



Ski-ing Country at St. Agathe in the Laurentians

Photo by Anderson

The Women Ski Racers of Europe

By Alice Wolfe

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THE real beginning of ski-racing for women, and the first of the great women racers was in the winter of 1928-29.

Before that, girls had skied and raced in Europe, and skied in America, but no one expected them to look like real skiers, or to do half as well as mediocre men skiers.

The year before, in 1928, was the first meeting of the Arlberg-Kandahar at St. Anton. Frau Polland, an Austrian, won the downhill and the combined event. Anyone who goes to Kitzbühel today and sees Frau Polland, that most massive of all large women, rolling her weight from ski to ski and easily manipulating the iciest slopes, will not find it difficult to believe that ten years ago she was a champion. Even today she continues to win gold and silver skis in the Altersklasse. Many a modern champion ten years from now will not ski as well as Frau Polland or wear an AK pin with as much distinction.

But it was in 1929 with the great English racers that ski-ing for women really came into its own. Nowadays all the best ski-racers know one another and about one another, the same newspaper-headlined celebrities turn up at all the big international events, but ten years ago it was a very different proposition.

In Murren the Kandahar Club was developing an extraordinarily fine group of girl racers. They were the first girls to have *esprit de corps*, courage and grit. Also, thanks to Mr. Arnold Lunn, they were the first girls in the world to have training in the slalom. Other countries, such as Switzerland, Austria and Germany, might have an individual girl here and there who loved to ski. There were girls in Austria who went ski-mountaineering with their brothers and friends in genial groups up from Innsbruck and who fundamentally skied very well in all kinds of deep powder and breakable crust. But nobody had ever taught them to

race. It was the English girls at the 1929 races at Zakopane, Poland, and St. Anton-am-Arlberg, who first put racing for women on the map.

What a flutter they caused in central Europe! Incidentally they were the first girl skiers in the world to be well dressed. Their long straight legs encased in even longer beautifully tailored, flapping dark blue trousers, caused the most open-mouthed wonder and astonishment in Mittel-Europa. And when these slim creatures could also ski it was really too much! Up till then, women skiers had been baggily clad, khaki figures with cold cream streaked across their sun-burned noses, and rucksacks on their strong backs. Ski clothes for women with any chic or style were completely unknown.

And there were so many good English women skiers in 1929. First, Audrey Sale-Barker, surely still the most famous British lady skier, winning her first Arlberg-Kandahar, second in the Swiss championship, and best lady at the first international races at Zakopane, beating forty-five men! When she and the other English girls came into a restaurant after the race, all the Polish skiers stood up and cheered, Audrey Sale-Barker made an extraordinary impression on everybody who saw her ski. Very tall, extremely slim, her height accentuated by trousers so long that they touched the ground around her boots, pale honey-coloured hair, a vague dreamy expression, and when she skied I can only describe her as a sleep-walker. She stood very erect, with both arms slightly lifted in front of her, she had little or no reserve strength in a race, gave everything she had, and often collapsed and fainted when a race was over. She had incredible courage, and I will never forget seeing her take the last steep slope of Dengert at the finish of the 1929 Arlberg-Kandahar absolutely straight, with lifted arms like someone in a trance.

Doreen Elliott that same year won the Swiss championship, and skiers like Lady Raeburn, and Diana Kingsmill (now Gordon-Lennox) and others were excellent team mates.

The English girls' ease and aplomb in the slalom was also a cause of admiration and despair to other nations. Austrian girls who knew they could ski well shied away from the red flags and sat down between them in a way to wreak havoc and disaster to their ski rating. The year 1929 was an eye opener in what courage and racing experience could do. There were plenty of good women skiers who were terrible cowards when it came to a race. The English girls were the first to do or die on any slope. The credit for this fine showing goes to Mr. Arnold Lunn and the Kandahar Ski Club. The girls raced over and over again against one another on the steep slopes of Murren before they went out to other parts of Switzerland, Austria and Poland. If it had not been for Mr. Lunn, ski-racing for women would not have come into its own until several years later.

The English girl racers of 1929 lacked nothing but a certain measure of technique. In those days their dash and courage carried them to victory without it. Ten years ago most women skiers were such cowards that, speaking generally, the brave girl won. Nowadays, in any combined event, two other factors are just as important as courage—physical endurance as developed by training, and ski technique as developed by practice. Gone are the days when a championship skier can go to the ski slopes and win a race unless she has had weeks of training first. The game has changed.

It even started changing in 1930. The girls of Austria were the first to learn the lesson that a winner must combine courage with endurance and technique.

I well remember little Inge Lantschner of Innsbruck, a week before the 1930 Arlberg-Kandahar at St. Anton, practising the Galzig course. She was very small with curly blonde hair which had a tendency to fly in the wind. She wore a little red knitted sweater with a hood. A well-known Scotch skier, Mr. Ernest Fraser, watched her coming down the Tobel of the Galzig in sturdy christies, sighed deeply and said: "She looks like Little Red Riding-Hood—only the wolf could never catch her!"

Inge Lantschner always seems to me in retrospect the best skier I have ever seen. Probably this is because she was the first woman skier who skied with effortless technique in every kind of snow.

