




SCIJ Event 2008



SCIJ DUCKS RETURN 2 JASNA

MAR 1. - 8. 3. 2007, JASNA, SLOVAKIA

Text: Rauli Storm. Photo: Renemiko, Marius Danci, Rauli Storm

When you drive from the Munich airport and the Alps come in sight you see Austria.

This time we flew to Vienna and the moment Austria came in sight, the moguls began.

Bumpy off-piste down, left wing up, right wing up, left wing front, right wing front. Swing you hips, baby!

No 720° though, not even 360° sideways or any ways but finally we had the smoothest landing I ever experienced.

Just give the pilot some challenge and he's awake at touch-down.

Evidently there was too much challenge some planes later and the airport was closed.



▲▲ The Grand Opening ▲ The beautiful traditional hassle over keys, skicards, etc.

SATURDAY 1.3.2008 • EMMA STORM, A DISTANT RELATIVE OF MINE ATTACKED CENTRAL EUROPE CAUSING THE DEATHS OF AT LEAST NINE PEOPLE AND VAST ESTATE DAMAGES AND TRAFFIC CHAOS. In Vienna a building crane crashed on the South railway station. Eva Woyte was the only German bird to catch the worm. The rest of the team had to come by car, and they arrived on Sunday. This was something that Ralf Scheurer was to regret when his car was stolen from in front of the hotel. We early birds enjoyed a minor welcome ceremony at the Bratislava airport and only when we were supposed to re-enter the buses the wind and horizontal rain hit us. The clever bus driver fetched most us from the main door, but those only two losers who had been punctually at the agreed-on meeting place and had to run 100 meters windward and rainward were soaked and e.g. my hairdo didn't recover from the shock during the whole week. Well, there was quite enough time to dry up during the six-hour transit that included the



▲ Helga shows Peter the Brain and Janko how to use a radiophone.

▲ Fatted pigs.

▲ The Lightfoot Sisters

▲ Somehow one always feels important with all the flags and signs and speeches and fireworks and all that jazz

driver's obligatory 45-min break. Well again, at Jasna we arrived and a quiet, light fall of snow welcomed us before the traditional hassle with fighting over the keys, tickets, presents, hugs and kisses on cheek.

SUNDAY 2.3.2008 • AT 10 AM WE DID IT AGAIN; WE SWARMED OUT OF THE MAIN DOOR AND STOPPED IN FRONT OF IT SO THAT THOSE STILL INSIDE WERE BLOCKED THERE. But we are used to push rival colleagues out of our way and finally everyone was out. Then the ski instructors, unexperienced to work with journalists kindly asked us to get clustered according to our skiing skills. Hardly anyone stopped to listen to them or in any way show any sign of grasping the idea. However, little by little we all started our 300 m crawl towards the nearest ski lift. In my group I noticed one of the worst skiers and a bunch of Swedish semi-pros. I'm positive we all learned something from (and of?) each other. It was so reassuring to notice that some things nev-



▲▲ Most medals to Italy and both Jr champs in GS.
▲ No precious metal to in GS Czech, but Lucie Petrová had her birthday (top) like did Rebecca Sharp from UK.

▲▲ The Swiss celebrate Christophe Ungar's bronze.
▲ Only country with triple champions, Slovenia had three. Here supergentleman Gregor Pucelj.

er change. Just like eleven years ago we still had the privilege to warm up our muscles before sitting down in the chair lift. Well, actually the chair lift was closed because of hard wind and we were only happy to crawl a bit longer. So, up we went, and then a bit down to get a more up to what I think was Lukova. Our guide skilfully showed us the right direction to get downwards and not to be slid uphill by the fierce wind. It had been snowing since Saturday and the skiing conditions were getting much better than what they had been on Friday by our Spanish-Swiss presidente el Miguelinho. It was pretty soon clear to me that there was much more skiable area at our disposal than last time. Heaven sent snow gave finishing touches to what the snow-blowers had started. The scurry of snow never stopped that day and

