

# Starting Gate

Volume XVII No.1

MARCH 2017

## HISTORY OF PRO SKIING



LISAMUTZ-NELSON

**The 1990s:** The past pinnacle of pro ski racing.

## Going Pro

By **Tony Chamberlain**

Reprinted from *Skiing History Magazine* May-June 2013 with permission.

Counting only prize money, this season's highest ranked alpine ski racer—Tina Maze of Slovenia, with 11 World Cup wins and 24 podium finishes—earned 701,797 Swiss francs, or about \$726,000. That tops the prize earnings of friend and rival Lindsey Vonn of the United States, who pulled in about \$220,000. The number-one male skier was Marcel Hirscher of Austria, who won \$554,286. In the 2012-2013 season—the 21st winter since the Federation Internationale de Ski (FIS) first began to allow cash purses—more than \$8 million in prize

Please see **GOING PRO** on **page 9**



Airing:  
March 18, 2017 @3:30pm ET  
March 25, 2017 @3:30pm ET



# Pro Ski Challenge at Sunday River launches new World Pro Ski Tour



**2017 Hot shots revving up:** Vermont's Robby Kelley is currently ranked 3rd in the U.S. in slalom.

The Pro Ski Challenge at Sunday River signals the rebirth of professional alpine ski racing in the United States with the launch of the World Pro Ski Tour. The special debut event will feature the professional dual alpine ski race format that had tremendous success in the U.S. from 1970 to 1999. The field is filled with Olympic, World Cup, and NCAA competitors such as 2012 National GS Champion Robby Kelley, 2015 Nor-Am Cup Overall Champion Michael Ankeny, and 2016 National GS Champion Kieffer Christianson. Flip through the rest of the

“ We are thrilled to host the return of this world-class event and ignite a new tour season to come. ”

Dana Bullen, Sunday River president

*Starting Gate* to learn more about these and other athletes. The Pro Ski Challenge will air March 18 & 25 at 3:30pm ET on CBS Sports Network, the 24-hour home of CBS Sports, which is available nationally. This event will kick-start a more extensive schedule in the 2017-18

season in premier ski resorts all across the country.

“We are thrilled to bring the professional skiing model back to the United States. The ski industry is growing rapidly and the success of American ski rac-

Please see **PRO SKI CHALLENGE** on **page 2**

## WORLD PRO SKI TOUR



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## Craig Marshall

Craig grew up at Sugarloaf, Maine and ski raced while at Carrabassett Valley Academy and at the NCAA Division I level for Colby College. He moved to Portland, Maine in August of 2015 and still lives there while running the WPST. Craig still enjoys skiing in addition to playing golf and squash.



## Ed Rogers

Ed is a legend in the skiing world following his twenty year run as the director of a regional pro tour starting in 1976 that grew to become the World Pro Ski Tour until 1998. Ed has been working to bring back the pro tour ever since and is now the Chairman of the Board of Directors of the WPST. He resides in Bath, ME where he owns and operates JR Maxwell's, a restaurant downtown. He is very active in the local community, working to drive tourism and increase economic activity while still finding time to sail.

## Kevin Clarke

A native of Fryeburg, Maine, Kevin works for Martignetti Companies, one of New England's leading liquor distributors. He was a pro racer during the 1980s and went on to take a position as an announcer and sponsorship activation specialist on Ed Rogers' U.S. Pro Ski Tour in the 1990's. Kevin enjoys skiing in the winter and car racing of all types in the summer.

## Marty Ehrlich

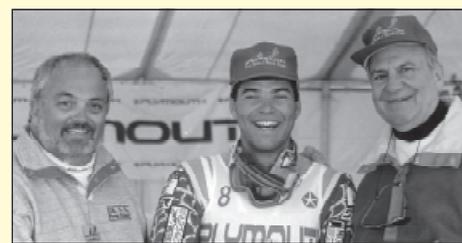
As Executive Producer for pro ski TV, Marty has over 25 years experience of production and program creation. He has produced, represented and created hundreds of world class properties and has a combination of over 30 Emmy awards and nominations.

## Christopher Lincoln

As a producer and director, Christopher has earned a reputation for delivering both exciting and informative programming in a variety of sports and entertainment. Over the past thirty-three years, he has been a part of ten Olympic games having worked for the host broadcaster and with three US rights holders (CBS, NBC, ABC). Since 2007, Flying Fish Productions has supported Olympic Broadcast Services in an award-winning production at the Beijing and London games from 2007-12.

## John Jacobs

John lives in Glens Falls, NY where he runs the world famous Reliable Racing Supply, a company that was started by his parents in 1969. His experience in pro tour skiing runs back to the days of Bob Beattie's tour and he stayed involved through the 1980's and 90's. John still enjoys skiing and sailing.