In the 1930 Arlberg-Kandahar she won both the downhill race and the slalom. Near the end of the second slalom she took a fall, all her enthusiastic rooters groaned, but she bounced to her feet like a rubber ball, called out, "es macht nix," and had darted like a goldfish through the last pair of flags. It was a new experience then to see a girl who could get up as quickly as a boy, and it is still one of the fundamental differences between most men and girls. It is very hard for girls to pick themselves up quickly in a race. They get more easily disorganized than men.

Ski-ing for women was now well in its stride in Switzerland and Austria and from Germany came rumours of a very young Schwarzwald mädel, Christl Cranz by name, who was supposed to show a lot of talent.

It has been rather funny to see the efforts of other countries to organize a women's team of racers to compete in the international events on the model which England started. The English, ten years ago and today, continue to organize a team every year to compete in the FIS races. And the fact that other nations have started doing well and beating them has no whit discouraged them from continuing to organize. Unfortunately, other nations have not yet all reached the same high standard of sportsmanship. There is an attitude in some countries—if it doesn't look as though we

would win, then we won't compete. In all fairness to the girls, this attitude is more from the country which refuses to send them than from the girls themselves.

Last winter (1937) France, the country which had the international races, did not trouble to organize a women's team. Italy and Austria did not send women's teams because, although they have a great many fine women skiers, they were afraid the Germans would beat them! The English and Americans gave the German girls this pleasure, and feel grateful for all they

learned from competition with such great skiers, and the Americans felt doubly proud when later in the year one of their team, Clarita Heath, beat three of the German FIS team in downhill and slalom at Kitzbühel.

At the Chamonix FIS more than one French skier said to me: "It's so strange, the American girls give the impression that they like one another!" It still seems to be true in several countries of Europe that *esprit de corps* is reserved exclusively for the sterner sex.

Allais Captures World's Ski-ing Combined Titles

EMILE ALLAIS, of France, won the men's combined downhill and slalom world's ski championship at Engelberg, Switzerland, last March, when he placed second in the slalom event after capturing second place in the downhill race.

Allais traversed the 600-metre slalom course twice in times of 1:33 and 1:34.3 for a total time of 3:07.3. Combined with his time of 3:19.8 for the downhill race, this gave him a winning total of 6:27.1. Rudolf Rominger, of Switzerland, was in the slalom with 1:32.2 and 1:31.2 and earned second place in the combined totals with 6:29.6.

The United States women's team earned fourth place in the team scoring, behind Germany, Switzerland and Norway, as Fraulein Christel Cranz, of Germany, won the individual slalom and combined titles.

Racing over a slightly shorter course. Fraulein Cranz, who was beaten out by her teammate, Fraulein Lisa Resch, in the downhill event, was timed in 1:25.2 and 1:26.7 for a total of 2:51.9. She earned 352 points for the combined title, while Fraulein Resch, fourth in the slalom with times of 1:32.1 and 1:30.6, finished second with 358 points.

The American women made a much better showing than three American residents of Zurich who competed in the men's champion-

ship. Miss Marion McKean, of Boston, was tenth among twenty-three entries in the women's slalom with 1:34.5 and 1:37.7.

Miss Elizabeth Woolsey, of New Haven, Conn., with 1:38.3 and 1:38.8, was thirteenth in both the slalom and combined; Miss Hannah Locke, of Philadelphia, was eighteenth in the slalom and seventeenth in the combined event, with times of 1:47.1 and 1:51.1, and Miss Dorothy Hoyt, of Schenectady, N.Y., was twentieth in the slalom and twenty-first in the combined with 2:05.3 and 1:59.5.

The American women's team scored 1,264 points in the combined championship. Germany was low with 1,077, Switzerland second with 1,155, Norway third with 1,202, and England fifth with 1,374.

Robert Schwarzenbach led the American men in the slalom, placing twenty-second in a field of thirty-seven with times of 1:51.9 and 1:46.6. George Page was thirty-first with 1:50.7 and 2:01.7, and Christoph Schwartzbach was thirty-fourth in 2:08 and 1:52.

The United States failed to place in the slalom team scoring as Germany, with 587.3 points, edged out Switzerland, with 587.6. The Americans came in eighth in the combined team totals. Germany won with 1,039 points to 1,043 for France and 1,058 for Switzerland.

Chronology of North American Ski-ing

- 1840-50—Norwegians bring the sport to America.
- 1886—Aurora Ski Club founded in U.S.A.
- 1887—Ishpheming Ski Club organize the first American ski competition.
- 1904—Montreal Ski Club founded; first Ski Club in Canada.
- 1904—National Ski Association of America founded.
- 1910—Dartmouth Outing Club founded; introducers of downhill running to North America.
- 1915—First Dartmouth Carnival and Inter-collegiate Winter Sports Competition.
- 1920—Canadian Amateur Ski Association founded.
- 1925—First Slalom held in the U.S.A.
- 1927—First downhill race, organized by The Dartmouth Outing Club.
- 1932—First Quebec Kandahar race at Mont Tremblant, Que.
- 1933—First American National Downhill Championship.
- 1935—First American National Slalom Championship.