

INTERVIEW WITH THE VICTORS

Rick Halling of Atomic USA called Atomic's International Nordic Race staff the day after the Tour de Ski. He was able to get the Director, Peter Jurich, and the Senior Technician, Roman Toferer on a conference phone. Team Atomic's Tobias Angerer won the inaugural event. Tobias was favored to win the overall title and he followed through with consistent racing. A pleasant surprise for Team Atomic was newcomer Simen Oestensen of Norway who took third overall.



OVERALL CHAMPION TOBIAS ANGERER. WINNING IS FUN.

RICK HALLING: Congratulations on a very successful Tour de Ski. Your boy Tobias Angerer was the favorite going into the event. Did you feel that there was a lot of pressure on you to make sure the *favorite* had fast skis?

ROMAN: Ja, it was a little scary. All the press kept saying over and over how Tobias was going to win this thing. If he have bad races, everybody point a finger at us and say, "Them Atomic guys don't make Tobi's skis go fast!" I tell you, that is what would happen.

RICK: That IS what happened to some of the wax technicians from different National Teams. It sounds like the journalists and fans were placing too much blame on the wax.

PETER: The technicians can only do so much. In the end, it is up to the man or woman who is on the skis to make them go fast.

ROMAN: It was crazy. There was more pressure on the wax technicians at the Tour de Ski than I ever see at Worldcup or Olympics.

RICK: Why was that?

PETER: The conditions were very tough, right around freezing, very tough to get the right wax.

ROMAN: Also, I think maybe because the Tour de Ski is new and was getting so much press. The athletes are such heroes that the papers don't want to blame them for bad results. So everybody points a dirty finger at the wax technicians and say, "You are a bad person. You don't make the skis go fast!"

RICK: Your staff did an excellent job. Not only was Tobias the overall winner, you also took third place overall with Simen Oestensen. Also, Franz Goering won an impressive classic stage. Did you have a strategy for waxing and testing?

ROMAN: Ja, we had a very effective strategy. We kept it all very simple. Team Atomic would work with the wax technicians from the National teams. We would only wax a couple of pairs of skis for each athlete the night before the race.

PETER: And we keep the waxing very simple. We don't use all them fancy powders with the bad smoke that make you cough.

ROMAN: Trond Nystad and I would go out on the tracks with different skis before the race and see what feel best.

RICK: No speed traps or glide tests?

ROMAN: No, best thing is just ski a few kilometers with different skis. Ski in the sun, ski in the shade, go up hills, go down hills, go in all conditions on the track and see which ski feels best.



Roman Toferer. Best thing to do is keep it simple.

RICK: Sounds like the toughest challenge was the kick wax for the classic events.

ROMAN: Ja, we cheated a bit there. We just put our top racers on the waxless skis. That makes it easier for us.

RICK: You had perfect conditions for the Multis, freezing with a wet fresh snow coming down.

ROMAN: Those used to be the toughest conditions for a technician because they were so hard to get right. Now we like them because they are so good for the Multi. We just sit in the wax trailer and have another cup of coffee, our work is done on those days.

RICK: Weather patterns throughout the world are becoming more erratic. Do you see waxless skis becoming more common on the Worldcup?

PETER: Definitely. We been using the Multi more and more for warm klister conditions. Now we got a new ski with a machined pattern for all conditions. Not as fast as the Multi at freezing, but the new one works for all snow. We have both skis in the line next year.



Claudia Kuenzel Nystad.

RICK: Let's talk a little more about the Tour de Ski. It looks like the spectators loved it. Eurosport claims viewer numbers surpassed the original estimates. Is it here to stay?

ROMAN: Definitely. It is like a major cycle tour, like Tour de France, the way it goes to so many places.

PETER: In cycling, the Tour de France is much bigger deal than the World Championships or the Olympics. I would not be surprised if Tour de Ski becomes bigger thing than Olympics for Nordic racers.

RICK: Bigger than the Olympics?

PETER: Ja. In Tour de Ski it is all about Nordic racing. In Olympics, we got to compete with skinny little boys and girls who cry and wear too much make up on the skating rinks.

ROMAN: You got to talk with US Ski Team. Everybody was so confused that the Americans were not here. The American skiers are coming on strong and becoming a real threat. You got to get the American boys and girls over here for the Tour de Ski! This is what international racing is all about.

PETER: We wanted to see the American boy Chris Cook in the final race. It had a naughty bad steep uphill. Have you ever watched Chris go up hills? He is evil, he is so fast. Chris would have given the German and Norwegian boys a good race.

RICK: Maybe we can get the US Team to attend next year. Good luck for the rest of the season and don't work too hard at the Worlds.



Will the Tour de Ski surpass the Olympics and the World Championships as Nordic skiing's premier event?