



EAST GERMANY DOMINATES WORLD NORDIC CHAMPIONSHIPS

*Fiberglass skis make stunning debut—
Grimmer, Kulakova, Aschenbach individual stars.*

by Lennart Strand and John Weinstock

The results of the FIS World Nordic Skiing Championships held in the Swedish ski capital of Falun Feb. 16-24 turned out to be a solid triumph for East Germany.

With 10 events on the program, East Germany won five gold medals (counting their victory in the men's relay as a single medal) and six silver medals. Under the traditional scoring system of 7-5-4-3-2-1 for the top six places in each event,

East Germany totalled 76 points to 49 for Russia and 24 for Czechoslovakia. The nordic countries, Finland, Norway, and host Sweden, followed with 22, 19 and 18 points respectively.

The other big story to come out of the games was the stunning advent of the fiberglass ski in world championship competition (see "Is Wood Dead?" on the preceding page). All the men's cross-country gold medals except that of Norway's

Magne Myrmo in the 15-kilometer race were won on skis made completely out of fiberglass. Myrmo's skis were wood, with synthetic bottoms.

The ski king of the games was 31-year old East German Gerhard Grimmer, who proved that his two silver medals and a bronze medal from the 1970 world championships were no accident. This time he won gold medals in both the 50-kilometer and the relay, a silver in the

In the most unusual incident of the games, host Sweden was disqualified from the men's relay when leadoff man Hans-Erik Larsson had to replace both skis during his leg (the second exchange shown here). Rules allow only one change. (L. Strand)

15-kilometer and he finished sixth in the 30-kilometer.

"You can also add that I am the world champion at falling," joked the fable skier who fell in all his races except the 30-kilometer. As a matter of fact, his fall in the 15-kilometer likely cost him his third gold medal.

The other individual stars of the competition were Russia's great Galina Kulakova, who once again swept the women's races, and East Germany's Hans-Georg Aschenbach, the world's premier ski jumper, who outclassed his competition on both the small and large hills.

The games were declared officially open on Saturday, February 16 by Sweden's new young king Carl Gustaf. Competition began the next day with the ski jump off the small (70-meter) hill. The gold medal, as expected, went to Aschenbach. He nearly outjumped the

hill on his first try with 90 meters (the best anyone else could muster was 86 meters). It was more of the same on the second, and concluding, round as Aschenbach hit 85.5 meters. The final point totals (determined on a combination of distance jumped and style) gave Aschenbach 258.9 to 241.2 for his countryman Dietrich Kampf and 239.3 for the third-place finisher, Aleksei Borovitin of the USSR. Aschenbach was so pleased with his form that he predicted he would triumph on the large (90-meter) hill a week later.

The first cross-country race of the championships — the men's 30-kilometer (approximately 18½ miles) took place the next day, Sunday. Excitement ran high, as it was the first confrontation of the three Nordic ski kings, Thomas Magnusson of the home country Sweden, Ivar Formo of Norway and Juha Mieto of Finland. Much to the delight of the home crowd, Magnusson crossed the finish line, "heied" on by King Carl Gustaf, with the best time, 1:33:41.40.

The male cross-country skier of the championships was East Germany's brilliant Gerhard Grimmer (6), shown here overtaking Norway's Ivar Formo in the third leg of the relay. (Lennart Strand)

In heavy, wet conditions, he led all the way and defeated his nearest competitor Mieto, who specializes in warm, heavy snow, by almost a minute. Formo had a bad day and finished 16th.

The surprise of the day was Jan Staszek of Poland who finished third. His best placement at previous championships was a 29th place in the 30 kilometers at the Winter Olympics in Sapporo in 1972.

East Germany's Grimmer finished sixth but demonstrated an ever-increasing tempo. He was 16th at 10 kilometers, 13th after 20 kilometers and he turned in the fastest last 10 kilometers in the field, picking up seven places. Grimmer's strong finish was an indication of things to come from him later in the championships.

The best American was 25-year old Gene Morgan from Anchorage, Alaska who finished 33rd, about eight minutes behind Magnusson. In the 30 kilometers at the US FIS trials, Gene had been fourth.

Much of the discussion after the 30 kilometers concerned the equipment used. It had traditionally been held that all-wood skis were unparalleled for racing. It was, therefore, something of a sensation



The Champions



GERHARD GRIMMER, East Germany — Men's 50 kilometers.

The ski king of the Falun championships, winning the gold medal in the demanding 50-kilometer (in the fastest time ever), another gold in the relay and a silver in the 15-kilometer. Grimmer is 31, 5'8", 150 pounds, an officer and engineer from Seligenthal, East Germany. He's married, with one child (a daughter).