Ed Rogers (l.) with pro Christian Orlainsky and Chrysler's Lee Iacocca.

*Lisa Mutz-Nelson photo.*



Kevin Clarke (l.) with 1992 Tour Champion Ove Nygren of Norway.

*Lisa Mutz-Nelson photo.*

## Lisa Mutz-Nelson

Professional photographer Lisa Mutz-Nelson was behind the cameras as the World Pro Ski Tour official photographer back when Kodachrome color slides were the medium of choice. "Shooting digital is a whole different world," says the Avon, Colorado resident, "and I look forward to working with the tour again."



## Barrett Stein

Barrett grew up ski racing at Buck Hill in Minnesota and started his coaching career there. He spent fifteen years in Telluride and Aspen as a program director and race coordinator. He is passionate about the WPST dual format and is excited to help bring this event, which is geared to spectators, back into ski racing. Besides skiing Barrett loves to golf and ride anything with two wheels.

## Carl Schlick

Maine native Carl Schlick skied Sugarloaf mountain when there were only three t-bars serving the slopes and Ed Rogers was just getting started with his infamous Red Stallion Inn. As creative director, Carl has worked with Ed for almost 40 years, 20 of those with the pro skiing tours. He enjoys playing drums in local bands.

## Pro Ski Challenge

from page 1

ers has fueled that growth. We are committed to this enterprise to provide high quality events for skiers and ski racing fans alike," said Ed Rogers, president of the World Pro Ski Tour. "Our main goal is to stimulate the ski industry by providing young racers an opportunity to experience financial success in order to pursue their dreams."

Known as a world-class venue for ski, snowboard, and other special events, Sunday River is hosting the race in their Monday Mourning Race Arena on Barker Mountain. The race site provides excellent viewing angles for spectators on snow and foot as it is located just in front of the Barker Lodge and the parking lot close by. "I grew up watching the World Pro Ski Tour along with many of Sunday River's guests," Dana Bullen, resort president and general manager for Sunday River, says. "We are thrilled to host the return of this world-class event and ignite a new tour season to come."

**PRO SKI  
CHALLENGE**  
AT  
**Sunday River**  
MAINE

Catch all the action on:



Airing:

March 18, 2017 @3:30pm ET

March 25, 2017 @3:30pm ET



Former Olympian alpine ski racer Pam Fletcher will be a voice during the TV broadcast.

WORLD PRO SKI TOUR



Just like the past—

# The future of professional dual alpine ski racing is bright

The global ski community has struggled for years as a sparse amount of dual events have barely satisfied their withdrawals from almost twenty years without a pro tour. The time is right to launch the World Pro Ski Tour as a way to benefit ski racers, resorts, businesses, and the local economies of ski towns.

In the 2018 season, the World Pro Ski Tour will take hold 4-6 events at fine resorts across the U.S. and Canada. From there, it will grow incrementally until it reaches a full schedule of weekend events from December to April with international races in places like Europe, South America, Asia, Australia, New Zealand, and even Dubai! The World Pro Ski Tour wants to bring the excitement and entertainment of pro

racing to every ski fan across the world, whether it be at their local hill or through our TV broadcasts.

The Pyeongchang Olympics next season will bring the debut of the dual Nations Team Event in Olympic competition. This provides an excellent opportunity for athletes who show talent and an affinity for dual to train specifically for the dual event in pursuit of Olympic medals. One day, can't you imagine the Team Event at the Olympics being full of pro tour athletes who have dedicated their career specifically to dual pro racing?

We sincerely hope that you enjoy the Pro Ski Challenge at Sunday River, March 9-11. This event is the product of years of work from our staff and signals the beginning of a new era in ski racing history. As you



look upon the Monday Mourning Race Arena at Sunday River, imagine Michael Ankeny or Tim Jitloff on their 165 slalom skis racing against Phil or

*By Craig Marshall*  
World Pro Ski Tour  
Executive Director

“

This event is the product of years of work from our staff and signals the beginning of a new era in ski racing history.

”

Steve Mahre on 210's. The equipment and the times may have changed, but the spirit of pro racing will endure forever...