it gave it's magical extra effect to the opening ceremony, when pictures and animation were lasered on the slope as the silver screen. The freestylers' skiing and jumping backwards and landing backwards after turning I-lost-count-how-many degrees in any direction mid-air were wilder than seen on telly. The most incredible was the blind racer skiing by his guide's yells: Links! Rechts! Links! Back at the hotel we gathered to the congress hall to hear the latest on "The New Philosophy of Slovakian Tourism Marketing". Listening standing up to Beethoven's "Song of Joy" as the anthem of the EU was almost embarrassing in it's American-like chauvinism. Is this kind of new super-nationalism needed in this union of free independent countries? After all, we were just having a press conference. Anyway, much more information was poured on



▲▲ Roberto Micalli had special delivery from the GS track.

Nations' Evening (and Night) was rather lively after the GS race. No names mentioned.

► -You don't have any Czech or Dutch wimes?" Laroslav Kopic and Tom Scheck at the Slovakian wine tasking.



WEDNESDAY 5.3.2008 •
DECENTRALIZATION OF THE SCIJ TROUPS. One busfull went to ski in Lomnické sedlo, the extreme mountain skiing, listened to the presentation "High Tatras yesterday and today" and drove by the historical train Kometa to Poprad, up to the bus and back to Jasna. Others skied in Donovaly - the place of annual Sled Dog Racing World Championship, and visited Brusno, a little spa town. Another busfull took a stroll through the historical town Banská Stiavnica, Back at the hotel we tasted good wines.

Bojnice fortress, first mentioned in written records in 1113, was turned into a Renaissance castle in 1528. Trained hawks and owls are it's speciality

experienced what it was to be a miner going underneath into a historical mine Glanzerberg and went through a demanding beer tasking in the Steiger brewery. Car freaks visited the KIA plant in Zilina before spoiling themselves in the Turcianske spa. We culturally oriented, or too late to get to the ski resort busses went to Bojnice, a beautiful castle, one of the oldest preserved castles in Europe. Its mysteries lead us back through centuries to the times of King Matej Corvine, of Turkish invasions and to the noblemen era. At the lift bridge of the castle we were welcomed by falcons, owls and a fire-eater, who, like a connoisseur of good wine didn't swallow the fire but spat it. So, he wasn't feral. There was a several floors deep well in the middle of the castle. When a repairman had climbed down the well about a hundred years ago, he found a large cave that the castle was built on. Odd enough, there was no disco. At least the humidity was right. After an excellent dinner and presentation of other Slovakian castles and churches built without any stone or metal the dirtier ones went to the classic spa of Bojnice, Pablo Costa and I went strolling in the Old Town. Back at the hotel we tasted good wines.



▲▲ Italians have great team spirit, or is it twisted nationalism? Anyway, on this climb all support was O.K.
 ▲ Darina and the other Slovaks worked so for this meeting that she seldom had time to enjoy the fine weather and great snow. Thank you Darlina!

us than anyone could swallow. However, it remained a little uncertain what the new philosophy is. Of course, when the info cramps loosen their grip and we have more time to go through the facts it certainly will all clear up. Meanwhile, in the kitchen a fatted pig had been butchered and some poultry for the road and the bacchanal feast could begin. When the young folk music band played, little children danced barefoot and finally we journalists were invited to the newly built dance floor I little by little Ifelt rather far from home. The rhythmic movements of our divine bodies to the loud music in the dark, hot disco added what was still needed.

MONDAY 2.3.2008 • WET SNOW, WET GORE-TEX, WET BOY. THAT'S THE DAY IN A VERY TIGHT NUTSHELL. O.K. Skiing was great up there. Lower parts of the slopes lost their snow and one had to be careful not to hit rocks. Sauna and XXL Jacuzzi O.K. even though I in general agree with Mr. Erkki Raatikainen, the late pres-

ident of FBC who said that people should wash themselves at home. With this he referred to the habit of Finnish president Urho Kekkonen who used to have his negotiations in sauna with the Russian leaders as well as those from the other superpower. Semi-public nudity must have been kind of hard for the Americans. Fresh as the morning view we, again gathered in the congress hall, listened to the theme of the Eurovision Song Contest and inhaled an enormous information package on "Slovakia -country of tourism and investments opportunities". Then we had another excellent meal - "My greetings to the chef" - and again the Dancing Queens and Kings disappeared downstairs.

