

Dobbiaco in World Cup fever

As part of the “Tour de Ski”, there will be four World Cup races in Dobbiaco on the 6th and 7th of January 2010. For the popular tourist place, planning and holding of this major sport event is a big challenge but also chance to establish itself as a Nordic center on an international level.

Dobbiaco has earned itself a name not only in touristic but also in sportive ways. Proof of its high publicity are the 500.000 entries that show up within 3 seconds upon entering „Dobbiaco“ as a keyword in the Google internet search engine. No wonder that this tourist location aside from its scenic attractions also offers a variety of sport activities and is – not least of all– venue of some grand events of international interest amongst which is the upcoming cross-country skiing World Cup in January 2010. Without a doubt, this event represents the highlight of this winter season and gives

Dobbiaco a unique opportunity to show itself to the world from its best side. And there is no shortage of it. The live-transmission of the races will be seen by over 22 countries. By now this tourist location in Alta Pusteria has become inseparable from the cross-country skiing sport and over the years has brought forth several sport talents, such as the famous Santer-Sisters, Albert Walder, Monika Schwingshackl and Jochen Strobl and was able to string close relations to the international sport elite, amongst them Ole Einar Bjoerndalen and Manuela Di Centa.

“Over the decades Dobbiaco developed itself into a wintersport center.”

There is reason enough to look over the past during which Dobbiaco gradually established itself as the winter sport center, which it is today. The year 1986 is a decisive milestone in the village’s development into a location of major sport events. Due to a lucky incident – there was no snow in the originally planned event location Klingenthal (former DDR) – and good relations with the then general secretary of the FIS Bengt-Erik Bengtsson, Dobbiaco (already having some experience in organizing public cross-country skiing) was suggested as the replacement location for the World Cup on short notice. Herbert Santer, who was at the time president of the Tourism Association Dobbiaco, realized the opportunities such an event would bring about and immediately accepted. As Santer recalls, the “basic thought” behind accepting so rapidly was to secure a vanguard position in international events for the tourism and winter sport area Dobbiaco and to strengthen its status as a Nordic center. That’s how it came about that in the winter of 1986 Dobbiaco welcomed the world elite of female cross-country skiing. At that time the races of women were held separate from those men. As Dobbiaco for the first time smelled World Cup air, it was not willing anymore to give up its position. What had first been an accident, in the future was to reoccur on

a regular basis. An agreement was made with the then president of the FIS (Federazione Italiana Sport Invernali), Generale Valentini, giving Dobbiaco the possibility to hold a cross-country skiing World Cup on a rotational basis every 4 to 5 years. With the 1991 Senior World Championship of cross-country skiing, Dobbiaco again convinced with its organizing qualities. About 1,000 participants were accommodated and enjoyed the breathtaking sceneries along the tracks. According to Santer, “Dobbiaco is in many aspects an ideal location for hosting winter sport events: A major plus point is its assurance to have snow but also the scenic beauty and – from a sportive point of view – its ideal altitude contribute that Dobbiaco again and again is able to welcome the world elite of cross-country skiing. The German national team, under chef trainer Jochen Behle, regularly trains here with us since years.” Over the decades World Cup races have been organized again and again. Also in 1993 when Manuela Di Centa, an Italian competitor, was able to celebrate a World Cup win for the first time. One year later this exceptional athlete won 5 medals for Italy during the Olympic winter games in Lillehammer. Di Centa repeatedly stated in the media that it was only in Dobbiaco where the way to her exceptional sport career had opened up.

World Cup 2010 – New incentive

The successful World Cup events of the years 1998 and 2003 gave the Dobbiaco Organization

Committee an incentive to further develop and to think of the future. Thus, this year work was

started on 5 courses and in cooperation with Karl Heinz Lickert, who is chairman of the homologation-commission, they were aligned to the existing FIS-regulations. Dobbiaco can now show homolog tracks over 5 km (classic), 5 km (skating), 3,3 km, 3,75 km and 1,3 km and thereby meets the high standards of the leading cross-country skiing centers. Also with the construction of the new cross-country skiing stadium, which is unique because of its type of construction – the courses go across it – Dobbiaco wants to demonstrate itself as worthy World Cup location. “One has to look into the future and repeatedly set new goals for oneself, if one doesn’t want to stagnate”, explains Herbert Santer. “The new cross-country skiing

center is not only important for the holding of the World Cup in January 2010 – its construction of the course leading across it made a so called B-Ascent possible (a requirement for holding a Tour de Ski stage) – but also means a clear increase of its value from a sport point of view.” The efforts already paid off. This year Dobbiaco officially was accepted into the Tour de Ski package and will be able to hold World Cup races also in the future. Also close cooperation with the Olympic city of Cortina gives Dobbiaco only advantages for holding of cross-country skiing World Cups. Cortina since long has a high level of popularity and will give the start signal for the first race of the men on the 6th of January, 2010.

3 questions for Herbert Santer, president of Sport Organization Committee Dobbiaco

Mr. Santer, what means holding of the cross-country skiing World Cup to you as president of the Sport Organization Committee?

The possibility to be allowed to hold a World Cup – or, like in the case of 2010, to hold a Tour de Ski stage – of course is a big honor for me as president of the Sport Organization Committee and, from a sportive and touristic point of view, is a chance to make the name of Dobbiaco as winter sport and tourism center known throughout the world. The international presence also from a longer range point of view means advantages for our location.

What is the biggest challenge in the holding of a major event of such magnitude?

The biggest challenge for sure lies in organizing the event. Everything must be thought through and planned down to the smallest detail so that sport enthusiastic visitors from across the world feel comfortable and can follow the races in a pleasant environment. To us hospitality is as important as a certain amount of professionalism: Dobbiaco will show the world that it can master this task! Realization of an event of this size would not be possible without the enthusiasm and commitment of the people of Dobbiaco. At this point I would like to thank all those who contribute to the success of this event.

What goals did Dobbiaco set itself in regards to this event?

For Dobbiaco it is real luck that it has been accepted into the cycle of the “Tour de Ski”. In January of 2010 World Cup races will take place as part of “Tour de Ski” for the first time –Dobbiaco will get mentioned in the same breath as well known sport centers Obersdorf (D), Prag (CZ) and Val di Fiemme. As a newcomer to the Tour de Ski federation we have to get busy to meet the great challenge. For Dobbiaco this chance is unique and priceless from a touristic point of view.



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Picture 1: Herbert Santer, Jörg Kapol, Gianfranco Caspar, Hanspeter Fuchs in Dubrovnik (from left)