Prior to 1974, Grimmer's best year had been 1970, when he was second in the 30-kilometer and the relay, and third in the 50-kilometer at the World Championships. That same year he won many international races, including the Holmenkollen 50-kilometer under very difficult conditions in which he outclassed all of the world's top skiers.

After a viral illness at the Olympics in 1972, he hadn't competed in many international events nor had many successes. As a result, before Falun he was uncertain how he stood in relation to the world's other top skiers.

The successes of Falun have spurred him on. "Yes," he says, "now I will continue to the Olympics in Innsbruck in two years, but after that it will have to be the end of competition for me."

Grimmer spends every autumn training in Kiruna, Sweden. He likes a course with steep hills.

when Magnusson and most of the central Europeans who did well in the race used fiberglass skis. Magnusson's victory marked the first time a world cross-country championship had been won on fiberglass skis. Even Mieto, though his skis were wood, had artificial bottoms. One team that didn't use the fiberglass skis was Norway, it's four men finishing only ninth, 16th, 17th and 21st. Still wondering what had happened, the Norwegians could be seen after the race experimenting with the fiberglass skis.

On Monday the women took to the track for the first time and the men's nordic combined concluded with the 15-kilometer cross-country race (after the 70-meter jump the previous day).

The women's event was the sprinter's distance over five kilometers and a sprinter's contest it became on an extremely fast track. The weather had changed, and below freezing temperatures caused Sunday's wet tracks to become hard and icy and exceedingly difficult to ski.

The gold medal went as expected to the great Galina Kulakova of the USSR, who took up where she left off at the Winter Olympics in 1972. The Russian champion finished in a fast 15:17.32. Anything much slower would have been too slow as only 1.7 seconds behind was the 19-year-old surprise from Czechoslovakia, Blanka Paulu. Raisa Smetanina of the USSR was third. The highest finish by a skier from a Nordic country was posted by Unni Fossen of Norway who finished sixth more than 23 seconds behind Kulakova.

Martha Rockwell of the United States skied well despite her 22nd-place finish. The several-time American and North American champion from Putney, Vermont was barely a minute behind Kulakova and ahead of all the Swedish women.

In the nordic combined, the gold medal went to East German Ulrich Wehling. He won by finishing third in the 15-kilometer after being seventh in the 70-meter jump. Gunter Deckert, also of East Germany, won the silver medal. He finished second in the cross-country and had been 10th in the jump. Poland's Stefan Hula, who had won the nordic combined jump, could only manage an 11th in the cross-country, and thus, had to settle for the bronze medal. Another Pole, Jan Liegiersky, was the fastest in the cross-country race. But he had only finished 25th in the jump and wound up seventh overall.

Best American in the competition was Dan Keenan of Tabernash, Colorado who finished 35th.

Before Tuesday's 15 kilometers for

men there were numerous interesting questions in the air: Were the Norwegians finished? Could the Swedes repeat their exploit of having all their racers within the top 14 as they had in the 30-kilometer? Could the 6'5" Finnish giant Mieto really get going and collect the gold medal that had always eluded him? Or were some new middle Europeans going to come to the fore?

The weather for the race was cool, making the track lightning fast and difficult to master at the high speed which the racers were going to reach on the downhill sections.

After only a few kilometers it was clear that the host country stars, including Magnusson, were completely out of it, and in the final tabulation only Sven-Ake Lundback, the defending gold medalist in the event from Sapporo, did fairly well, finishing 7th. Magnusson was only 29th and Lars-Goran Aslund, the 15-kilometer winner at the 1970 world championships, ended up 49th.

For the Norwegians it was a different story. At halfway they had three men in the top six. At the end, it was Norway's Magne Myrmo winning the gold medal in 41:39.09. But Gerhard Grimmer was less than one second behind — and probably would have won if he hadn't taken a fall just before the finish. The bronze medal went to Vasily Rochev of the USSR who was the leader after 10 kilometers. At the finish only 1.5 seconds separated the first-place Myrmo and the third-place Rochev.

Myrmo's victory prompted the Swedish radio commentator Assar Ronnlund, a former racing great, to say the "wrong" Norwegian had won the race. His reference was to the fact that the top two ranked Norwegians, Oddvar Bra and Ivar Formo, had finished fifth and sixth respectively.