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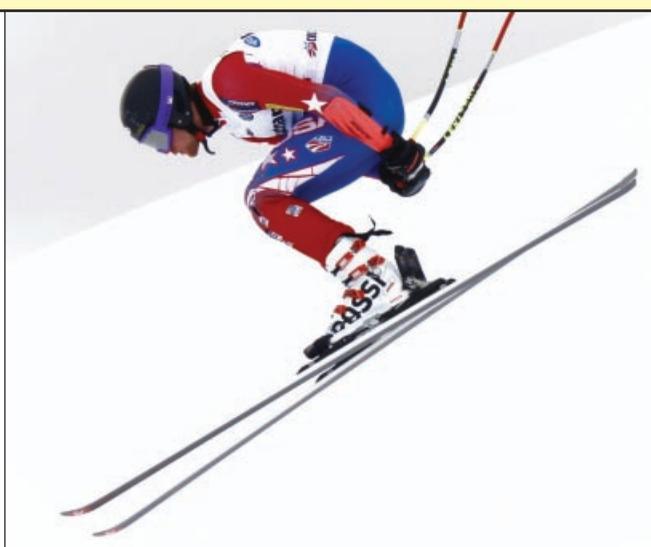
A CLOSER LOOK AT

## THE RACERS

THE WORLD'S BEST



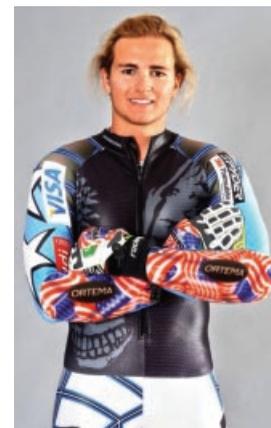
**Michael Ankeny** is a member of the United States Ski Team from Wayzata, MN. He was the 2015 Nor-Am Cup Overall Champion and has three top-25 finishes in World Cup races. In the off season he attends Dartmouth College.

**Ryan Cochran-Siegle**

is a member of the United States Ski Team from Starksboro, VT. Ryan Cochran-Siegle is a member of the US Ski Team from Starksboro, VT. He was 25th in the 2017 World Championships GS and won both the Downhill and Combined at the 2012 World Junior Championships.

**AJ Ginnis**

is a member of the United States Ski Team from Vouliagmeni, Greece. He attended Green Mountain Valley School in Vermont, has made 15 World Cup starts and was 3rd in the 2015 World Junior Championships Slalom.



**Tucker Marshall** is a member of Redneck Racing from Pittsfield, VT.



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## Orbitwear helping Tour to blast off

With the return last year of amateur World Cup racing to New England and the attendance of record-breaking crowds to those exciting events, America's east coast skiers and fans joined their west coast and Rocky Mountain counterparts in a new, nation-wide explosion of enthusiasm for ski racing. In 2017-18, attention now

turns to the resurgence of professional ski racing across America, and the celebration of the long-awaited return of the world's greatest pro skier circuit, the World Pro Ski Tour.

The international skiing world's most talented racers are gearing up to participate in what will be the most exciting and popular series of outdoor winter sporting events in the history of North American skiing. Events are planned from Maine to California throughout the winter months of 2017-18, giving sponsors, advertisers, athletes and fans the chance to interact in ways that will provide tremendous opportunities for big branding, tremendous product sales, and huge fun.

Orbitwear, as one of the key supporters of the World Pro Ski Tour Pro, will be right in the middle of it. For more information, check out the World Pro Ski Tour website at [worldproskitour.com](http://worldproskitour.com), on Facebook at "worldproskitour" and the new Orbitwear product and custom design line at [orbitweardesigns.com](http://orbitweardesigns.com).

**ORBITWEAR**  
[orbitweardesigns.com](http://orbitweardesigns.com)

## SKIERS COMPETING ON THE WORLD PRO SKI TOUR

**Robby Kelley** is a member of Redneck Racing from Starksboro, VT. He is a graduate of the University of Vermont and is currently ranked 3rd in the U.S. in Slalom. His dynamite action shot anchors the World Pro Ski Tour poster this season.

**PRO SKI CHALLENGE**  
AT  
**Sunday River**  
MAINE  
March 9-11, 2017

**SCHEDULE OF EVENTS**

Thu March 9: 7pm - Tito's Handmade Vodka Welcome Reception at the Camp Restaurant

Fri March 10: 11am - Pro Ski Challenge Qualifier  
4-5pm - Tito's Handmade Vodka Apres at the Foggy Goggle  
8pm - Tito's Handmade Vodka Bar Party at Trail's End Restaurant & Tavern

Sat March 11: 11am - Pro Ski Challenge Finals followed by Awards Ceremony  
3-5pm - Tito's Handmade Vodka Apres at Barker Bar  
8pm - Tito's Handmade Vodka Bar Party at Matterhorn Ski Bar

**CBS SPORTS NETWORK**  
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**Hig Roberts** is a member of Team America from Steamboat Springs, CO. He is a graduate of Middlebury College, where he was a two-time NCAA All-American. He has made nine World Cup starts and is ranked 6th in the country in Giant Slalom.



