljubljana, Slovenia

Rado Pišot, PhD.,  
Institut for Kinesiology  
Research, Science and  
Research Centre,  
Koper, Slovenia







  
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