At least part of the reason for Myrmo's victory lay in the waxing. When it turned cold for the 15-kilometer — after very warm temperatures before the games — Myrmo took a chance by avoiding klist. Instead, he used green, orange and blue wax liberally for the relatively cool conditions with ice and corn snow. It worked.

For the Finn Mieto, who finished fourth, it was another disappointment. Right after crossing the finish line, he looked up at the scoreboard and saw that his time was not good enough. He shook his head and left the stadium muttering to himself.

The best American in the 15-kilometer was 24-year old Larry Martin of Homer, Alaska. Only the third-ranked American going into the race, he turned

in a strong performance to finish 32nd. This put him in front of the world's best relay racer, the Norwegian Odd Martinsen.

Afterwards Jim Balfanz, the US nordic program director, called Martin's performance the best by a US racer in international championship racing in over a decade.

Martin himself said, "I felt good from the start and all through the race. I had good skis with plenty of kick and a hard fast track. I was able to rest on the downhill."

Wednesday was Galina Kulakova's day again, as she won the women's 10-kilometer to become the first double gold medal winner of the games. This time she won with 25 seconds to spare over the surprising Barbara Petzold of East Germany. Finishing third was Finland's Helena Takalo who had been second after five kilometers. The surprise of Monday's five-kilometer, Czechoslovakia's Blanka Paulu, finished a fine fourth.

The track was lightning fast again, as it had been the previous two days. The main problem for competitors was that some of the downhill sections were extremely steep, fast and difficult, causing some of the competitors to tumble. Even Kulakova managed to roar down one of those hills on one ski but she was skilled and experienced enough to keep her balance.

For the US the big story was the sensational 10th-place finish of Martha Rockwell. It was easily the highest finish ever by an American skier in world championship competition. Martha was only one minute and 29 seconds behind Kulakova and almost beat such greats as the Finnish champion Marjatta Kayosmaa and Russia's Nina Selunina. In fact, she almost certainly would have beaten them if not for an unfortunate incident in the last kilometer.

As Martha skied towards the finish, a coach from another country was standing with his skis on the track. She shouted at him but he didn't hear. The result was a collision and Martha fell down, losing a least five or six valuable seconds as well as her momentum.

She got back up and finished in 32:46.86, only 2.38 seconds slower than Kajosmaa and 5.05 seconds slower than Selunina. If not for the fall, it's possible that even some of the positions above the eighth spot occupied by Selunina might have been within Martha's reach. For example, the seventh-place finisher, Sigrun Krause of East Germany, was only 9.78 seconds ahead of Martha and even the fifth-place finisher, another East German, Veronika Schmidt, was only 16.60 seconds ahead.

Martha was elated over her effort, naturally. "This is the best I have ever

The Champions



MAGNE MYRMO, Norway — Men's 15 kilometers.

All of Norway applauded Myrmo on his victory. For years it had been hoped that the 31-year-old skier, who is very popular in his country, would win a world championship. The closest he'd come in the past had been in the '72 Winter Olympics where he was second in the 50-kilometer.

On his success in Falun, Myrmo said, "It was a good day from the start to finish. I had hard wax on while most of the others raced on klister. I tried to go evenly the whole time. Perhaps it went a little too fast in the beginning, but I didn't have any tired period without everything going well."

The race, incidentally, was run on an extremely fast track and was possibly the fastest 15-kilometer in nordic racing history.

Myrmo, who comes from the province of Trondelag where many great racers have been brought up over the years, is 5'9", 154 pounds. He's single and a salesman by profession. A two-time Norwegian champion, he's had numerous international triumphs since '68.

(Sweden's Thomas Magnusson, men's 30-kilometer winner, is featured in a lengthy interview starting on page 6.)



The fastest skier in the men's relay at Falun was Norway's relay specialist Odd Martinsen. (Lennart Strand)

The Champions



ULRICH WEHLING, East Germany — Nordic Combined.

The young student from Ob-
erwiesenthal defended the world's
title he'd won at the '72 Winter
Olympics in Sapporo when he was
only 20. In 1971 he had been the
gold medalist in the nordic combin-
ed in the European junior champ-
ionships. Wehling is single, 6'0" and
172 pounds.



HANS-GEORG ASCHENBACH, East Germany — 70- and 90-meter jumps.

A remarkably decisive winner
of both jumps at Falun and the world
champion in ski flying in 1973, the
23-year-old student from Suhl reigns
as the undisputed king of the daring,
specialized sport of ski jumping.
Aschenbach is 5'9", 156 pounds,
single. He was the European junior
champion in 1969 and has been East
German champion several times.

done," she said, "I am very happy. The
wax was excellent; I really punched
through. I had good help and the coaches
gave me my times all along the way. That
really helps me."