**Gabriel Rivas** is from Val Thorens, France. He is a graduate of the University of Colorado where he was the NCAA Slalom Champion in 2009. After his collegiate career, he made 20 World Cup starts with 5 top 30 finishes. He was also a European Cup winner in a Dual Slalom at Kronplatz, Italy in 2012.



**Tim Jitloff** is a member of the United States Ski Team from Reno, NV. He is a two-time Olympian and finished 15th in the Giant Slalom at the Sochi Games. He has been a member of five World Championships teams, is a seven-time national champion, and has 16 top-15 World Cup finishes.



**Trevor Philp** is a member of the Canadian National Ski Team from Calgary, Alberta, Canada. He is a University of Denver graduate, won the silver medal in the 2015 World Championships Nations Team Event, and was 14th in the 2016 Kitzbuehel World Cup Slalom.



**Mark Engel** is a member of the US Ski Team from Truckee, CA. He has made 28 World Cup starts and while attending the University of Utah, Mark was the 2014 NCAA Champion in GS.



**Kieffer Christianson** is a member of the Alyeska Ski Club from Anchorage, AK. He was the 2016 U.S. National Giant Slalom Champion and has 13 career Nor-Am Cup top-5 finishes.



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# PRO SKI CHALLENGE

AT  
**Sunday River**  
 MAINE  
**March 9 - 11, 2017**



**Steamrolling:**  
 Hig Roberts of  
 Team America  
 from Steamboat  
 Springs, Colorado

## SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

### THURSDAY, MARCH 9

**7PM:** Tito's Handmade Vodka Welcome Reception at the Camp Restaurant

### FRIDAY, MARCH 10

**11AM:** Pro Ski Challenge Qualifier

**4-6PM:** Tito's Handmade Vodka Après Party at the Foggy Goggle

**8PM:** Tito's Handmade Vodka Bar Party at Trail's End Restaurant and Tavern

### SATURDAY MARCH 11

**11AM:** Pro Ski Challenge Finals - Round of 32, 16, 8, 4, and 2

**3PM:** Awards Ceremony

**3-5PM:** Tito's Handmade Vodka Après Party at the Barker Bar

**8 PM:** Tito's Handmade Vodka Bar Party at The Matterhorn

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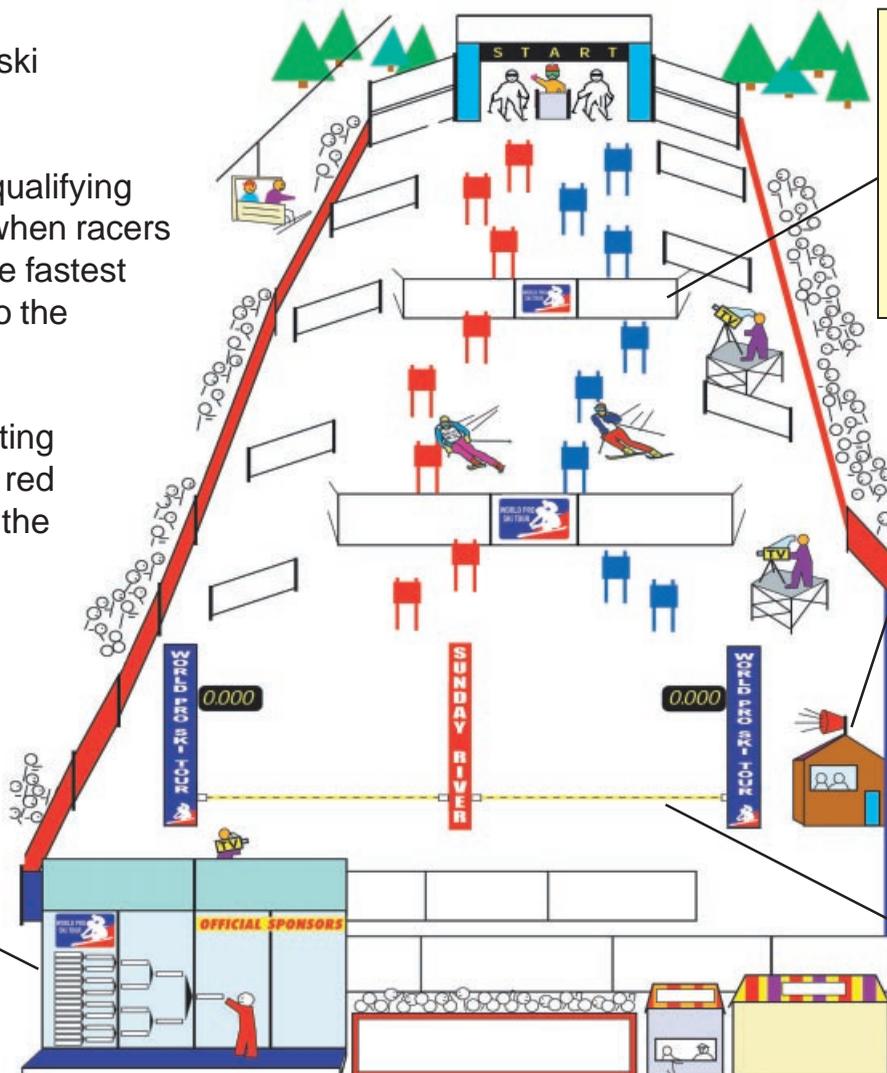
Watching the dual format of pro ski racing is easy and exciting.

