



SCIJ Event 3/2010

Oukaimeden/Marrakesh



When some 180 skiing journalists from 33 different countries met to ski and compete in Morocco's High Atlas mountains recently, it was declared a "miracle." The organizers (Belgian and Moroccan) had to overcome monumental difficulties, including a dearth of snow, to host this unique event.

No snow-making equipment, no gondolas or fast six-passenger chair lifts, no cozy mountain restaurants, Oukaimeden is a step back in time. Skiing here may not be much different than it was back in 1937 when the first poma lift was installed. Today there are six of those, plus a chair lift which accesses the peak at 3,269 meters. The views from the top are awesome, and the run down is challenging. Riding the poma lift to the top of the main intermediate slope was no less a challenge. At the start, it jerks you up in the air. No complaints, however, as an all-day lift ticket costs just 10 euro.

Where else can you ride a donkey to the slopes? Enterprising Moroccans were on hand with their beasts to offer transport to the slopes for a mere euro. As racing is de rigueur for SCIJ, by the grace of Allah snow fell the night before the giant slalom race adding enough extra white stuff so a professional crew from the Sierra Nevada mountains in Spain could prepare the slopes and set the gates.

SCIJ races follow professional standards, and many members (those who are fast) take the course very seriously. In the past (when I was younger), I did on occasion win medals and prizes. It was a thrill, but those days are over for me.

In addition to slalom, there is a cross country competition. The Scandinavians usually capture the prizes in this race. At "Ouka" there was serious concern that there would not be enough snow for the cross country event, alas another miracle. Ouka.11 Those wizards from Spain did it yet again, and prepared a course. It was shorter than usual, just one kilometer for women, but at the high altitude, most felt that was enough. This was the first time there had ever been cross country competition at Ouka.

Members of the Dutch team always serve their traditional pea soup at the end of the cross country race. Enjoying the warm and tasty soup with us were members of the Moroccan army who were on hand to help with the races. One kind soldier even helped me up after I fell on the track.



▲ Wonder how many of those prizes left Morocco
 ▲ Sajaq ladhidha. Sier jayid laka!
 ▲ A pee brake somewhere between Marrakech and Oukaïmeden



SCIJ meets usually attract local media. The Moroccan event seemed to be a sensation for press and television crews who were always on hand to publicize our doings.

Off the slopes at Ouka, many indulged in a “hamman,” – a Moroccan steamy bath and scrub down. I tried it. Stretched out on hot tiles, a pretty woman doused my body with warm water, lathered me with black, sudsy soap, then scrubbed and scrubbed with a rough mitt. I was wiped out after the treatment, but definitely felt clean. Many also took advantage of massages offered at bargain prices. There were more bargains in souvenirs. Berber jewelry was a special hit. Moroccans, arms loaded with necklaces, followed us, offering their treasures. As this was Morocco, it became a game – to see how much you could get the seller to lower his price. My Ouka.20 Irish friend Isabel was a pro at this and ended up with more than a dozen necklaces, some for as little as 2 and 3 euro each.

Another interesting après-ski activity was a short hike in the surroundings to see ancient (1,500 BC) etchings in the red-brown sandstone. But, the most après-ski fun was on the disco floor. One evening the party even moved to the hotel pool (indoors) with a group deciding to jump in, fully clothed.

As Morocco is not a typical ski destination and the skiing is limited, several days of our week in the country involved other activities. We toured Marrakech where we were overwhelmed by the sights, sounds and smells in its labyrinth of souks. The day we set off for the mountains (a caravan of 36 four-wheel drive Toyota land Ouka.18 cruisers), we stopped at a “Kasbah” nearing completion as a luxury resort, were welcomed by dignitaries at a town en route with a reception, then had a lunch stop at an eco-resort in the mountains. At all these stops, as well as wherever we went, a Moroccan band was on



▲ Ski transportation from accommodation to the slopes

hand to welcome us with traditional sounds – mainly drums and a type of shouting song.