Again service worked like a dream.
 ▲▲ Dutch peasoup was as good as ever, but I missed the waitresses they had earlier.
 ▲ Waxing was essential on the sunny but partly shadowy ski trail. The steep climbs were yet another issue.

TUESDAY 4.3.2008 • THE SUN IS SHINING, THERE'S PLENTY OF LIGHT, A NEW DAY IS DAWNING SUNNY AND BRIGHT. BUT AFTER I'VE BEEN CRYING ALL NIGHT... Stop it, stop it! Wrong song. Was it a bad disco night for someone? This day is bright for everyone at the races.



Most CC skier fell. Here we have two different styles
 ▲▲ Isabel Garrido: kis slip frontwards
 ▲ Tony Gearing: loosing balace sideways.



Two of the three Slovenian hat trickers:
 ▲▲ Barbara Jerman and ▲ Matjaz Albreht. Gregor Pucelj was the third one.



▲▲▲ Swedish disgrace. Eternal Serbian smile. A nap whenever possible
 ▲▲ ART: Nikolai Popov and Aleksander Pumpianky. TART: Rene Thierry
 ▲ CC Junior champion Milan Stanko.

▼▼ From now on we want Uros to carry all the Slovenian medallist from the podium. Barbara Jerman is an easy start.

▲-Snow to snow, water to water. Svetlana Gavrovová is being raised to the scijity by Miguelinho.



It's the most important day of the week, the day of the Grand Slalom competition. Of course, the sun will shine warmer on some. The course offered good speed but rather easy turns. There was only one place where you could lose it after a bump, but it was so obvious that only few put his/her foot in it. Two almost certain medallists did. The sun shone cold on Roberto Micalli who was removed from the track area wrapped up in a sled. However, after a miraculous revival he was soon seen leaning on the bar desk with his regular Marlboro hanging from the corner of his mouth.

Another reviver from under cold sun was Romanian Luciana Neascu, the juniora of the meeting, who first very skillfully spread all her gear on the slope, re-collected it and herself and finished the race as furiously as she had started it. Good old self-discipline still left in the young lady.



▲▲ The Glitter Sisters Maria Tolnayová and Darina Gyurkovicsová receiving gifts from the new SCIJ member, Morocco.

▲ The Glitter Sisters and their Magic Slovak SCIJ Choir did a great job. Thank you very much!

The champions were Gisella Motta, ITA (WJ), Andrea Mugnaini, ITA (MJ), Barbra Jermann, SLO (WS), Matjaž Albreht, SLO (MS), Ivana Suhadolc, ITA (WSS), Gregor Pucelj, SLO (MSS).

For once the Nations Evening was on the right night. The young and even older champions so knew how to celebrate and the bar looked like it. When the disco opened the personnel got their chance to clear the place up, and cleared up it was in the morning, miraculously. Probably the first ones coming for breakfast and the last ones returning from disco met in the lobby.

THURSDAY 6.3.2008 • ANOTHER MARX BROTHERS' DAY. THIS TIME AT THE CROSS COUNTRY RACES at the fine Strbske pleso stadium in the High Tatras. Vice president Uros Sostaric, responsible for planning the ski trail probably received tens of thoughts of despair from SCIJ members who slid from the trail on their butt, thigh or face after the steep downhill. No casualties, but quite enough hematomas and bruises. Well, the terrain was what it was. What could a trail master do. The track was quite O.K. for those who put cc skis on more often than just for this one SCIJ competition day a year. One had to be able to push, slide, climb steep uphill and ski down a steep trail. Like in Grand Slalom the champions knew the technique, but also had the condition that it takes to be fast.