US nordic program director Balfanz
said, "This is the best nordic performance in
our history. I feel we have broken through.

"Martha makes our entire nordic
program worthwhile. No one in our en-
tire program has the mental toughness
that she has. Her finish is an indication
of her determination and the success of her
training program as set up by (US team)
coach Marty Hall. And Hall is a great
coach. He hasn't missed the wax over here
yet. And the snow conditions are certainly
puzzling most of the other coaches."

Balfanz, who had been out on the
course during the race relaying times to
Martha, reported that at one point he saw
a Norwegian coach check her time, do a
double take and drop his clipboard.

On the program for Thursday,
February 21 was the men's 4 x 10-kilo-
meter relay. Light new snow and bril-
liant sunshine attracted around 50,000
spectators to the ski stadium and they
got to experience one of the greatest disap-
pointments in Swedish skiing history —
although the race itself turned out to be
one of the most exciting of the games.
Sweden's leadoff man, Hans-Erik Lars-
son, lost a ski after only 50 meters, his
binding having loosened. After getting a
replacement ski, he took up the chase,
already far behind. Amazingly, at two
kilometers, he lost the other ski. A team-
mate handed him another one and Lars-
son was able to complete his leg. But the
rules only allow one ski change. So
Sweden was disqualified and it's two
best men, Magnusson and Lundback,
did not even get a chance to ski.

With Sweden out, it should have
been Norway's day — in view of the 1-5-6
finish of Myrmo, Braa and Formo in the
individual 15-kilometer two days earlier.
But things didn't start off well for Nor-
way. Leadoff man Myrmo could only
come in fourth, outdistanced by the Rus-
sian Ivan Garanin who was more than a
half minute ahead. (An impressive per-
formance was turned in on the first leg by
young Canadian Herbert Bullock who
finished sixth, one minute behind Gar-
anin.)

Norway came back on the second
leg as relay specialist Odd Martinsen,
known to Norwegians as "Relay-Martin",
posted the fastest time of the day to put
them in the lead. Russia, with Feodor
Simasjev having problems, fell back to
fourth place. East Germany, the eventual
winner, was now in second, having moved
up one position after a fine leg by Dieter

Meinel. Canada has fallen back but the
US was going well thanks to 18-year-old
Bill Koch who posted the sixth-fastest
time for the leg. Bill, who was to finish
a splendid third in the world junior cham-
pionship at Autrans, France the follow-
ing week, was a half minute faster than
Russia's Simasjev.

On the third leg, Gerhard Grimmer
skied very strongly to make up all the dis-
tance on Norway's Ivar Formo and, in
fact, take the lead. But then Grimmer
took a fall and Formo was able to send
his teammate Oddvar Braa out in first
place on the final leg, with East Germany
second and the USSR now third.

Braa didn't have one of his best
days. In fact, he had been sick to his
stomach the day before and only decided
he was well enough to ski in the relay the
morning of the race. After four kilo-
meters, East Germany's anchor man Gert-
Dietmar Klause caught Braa and went
past. As if that wasn't enough, a few kilo-
meters later Braa had to relinquish second
place to the strongly moving young Rus-
sian Juri Skobov.

Skobov was almost flying in the
track and was gradually gaining on Klause.
With only five or six kilometers to go,
he was right behind him. But then he
caught an edge and tumbled. That deci-
ded the relay; Klause could march in to
the finish, 10 seconds in front of Sko-
bov, who many thought would have won
if it hadn't been for the fall. Norway had
to settle for third and Finland was fourth
thanks to a fine anchor leg by Juha Mieto.

Significantly, the fastest man of all
on the anchor leg was none of those men-
tioned. Instead, it was the Czech Stanis-
lav Henych who thereby gave a preview of
the fine effort he was to produce in the 50-
kilometer later in the week.

The US wound up 12th in the relay
a minute behind West Germany, while Ca-
nada, despite Bullock's fine opening leg,
had to settle for 13th and last.

The relay victory was East Ger-
many's first-ever gold medal in cross-
country skiing. The four who made his-
tory, Gert Hessler, Dieter Meinel, Gerhard
Grimmer and Gert-Dietmar Klause, all
skied evenly. Meinel was second fastest
and the other three third fastest on their
respective legs.