Meals were tasty, often the Moroccan standard, tagine (stew with meat and sometimes fruit and nuts) and/or gilled meats, usually preceded by a buffet of a variety of salads. The concoction with cumin-spiced eggplant was my favorite. These repasts in Marrakech were held at lavish hotels richly decorated with colorful tiles and marble.

On the serious side, during the meet there were conferences on the economy of Morocco, the role of women in modern Morocco and freedom of the press in the country. The session on women generated lots of questions and discussion.

Oukaïmeden competition results

GRAND SLALOM			CROSS COUNTRY			COMBINED		
	GS	GS		CC	CC		COME	COMB
M junior	MJ	MJ	M junior	MJ	MJ	M junior	MJ	MJ
1. Blaz Mocnik	SLO	31.77	1. Johan Soderlund	SWE	10:32.27	1. Blaz Mocnik	SLO	1+5 6
2. Andrea Mugnaini	ITA	32.75	2. Petr Mlch	CZE	11:36.59	2. Petr Mlch	CZE	4+2 6
3. Bertrand Fischer	SUI	33.32	3. Lubomir Boyadjiev	BUL	11:44.31	3. Bertrand Fischer	SUI	3+7 10
M senior	MS	MS	M senior	MS	MS	M senior	MS	MS
1. Ralf Scheuerer	GER	32.30	1. Ralf Scheuerer	LIT	7:13.71	1. Ralf Schederei	GER	1+2 3
2. Luigi Brecciaroli	ITA	34.05	2. Hartmut Krause	GER	9:33.75	2. Luigi Brecciaroli	ITA	2+6 8
3. Skdjan Vrancic	CRO	36.51	3. ??? ???? ???	???	1?:?:??	3. Hartmut Krause	GER	5+3 8
M super senior	MSS	MSS	M super senior	MSS	MSS	M super senior	MSS	MSS
1. Alois Loibnegger	AUT	36.35	1. Axel Odelberg	SWE	4:55.24	1. Petr Kubka	CZE	3+3 6
2. Jacques Morissette	CAN	37.36	2. Olav Hogetveit	NOR	5:02.00	2. Axel Odelberg	SWE	5+1 6
3. Petr Kubka	CZE	37.67	3. Petr Kubka	CZE	5:21.72	3. Alois Loibnegger	AUT	1+8 9
L junior	LJ	LJ	L junior	LJ	LJ	L junior	LJ	LJ
1. Gisella Motta	ITA	36.16	1. Eva Woyte	GER	5:40.28	1. Gisella Motta	ITA	1+3 4
2. Cris Gibert	ESP	40.72	2. Radka Markova	CZE	5:43.26	2. Eva Woite	GER	3+1 4
3. Eva Woyte	GER	42.47	3. Gisella Motta	ITA	6:02.35	3. Cris Gibert	ESP	2+9 11
L senior	LS	LS	L senior	LS	LS	L senior	LS	LS
1. Lena Hoglund	SWE	37.02	1. Anniken Schioll	NOR	5:41.53	1. Lena Hoglund	SWE	1+3 4
2. Marica Finnsio Gefvert	SWE	37.59	2. Cecilie Eide	NOR	5:58.33	2. Marica Finnsio Gefvert	SWE	2+5 7
3. Isolde Pucher	AUT	40.52	3. Lena Hoglund	SWE	6:18.55	3. Cecilie Eide	NOR	5+2 7
L super senior	LSS	LSS	L super senior	LSS	LSS	L super senior	LSS	LSS
1. Martine Lanctot	CAN	36.44	1. Marjeta Matvoz Sostaric	SLO	6:14.08	1. Martine Lactot	CAN	1+2 3
2. Marjeta Matvoz Sostaric	SLO	37.60	2. Martine Lactot	CAN	6:14.65	2. Marjeta Matvoz Sostaric	SLO	2+1 3
3. Branka Malnar	CRO	40.47	3. Kersti Inno	EST	6:34.21	3. Jana Janku	SVK	4+5 9