The ski trail heroes were Maja Ros, SLO (WJ), Stanko Milan, SVK (MJ), Barbra Jerman, SLO (WS), Matjaz Albrecht, SLO (MS), Jana Janku, SVK (WSS) and Gregor Pucelj, SLO (MSS). However, the fight was tight especially in Men's Super-Senior and Senior categories. Maybe we should start a new category just for the Slovenians and the Slovaks.

After the dinner and being scared of the economic tiger Slovakia in hotel Patria, most of us went to spas. Tatralandia and in Aqua City Poprad are both modern entertainment spas, but the latter has interesting history.

The owner of the spa had moved to the UK in

his youth. After the collapse of the Iron Curtain he traveled to Slovakia wishing to show his little son his old home district. When walking in the field he kicked his foot on an end of a tube. He went to the town council and asked what the tube was. Oil searchers had been drilling in the field but all they found was hot water. So they packed up their gear and left. The man bought the wasteland right away, and build the spa. And as we say every now and then: the rest is history. Now the water and all energy needed in the huge spa comes from underground for free. With all our responsibilities over, the disco was full again.

FRIDAY 7.3.2008 • FREE SKIING IN BRIGHT SUN. FINALLY THE HIGHEST LIFT WAS OPEN AND WE COULD SKI THE HIGHEST PART OF THE MOUNTAIN. However there was no way to get to the other side, but climb the last 100 vertical meters. The ski area from the highest lift was in so bad condition that I didn't want to ruin my skis there and looked right instead. A huge bowl opens at the side of the slope. A slide over the snow border brought to a steep off-piste full of deep sticky snow where jump turns were the best way to stay on foot. After an ecstatic run the slope became more gentle and I reached three Swiss scijers and we slid to a thin forest full of powder, not thick but soft. After some of my nicest turns of the week I noticed that the Swiss had taken another way while I had followed some older trails.

All good comes to an end and I found myself doing very tight turns in a dense forest. After ten minutes I suddenly popped up in a small opening full of skiers who had come from different directions. That was the end of the off-piste. Everyone took their skis on their shoulder and started climbing a steepish trail in a line like the gold diggers in Klondike. Out of the forest we came in a turn of the mildest slope leading down from the chair lift. Down to Zahradky I went and considered having deserved a beer.

The conditions were so great that Kimmo Sarlin and I skied till we were the last people let to enter the ski lift. There was no going to ski all the way to Hotel Grand and we decided to take the ski bus from Zahradky back home. There were already other SCIJ members at the bus stop. Busses drove by but didn't stop. Surprise: the ski busses don't take passengers after 4 o'clock when the ski lifts stop! One might ask: When are they more needed than after the lifts have stopped?!

