



Heavy snow postpones Super G racing

50cm of fresh overnight snow sees jury with no choice but to cancel days racing

Despite the clocks going forward and the gathering of eager faces at the bottom of the hill ready to go up and inspect, the opening race of the 2010 British Championships had to be postponed for 24 hours. Heavy overnight snow had left approximately 50 cm's of new snow covering the top half of the course.

Initially it was hoped to run the women's race but the amount of work required to make the course raceable was deemed too great and with safety paramount, the race was postponed.

Davie Austin, Chief of Race: "Due to the soft conditions the race committee felt it was unsafe to race. We hope that with the excellent work that the ESF have done on the race piste and the work that the piste machine drivers have done to compact the slope, we will have good conditions for the race tomorrow."

With 48 girls and 116 men on the start list, the depth of racing is looking very healthy for the start of the 2010 British Alpine Championships.

So what can we expect from the 2010 British Alpine Ski Championships?

Last year saw the start of a successful defence of his Overall Title for Ed Drake, albeit sharing it with Dave Ryding. Drake has not raced since the Olympics after suffering a knee injury. Drake has been told to rest his knee, with no skiing, so that he would not have to go through surgery but could go through rehab rather than surgery.

Dougie Crawford and David Ryding shared the podium with Drake last year and this year expect TJ Baldwin to be challenging to make the main podium after dominating the Junior age group section for the last couple of years. Baldwin was Britain's only racer at the World Junior Championships in January and has been making great strides in impressing against the older racers. The form that he is in at the moment should see him challenging his older compatriots.

Baldwin will not have it all his own way as he looks for a maiden Senior title as in great form at the moment is Noel Baxter and he will be looking to add to his six British Championship titles. Baxter is skiing well and has a point to prove after his omission from the GB Olympic Team.

Other British contenders to look out for are James Geyer, Frankie Clough, Scott MacBain and Jai Geyer. Clough and Geyer have both been training in Meribel this winter so will have plenty of knowledge of the slope so will be homing to put this to good use. Also in the top 50 seeds starting the race and should make the top ten UK finishers are Tristram More Molyneux, Georgie Hunt, Bradley Morgan and Harry Brown.

The race has attracted a number of the top French racers as well including a host of their World Cup racers: David Poisson, Yannick Bertrand, Guillermo Fayed and Adrien Theaux amongst them!

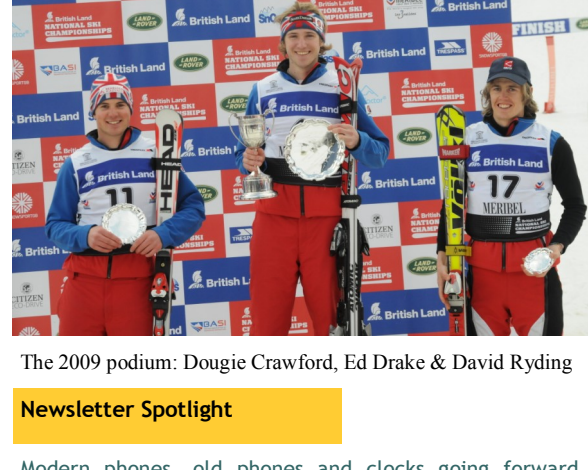
In the women's race, the field is headed once more by Chemmy Alcott. Alcott is one of the top 30 Super G racers in the World and should give the rest of the field a demonstration of how much they still have to do. With the number 2 GB Racer, Pam Thorburn competing in the Canadian Nationals at the moment, some of the younger racers will be looking to join Alcott on the podium.

The likes of Louise Thomas, Harriet Stegges Niki & Michelle Sole and Mel Piper will be looking to use an early start number to make the most of the course conditions. The competition for British Championship points will be intense as the rising talents look to make names for themselves. Look out for the youngsters in the form of Imogen Taylor, Alex Tillely, Charlie Guest and Sarah Norton. After two years out with injury Jo Ryding will be looking to make up for lost time as well!

With just one inspection and one run, the Super G is a demanding event. Clean lines, a low tuck and the ability to fight all the way down is vital. The Meribel course rolls around the mountain and is an exciting course for both racers and spectators.