There was no competition on Fri-
The biggest question that day was how
much of the snow would last for the fi-
nal two days of competition on Saturday
and Sunday. Above freezing tempera-
tures had returned to Falun and the water
in the ski stadium was inches deep in
places. But the capable people in charge
of making the track overcame the diffi-
culties, and when the sun came up on Sat-

urday, with the temperature now below freezing, the track was in fine condition for the women's 4 x 5-kilometer relay. The jumpers, meanwhile, awaited the start of the 90-meter jump.

In the ladies relay the USSR was heavily favored to win and they came through as expected, Galina Kulakova skiing the anchor leg 10 seconds faster than her rivals to give her team an 11-second victory over East Germany. The winning time was 1:02:57.39.

On the first leg things began well for Norway which exchanged first with Czechoslovakia second, East Germany third, Finland fourth, the USSR fifth and the US, on a strong first leg by Martha Rockwell, sixth. Martha was only 12 seconds behind the leader Norway and with this performance re-affirmed her stature in the eyes of the European competitors.

The second leg was won by Russia's Nina Seljunina, putting her team into a lead it never relinquished. East Germany's Barbara Petzold won the third leg to bring her team closer to the front. But Kulakova completely dominated the anchor leg to bring her team home safely in front and give her three gold medals in three starts at the Falun games. East Germany finished second and Czechoslovakia third. The US slipped back considerably after Martha Rockwell's opening leg and finished in next to last place barely 40 seconds in front of Japan.

In the men's 90-meter jump, the great Hans-Georg Aschenbach won as expected, with virtually no competition. He thus joined Kulakova as the only double individual gold medal winner of the games.

Aschenbach began with a jump of 104 meters and almost perfect form. His second jump was 101 meters and again the form was remarkable. He totalled 240.4 points to finish far ahead of his countryman Heinz Wosipiwo, second with 223.3 points, and Czech Rudolf Hohnl, third with 217.1. Aschenbach now seems a shoo-in for the Olympic gold medal in 1976 at Innsbruck where he has already demonstrated his mastery of the difficult hill, Bergisel, that will be used there.

The men's marathon distance of 50-kilometers (approximately 31 miles), held under fast conditions on Sunday, concluded the 30th world skiing championships. It turned out to be a great exclamation point to a fine week of skiing, Gerhard Grimmer winning in 2:19:45.26, the fastest 50-kilometer ever.

The race began well for the host country Sweden. After eight kilometers, Thomas Magnusson led with his teammate Sven-Ake Lundback in second and Grimmer in third. Magnusson still led at 20

kilometers but Grimmer's pace was relentless. By 25 kilometers he had moved in front, at 33 kilometers he was nearly a minute ahead and at the end he was nearly two minutes ahead. Magnusson lost second place in the last 10 kilometers to the surprise of the race, Czechoslovakia's Stanislav Henych. The 25-year old Henych had been 19th after 10 kilometers, 11th after 17 kilometers and fifth after 33 kilometers.

Lundback finished fourth. Vasilij Rochev and Anatolij Biriukov, both of the USSR, were fifth and sixth respectively. For Norway things didn't go well again, a ninth place by Oddvar Braa was their best for the day.

The best American was the veteran Bob Gray of Putney, Vermont. He finished 32nd and had the distinction of beating Juha Mieto who had difficulties and wound up 35th, 15 minutes behind Grimmer.

For Grimmer the 50-kilometer was a perfect ending to a very successful week in which he proved himself the male racer of the games no matter how you figure it. If you total up the time for each racer in the 15, 30 and 50 kilometers, Grimmer's total was 4:37:14 to 4:39:03 for Magnusson, 4:41:03 for Henych, 4:42:08 for Lundback and 4:42:31 for Braa. Totalling up the final positions for the same races, Grimmer again comes out on top, his finishes — sixth, second and first — totalling, nine, compared to 23 for Braa (fifth, ninth and ninth) and 24 for Henych (ninth, 13th and second). And, of course, Grimmer led in medals won.

The Champions



GALINA KULAKOVA, USSR
— Women's 5 and 10 kilometers.

With her victories at Falun, the 32-year-old gymnastics teacher from Izhevsk becomes the most decorated female cross-country skier in history. In Olympic and world championship competition, she's now won eight gold medals, one silver and two bronze!

Kulakova, who is 5'3", weighs 123 pounds and married, began training regularly 10 years ago. Before that, she worked as an animal keeper which helped her develop the body strength which is so helpful to her now.

Photo by David Seidman

snowshoe
bindings
and
crampon
straps of
neoprene nylon

send for free catalog

BECK OUTDOOR PROJECTS • Box 3061 • So. Berkeley • CA. 94703