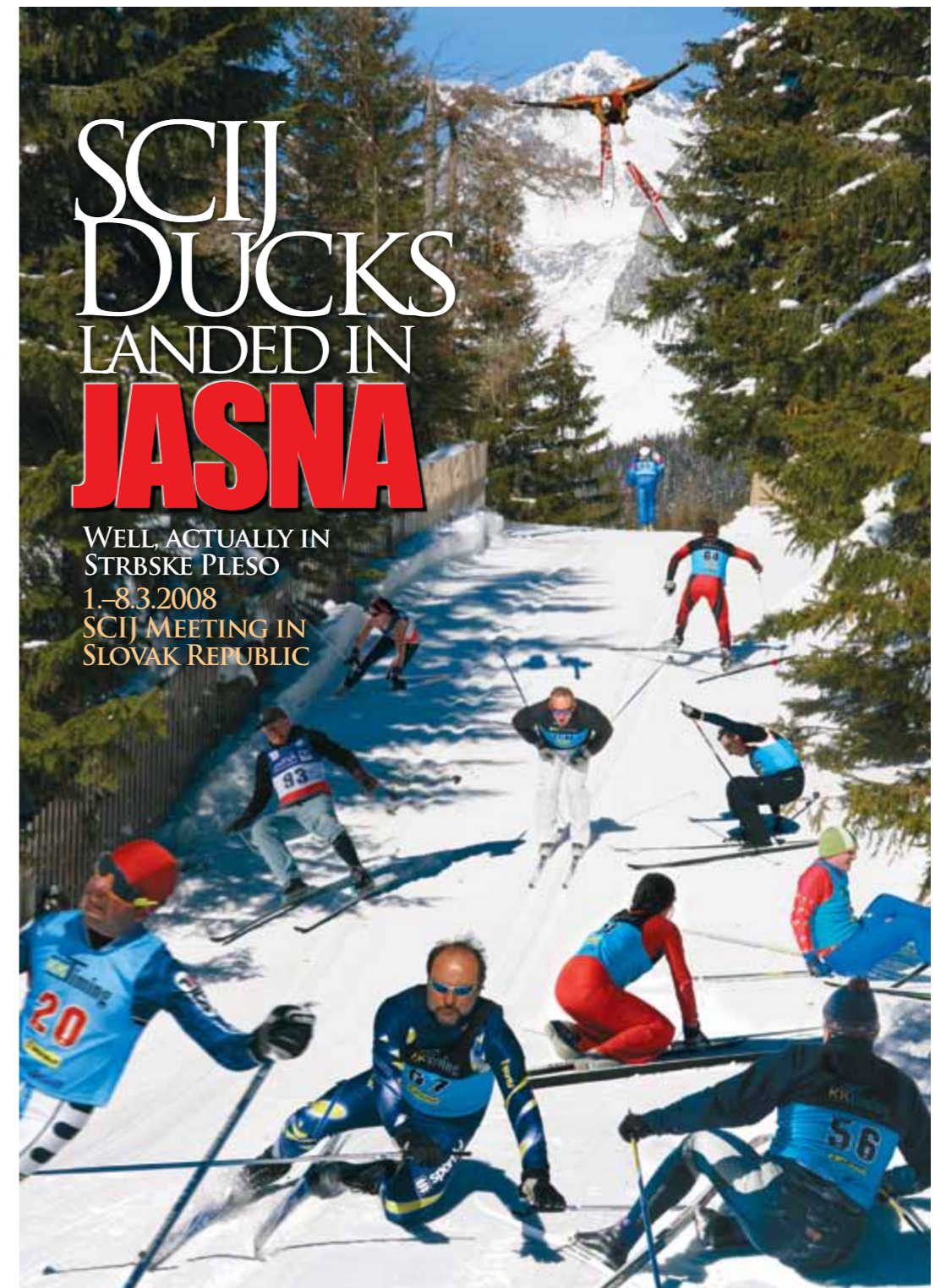
Well, we walked the same way we had been taken down by bus to the opening ceremony. Now we had ski boots on and carried our skis uphill after having skied the whole day our hearts out. Are we some sort of sportsmen?! Well again, we don't matter, but is this good service for all the families who come here. If

the public transportation doesn't improve there will be a huge traffic and parking chaos. The transportation chaos lurks also in the ski lifts. More, and more effective ski lifts from the street are needed to feed the upper lifts. People come to Jasna to ski, not to climb stair or stand in lines.

Something should also be done to move people from hotel Grand to the nearest slope. People staying in a four star hotel don't nowadays walk 300 m uphill to get to the lift. The walk was a shock already eleven years ago, and still was.

After a heavy week the partying had lost some of its charm. Several car loads left to the night and most others went early to pack and to bed.

SATURDAY 8.3.2008 • NOTHING MUCH TO SAY. THE SLOVAK TEAM HAD DONE EXCELLENT WORK and the organization by the team and the hotel worked like a clock till the very end. Milan Minaric sent the buses out punctually like a good old train dispatcher and Darina collected my ski boot bag from the parking place where our chauffeur had left it and sent it to me. The High Tatra formed the great background to our road movie. Friends were still friends in the bus, and to the Vienna airport we came. I called Darina who told me that it was raining in Jasna. Gods of skiing were crying after us. Talk about timing.



SCIJ DUCKS LANDED IN JASNA

WELL, ACTUALLY IN STRBSKE PLESO
1.-8.3.2008
SCIJ MEETING IN SLOVAK REPUBLIC