With two weeks of racing in the offing, no Drake sees the Men's Super open and it will be interesting to see which girls can create the challenge to Alcott!

Once the starting beeps begin, it is just the racer against the hill. One days postponement will have allowed the racers to sample the atmosphere and build up for a race in the morning. The greetings have been done, now it is time to get down to the serious business!



The 2009 podium: Dougie Crawford, Ed Drake & David Ryding

Newsletter Spotlight

Modern phones, old phones and clocks going forward made it an interesting morning for a certain group. Using the alarm on his clock to wake himself up, our intrepid person was expecting the clock on his phone to correct itself with the change of time and when this did not happen, it was a mad frantic drive up the hill only to find the race was postponed..... Oh dear!

How serious is the cash crisis with GB Skiing?

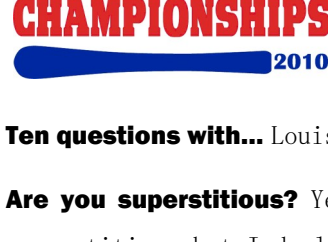
In a word: Very. Without the profile of at least one racer on the World Cup, the British team faces the possibility that the number of spots available in FIS races could be reduced. This has an impact all the way down the scale. Chemmy Alcott posted on her Facebook page she faces the realistic threat of not being able to attend the final World Cup races or the subsequent World Cup Finals, due to a severe shortfall in funding. "On my way to becoming first British athlete to EVER make World Cup finals but am having to fund everything myself. Cutting back on things I desperately need like physio. Another big expense is vehicles does anyone have a van that we could borrow or lease just until beginning of April?" was how she posted the predicament on Facebook.

After relatively successful participation at three Olympics, five World Championships and multiple World Cup races, Chemmy has the right to expect a certain degree of support from her country. In the last four years the sport has evolved faster than you would believe and more and more support is now needed. While the governments coffers are limited, the private sector needs to dig in now and help out.

In March the annual City Ski Championships take place in Courmayeur in Italy. The British team has in the past attended these races in a PR capacity to try and raise some funds for the athletes. In the wake of the demise of Snowsport GB it is vital that the guys get in front of the racers again and do a question and answer session with those attending the evening meal. While not all the people attending the function will be decision makers, they will be able to sow the seed that may lead to the City of London helping out.

It is vital that a new body which grows out of the demise of Snowsport GB is built on stone and is a professional organisation. The little thinks that save money are just as important as the cash coming in. The American team has been very successful in raising funds through its World Cup Dreams programme and they have also started a text messaging someone leaves a supporting message for the US Team. Thinking outside the box in raising funds is something Britain needs to do as it is vital we look to the future and help nurture the talent that we have or there will be no team to talk of in Sochi in 2014.

If we lose starts in FIS races, then it gets harder to get more people involved and then the slope becomes ever more steeper, excuse the pun. When we cannot afford to keep our only current World Cup racer on the tour, something is wrong. We have the same situation that the summer sports had after Atlanta in 1996: With investment comes results. We have some very talented athletes, they now need to be supported to increase their chances of making the next Olympics successful in terms of a medal haul. Private enterprise plus Government support leads to a better chance. No support from either side equals no chance!



Ten questions with... Louise Thomas

Are you superstitious? Yes. Well, I suppose I am not that superstitious but I do like to wear my lucky thermals and that kind of stuff so yes, I guess, in a way!

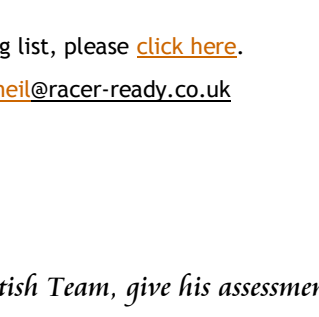
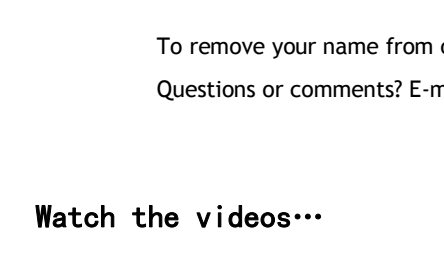
Where did you watch the Olympics? Val d'Isere. Split between Val and Austria in a house on the TV!