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Two racers blast out of dual starting gates onto parallel courses, one red and one blue. All the timing is at the finish line. The action continues down the ladder until only one pro is left – the champion!

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Starting with 32 qualifiers, the dual format builds excitement as the pro field narrows through rounds of 32, 16, 8 and the semi-finals. The hottest racing is often at the end when the best racers battle to be the champion. Updated continuously to show each racer's progress, the scoreboard is the site of the post-race awards ceremonies.



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## Maine Adaptive helps everyone to get on the ski slopes

Maine Adaptive Sports & Recreation is proud to be the Featured Non-Profit Partner of the World Pro Ski Tour and welcomes athletes, sponsors, and spectators to its home mountain and venue host, Sunday River.

Founded in 1982, Maine Adaptive began as a 501(c)(3) dedicated to providing adults and children with physical disabilities with the opportunity to learn how to ski with adaptive equipment and trained volunteer instructors. Since then, Maine Adaptive has expanded its programming across the state to Sugarloaf, the Camden Snow Bowl, Black Mountain, Mt. Abram, Acadia National Park, Pineland Farms, Bethel Village Trials, and Back Bay Cove in Portland, and now provides year-round adaptive sports instruction in alpine skiing, snowboarding, Nordic skiing, snowshoeing, tennis, golf, cycling, paddle sports, hiking, and fishing.

Through the generous support of Sunday River and Sugarloaf, as well as individual donors, foundations, corporations, and volunteers, Maine Adaptive serves both residents and visitors to Maine, summer and winter. In addition to providing lessons in its core sports, Maine Adaptive hosts specialty camps and programs. Our Veterans No Boundaries program serves more than 60 active duty personnel and veterans with physical disabilities and their family members annually with both a summer and winter sports camp. In February each year, Maine Adaptive and Sugarloaf host the New England Blind and Visually Impaired Ski Festival, which brings adults and children from across the country to Sugarloaf for 3 days of alpine and Nordic skiing. Each March, Maine Adaptive partners with the No Limits Foundation to provide alpine skiing opportunities to children with limb loss during Camp sNOW Limits.

Maine Adaptive has its own alpine race team, with athletes who train weekly and compete in Disabled Sports

Maine Adaptive now provides year-round adaptive sports instruction in alpine skiing, snowboarding, Nordic skiing, snowshoeing, tennis, golf, cycling, paddle sports, hiking, and fishing.

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# Going Pro

from page 1

money was distributed on the World Cup alpine circuit. This doesn't include dollars that athletes earn from other sources, like product endorsements. According to ESPN, Vonn's total haul this year was \$3 million.

