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FIS MEDIA INFO

Ski Jumping History

Origin of Ski Jumping

The history of ski jumping began in the 19th century. The first known ski-jumping contest was held in Trysil, Norway in 1862. Norwegian Sondre Norheim (known as the father of ski jumping) jumped in 1860 without poles over a rock and reached a length of 30 meters. This record held for more than three decades. Around 1900 Norwegian Bjarne Nielsen demonstrated the first classical jumps with a length of 17 meters. Using this same style, Norwegian Nils Gjestvang jumped 41 meters in 1902. In Davos, Switzerland, American H. Smith set a record of 45 meters.

After the First World War, Norwegians Thulin Thams and Sigmund Ruud developed a new jumping style with the upper body bent at the hips and a wide forward lean with the arms extended in front. This aerodynamic technique succeeded and was named the "Kongsberger Technique" after the home of the inventors. This new technique led to jumps of more than 100 meters.

The sport continued to develop with the help of mathematicians and engineers, resulting in more perfectly designed, larger hills. On 15 March 1936, Austrian Sepp Bradl became the first person to break the 100-meter mark with a jump of 101 meters. In 1937, the first Nordic World Championships were organized in Chamonix, France, with just one jumping event. In the mid-1950s, Swiss jumper Andreas Daescher developed yet a new jumping technique. He became the first jumper to hold the arms backward close to the body with a more extreme forward lean.

In 1962 at the Nordic World Championships in Zakopane, Poland, a second event was added to the program (large hill). In 1972, the first Ski-Flying World Championships were held in Planica, Slovenia, and was won by Swiss jumper Walter Steiner. In 1979-80, the FIS organized the first World Cup season, with Austrian Toni Innauer winning the overall title.

In 1985, Swedish jumper Jan Boklov began spreading the tips of his skis into a “V” shape. Initially, he was laughed at and penalized by the judges. However, when Boklov won the 1989 World Cup title and aerodynamic wind-tunnel tests proved that the “V” provided 28 percent more lift than the traditional, parallel style, all ski jumpers started changing to this style en masse. By 1992, all the individual medal winners used the “V” style.

On 17 March 1994, Austrian Andreas Goldberger became the first person to break the 200-meter mark, when he jumped 202 meters.

Ski Jumping Today

Today ski jumping is a very popular sport in many countries around the world. Ski jumpers from more than 25 countries regularly compete during the season in World Cup and Continental Cup events. Every two years, the FIS organizes the World Nordic Ski Championships. The FIS World Junior Nordic Championships are staged every season. Today, there are many jumping hills with plastic covering, allowing jumpers to practice and compete even during the summer months. The most successful ski jumpers today come from Norway, Finland, Germany, Japan, Austria and Slovenia.

Ski jumping equipment and hills have undergone considerable revision during the last century. New bindings and boots permit greater lift and control of skis during flight; aerodynamic outfits reduce drag, and modern helmets increase safety. As jumpers soared to greater distances, more care was taken to design hills contoured exactly to the jumpers' flight path so they would never be more than 15-20 feet off the ground.