Do you think the right person won the Crystal Globe in your favourite discipline? Yes. I do not see why the German, Kathrin Hoelzl should not have won the Globe! (Louise had to think about what her Favourite discipline is before deciding on Giant Slalom!)

Do you put your left or right ski on first? Right ski every time.

What's the programme for the racing in Meribel? [Click here](#)

What are the results from the races so far? [Click here](#)



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Watch the videos...

Watch Finlay Mickel, now coaching the Scottish Team, give his assessment of the conditions and hopes for the week: [Click here](#)

Mike Barker, Head Coach of the England Team, on what his team of racers will be up to with racing cancelled for the day [click here](#)

From the organisers...

After battling for six weeks to rise from the ashes of the financial failure of The British Ski & Snowboard Federation, the sport's national governing body which was forced into administration last month, hopes of getting the British Land National Ski Championships under way on schedule in Meribel, France today (Sunday) were lost under a deluge of fresh snow and continued mild temperatures.

The planned Men's and Women's Super G fell victim to a substantial fall of fresh snow which left the race course unsafe, but the forecast for a big drop in temperatures leaves the organisers confident that they can run a full programme of Senior, Junior and Children's title races over the next 12 days in the former Olympic resort.

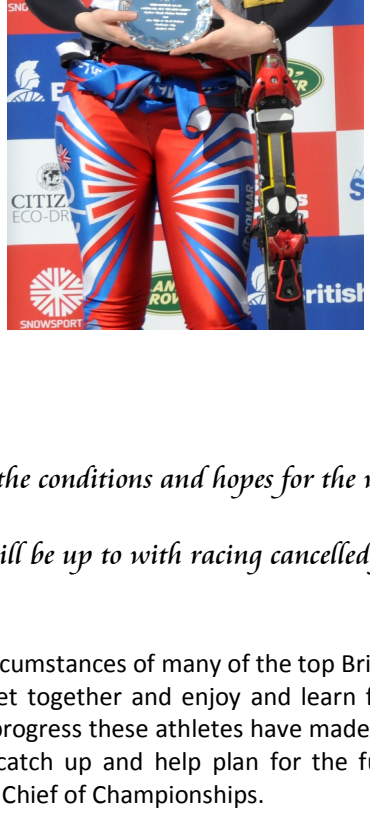
The event is being seen as an important catalyst in the process of trying to build a new structure for British Alpine ski racing and rebuild confidence and trust across the spectrum athletes, coaches, Home Nations governing bodies and constituent ski racing clubs who have all been badly affected by Snowsport GB's financial crash.

"The whole idea that this is an event which has been supported for more than 30 years by British Land and it was under threat was just not acceptable. This is a chance to celebrate the success under

difficult circumstances of many of the top British racers, for the whole sport to get together and enjoy and learn from these successes, to see what progress these athletes have made, and for everyone to get together, catch up and help plan for the future," explained Maree Adam, the Chief of Championships.

"For the athletes, for sure this a chance to end their season feeling like there is some support for them, and a chance for British skiing to look outside again and start fighting against the rest of the world to get better again, rather than being forced to look inwards and battle against what has been going. It has been an extremely difficult season and this event is the chance to repair or make new bonds, and try and overcome the lack of confidence which has been prevailing, commented Mark Tilston, Britain's Olympic ski team coach.

In addition to income from entry fees and considerable help, financial and practical, from the resort of Meribel, the organisers have had to raise more than £70,000 since they took the decision to make sure the events longstanding history continued, immediately after the governing organisation collapsed. The attendance of British Land National Team skiers, many of whom are struggling for cash to complete their season after being forced to pay all of their own costs, has been funded by a group of sponsors including British Land, a Glasgow accountancy firm, and several of the larger ski racing clubs.



Louise Thomas is the first person we have asked the standard ten questions to. A different racer will be featured each day over the next two weeks!

Left: Louise Thomas, on the podium last year.