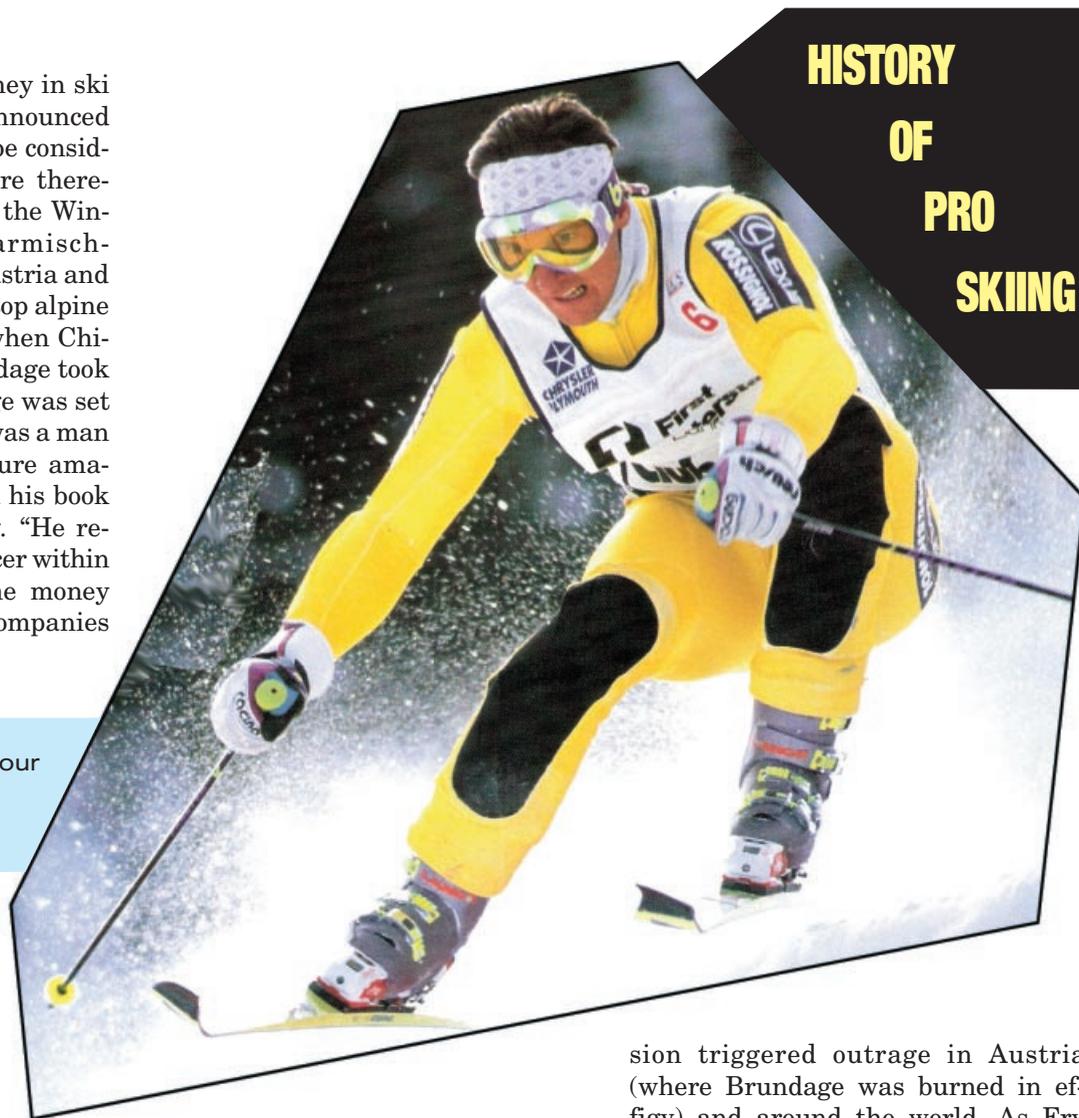
Professional ski racing lags behind the superstars of other sports when it comes to annual earnings—Vonn's annual earnings are about a 20th of what boyfriend Tiger Woods pulls in on the golf course, for example. But their careers can still be relatively lucrative. This is thanks partly to the pro racing movement, which confronted the politics of amateurism in the 1960s and affected competitive racing for all time.

## CLASHING OVER SHAMATEURISM

As early as 1936, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and the International Ski Federation (FIS) were

clashing over the role of money in ski racing. That year, the IOC announced that ski instructors were to be considered "professionals" and were therefore ineligible to compete in the Winter Games at Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Germany. Austria and Switzerland withdrew their top alpine racers in protest. By 1952, when Chicago millionaire Avery Brundage took the helm of the IOC, the stage was set for a showdown. "Brundage was a man obsessed with the idea of pure amateurism," writes John Fry in his book *The Story of Modern Skiing*. "He regarded alpine racers as a cancer within the Olympics because of the money paid to them by equipment companies to use their products."

1994 World Pro Ski Tour champion Sebastian Vitzthum of Austria.



## HISTORY OF PRO SKIING



### Playing it cool at Winter Park, Colorado

Austrian Alexander Hosp stays low off the bump to avoid catching too much air, which slows the racer down.



Sweden's Anders Akerland leads Michel Coranotte of France off the jump.

Lisa Mutz-Nelson photos

Meanwhile, alpine racers found an outspoken proponent in FIS president Marc Hodler, who argued they should be allowed to earn money to cover the high cost of training and racing, which far exceeded the expenses of, say, swimmers or track and field athletes. Sir Arnold Lunn concurred, saying that "fake amateurism" encouraged perjury as athletes swore they were amateurs in order to compete in the Olympics.

