



**FÉDÉRATION INTERNATIONALE DE SKI**  
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## **FIS MEDIA INFO**

### **40<sup>th</sup> season of Alpine FIS World Cup – a kaleidoscope of skiing**

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This winter the Alpine Ski World Cup, cooked up by a few skiing pioneers in the Chilean Andes, celebrates its 40 year anniversary. The four decades have been characterized by triumphs and tragedies, beaming winners and dazzling stars.

The World Cup, created by some progressive ski freaks, changed the world of skiing. The journalist Serge Lang, who worked for the French newspaper “L’Equipe”, Honoré Bonnet and Bob Beattie, team coaches of the French and American teams, and later Austria’s “Sportwart” Sepp Sulzberger conspired during the long nights of the summer World Championships at Portillo in 1966.

At that time “L’Equipe” had invited the best skiers to a “challenge”, a competition analogous to bicycling, but taken notice of by hardly anybody (except Serge Lang), and the trophy to be won, a ski set with brilliants, was not even appreciated by the winners Marielle Goitschel and Karl Schranz.

While on Portillo’s altitude of 3000 m the athletes were killing time by throwing cakes and ash trays, the Gang of Four (as Serge Lang called his creative team), of which only Bob Beattie is still alive, were hatching their project day and night. When the draft was more or less finished, they presented it to FIS president Marc Hodler. Unexpectedly and undiplomatically the ski boss reacted fast and announced to the press on August 11, 1966: “Gentlemen, we have a World Cup”. On January 5, 1967 already the first “World Cup” race took place at Berchtesgaden. Most newspapers wrote “World Cup” in inverted commas, as they were not yet fully convinced by the idea.

Heini Messner was the winner of the first World Cup race. In the second run he came back from rank 10 to win the slalom. Only two athletes, Pierre Bourgeat in 1998/99 in Park City (14<sup>th</sup> to 1<sup>st</sup>) and Benjamin Raich in the same season in Schladming (23<sup>rd</sup> to 1<sup>st</sup>) repeated this amazing feat. In order to enhance the World Cup status the races were clocked in thousands of a second for the first time.

Jean-Claude Killy was the first overall winner. He was the best promoter for the new competition, when he said: "For me the World Cup is more important than World Championships or Olympic Games." He won the crystal globe with 225 points, the maximum result possible. A year later he clinched three Olympic gold medals, still saying the same. That was music to the ears of Serge Lang, the "father" of the World Cup.

In the meantime also the FIS supported the World Cup. During the 1967 Congress in Beirut it was officially acknowledged. For the overall competition only the three best results per discipline were taken into account. Co-founder Honoré Bonnet prophesied with wise foresight: "We will never find the perfect formula. Even in ten or twenty years there will be discussions about the best way of counting the points". Indeed, the recurrent modifications of the formula proved to be the only steady factor of the World Cup for a long time.

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