The long-running battle between Brundage and Hodler heated up when Brundage publicly demanded that racers from the 1968 Grenoble Olympics—including triple gold-medal winner Jean-Claude Killy—return their medals. He also demanded that a slew of racers be barred from the 1972 Games in Sapporo, Japan. In the end, the only racer to be banned was Austria's great slalom skier, Karl Schranz, the three-time world champion and World Cup overall champ in 1969 and '70. Schranz, who was considered a favorite in the '72 Games, was excluded on grounds that his consultant status with equipment manufacturers, most notably Kneissl, had tainted his amateur status. His expul-

sion triggered outrage in Austria (where Brundage was burned in effigy) and around the world. As Fry writes, it was a watershed event in the history of the Games, and one that ultimately "turned out to be the funeral...of the amateur ideal in the Olympics." Brundage stepped down later that year.

## FRIEDL PFEIFER AND PRO RACING IN AMERICA

While the IOC and FIS were duking it out over the Winter Games, a professional racing circuit was gaining traction in the United States. It was led by Friedl Pfeifer, one of the founders of the Aspen Skiing company who helped to build the Colorado resort after World War II. As a ski instructor in his native Austria, Pfeifer had been barred from the 1936 Games for his "professional" status. So he had a certain passion in 1960 when he founded the International Professional Ski Racers Association (IPSRA), stamping it with a ringing rationale. "I want (ski racers) to have the opportunity to be compensated for what they have given to the sport," he said. "With that in mind, I set out to start a professional racing organization."

The ski world took notice as Pfeifer

Please see **GOING PRO** on page 10

## Going Pro

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organized a cadre of the most famous names in skiing: Minnie Dole, Sigi Engle and Willie Schaeffler in administration; Howard Head as the initial sponsor; and racers such as Toni Spiess, Anderl Molterer, Stein Eriksen, Pepi Gramshammer and Othmar Schneider. The initial races were held in Buttermilk in 1960.

"The FIS heard bout my project," wrote Pfeifer in his biography, *Nice Goin'* (ghost-written by Morten Lund), "and urged the U.S. Ski Association to notify resorts of the consequences of hosting an IPSRA race. The resorts were warned that if they supported or sponsored the professional ski races in any way they would be disqualified as a future host for an FIS championship event."

Despite the warning, the fledgling pro ski tour survived for six fairly vigorous seasons until Pfeifer turned the tour over to the racers themselves, who formed the Professional Ski Racers Association with Killington's Karl Pfeiffer (no relation) heading the group. After the championship races in Japan the next season, Pfeiffer held a meeting to tell racers that he didn't have the time to chase new sponsors. In 1969, wrote Friedl Pfeifer, "The torch was passed on once again, this time to Bob Beattie."

### BOB BEATTIE TAKES THE REINS

The 1970s started well for Beattie's tour, featuring high-profile U.S. racers like Billy Kidd, Tyler Palmer, Hank Kashiwa, Scott Pyles and a 25-year-old from Aspen with dazzling blond good looks, Vladimir "Spider" Sabich, who had scored 18 World Cup top-ten



Let 'em run: Jakob Rhyner of Switzerland and Francis Carminati of France

finishes. Sabich won the first two pro events he entered, taking home a modest \$21,189 in prize money. But the charismatic racer, whom some suspect was the inspiration for Robert Redford's character in the movie *Downhill Racer*, also had product endorsements that brought his earnings to \$100,000. He soon earned the nickname "Mr. Pro." When Killy joined him at the start of the '73 tour, pro racing seemed to be the ascendant rocket of the sports world, with product endorsements coming on strong and TV dates filling the season calendar.

Instead, enthusiasm dampened that year when the tour took an unpredictable turn and two relative unknowns—Austrian racers Hugo Nindl and Harald "The Stork" Stuefer, a gangly athlete who stood six feet, five inches tall—won the opening events. In the end, Killy took the season title, mollifying sponsors and television executives. But the potential weakness of pro skiing was becoming clear: Without big names, the buzz soon quieted.

In 1974, Nindl won the title, and a record \$93,230 that stood for many years. But again, when unknowns such as rookie Josef Odermatt displaced better-known skiers, Beattie knew he had to come up with a plan. Meanwhile, the tour's chief sponsor, the cigarette company Benson & Hedges, pulled out of ski racing. In 1975, the schedule forced a five-week break in mid-season, and the tour seemed to be faltering.

Aspen hosted a four-race Aspen Pro Spree event in 1976 at a time when hometown hero Sabich was struggling on the slopes. A French skier, Henri Duvillard soared on the tour that year, winning three of the four Aspen races and adding 13 more wins to dominate the season and win him an honorary title, "The Frog Who Ate the World."

The season seemed fairly successful until March, when Sabich was shot to death. His girlfriend, the actress Claudine Longet, was arrested for manslaughter and sentenced to a short term in prison.

By the end of the decade, the tour

was still suffering from a familiar demon—unknown ski racers—and so Beattie devised a plan to alter the seeding system to guarantee that some of the top names would at least get through the qualifying rounds. The maneuver helped a bit; the season finished with two veterans, Hans "Hansi" Hinterseer and Lanny Vanatta, taking serious but unsuccessful runs at Andre Arnold.

The following season, with his finances flagging, Beattie's tour unraveled. Arnold was still dominating early, and the season played out until April, when a handful of racers—including Hinterseer and Boston's Richie Woodworth—boycotted a race, claiming that a snowstorm had made course conditions variable and unfair. With national TV ready to roll, the boycott was disastrous for Beattie, who disbanded World Pro Skiing a few weeks later.

### THE ERA OF ED ROGERS

With no major leagues left, regional minor-league tours partially filled the void, including a Coors-sponsored American Pro Ski Tour out of Colorado and a group of racers organized by Maine restaurateur Ed Rogers and partner Mike Collins, who signed a sponsorship deal with French car company Peugeot. After a sensational Eastern meet at Mt. Snow in Vermont (Wayne Wright fought hard to beat Georg Ager for the title), the two regional tours were combined once again into a national tour. Rogers, who owned the famous Red Stallion Inn at the Sugarloaf ski resort in Maine, says, "We had the B tour, but when Beattie went out, a lot of his skiers came over to us."

In the mid-1980s, the Viking assault was on, in the form of Norwegian brothers Jarle and Edvin Halsnes and their buddy Reidar Wahl, who won the tour in 1984. Jarle won the title in 1985 and Edvin beat him the next year. Jarle was back in 1987 before Sweden's Joakim Wallner broke the brothers' grip in 1988, the year that Jarle, suffering from a bad back, announced his retirement. In his 1987 win, Jarle pocketed \$103,750, finally topping Nindl's earnings mark that had stood since 1974.

In October 1988, Rogers announced that he had signed the country's two most successful amateur racers, twin brothers Phil and Steve Mahre, who had won gold and silver medals respectively in the 1984 Winter Games in Sarajevo. Phil explained that they needed the cash to fund a race car,



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and yet bad-mouthed the pro tour as a group of “has-beens and never-weres, including myself.” Mahre’s opinion aside, the tour that year was stacked with stars, including two Austrian aces—Roland Pfeifer and Bernhard Knauss, who had lost his place on the Austrian national team because of illness.

In 1989, Phil Mahre placed second but still pocketed \$82,000 for the season. Meanwhile, Chrysler-Plymouth liked what they saw and came in as a major sponsor. Mahre, who had bad-mouthed the tour as too easy, still worked hard to master the duel-elimination format, ending up 3rd in the 1990 standings. But Knauss was coming on strong.

At first, Knauss was unable to overtake Pfeifer who, in 1990, cashed in with record earnings after winning both the tour and the Plymouth Super-Series Championships for a record haul of \$221,816. The following season, Knauss hit the jackpot for \$356,256, and then sweetened it the following year by winning \$364,038 and knocking off Andre Arnold’s old record with 46 career wins. The next season he passed the million-dollar mark in career earnings. He would go

on to win 76 races by the end of the tour in the late 1990s, with career earnings of about \$1.5 million.

Though there had not been an American winner on the tour since the Mahre years, in 1996 Erik Schlopy from Park City won Rookie of the Year honors with a 6th place finish, as Knauss finally relinquished his dominance to a younger countryman, Sebastian Vitzthum. Then another Austrian, Hans Hofer, won his first title.

In 1996, Rogers and his new partner, Bill Flavin, sold the tour to Del Wilber & Associates from McLean, Virginia. Calling it the World Pro Ski Tour, Del Wilber soon had it up for sale again. One potential buyer, ESPN, gave it a pass to start the X-Games instead, and another, IMG, also let it go, leaving the field to the Fox Family Channel which, within two years, cancelled all of its sports programming.

“When Chrysler left, we couldn’t find a replacement,” says Rogers. “Fox couldn’t come up with enough sponsorship either, and that’s what pro sports is all about.” The sad irony, Rogers says, is that pro racing, which had been running continuously in the United States for nearly 40 years,

came apart at a high point, with high-profile racers and record prize dollars.

“I think I know how it would work again,” says the plain-talking Rogers, now in his 70s, “but I’m not about to do it. I put in my time.”

#### 1998 Austrian powerhouse



Bernhard Knauss (l.) poses with Mathias Berthold (r.) and Roswitha Raudaschl, who took the Women’s Pro Ski title in ‘91 & ‘92



Bernhard Knauss was a force in pro skiing as he claimed the Tour champion titles in ‘91, ‘92, ‘93, ‘95 and the overall World Pro Champion titles in ‘90, ‘91, and ‘93 through ‘96. LisaMutz-Nelson photos

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