

Sportification, Power, and Control: Ski-Jumping as a Case Study

INTRODUCTION AND ISSUES

Sport is an activity in modern society that contains rigid norms and stringent regulations that cover even the tiniest details. Thus, control is key in sport and impacts on areas ranging from determining admissions to contests and ensuring the enforcement of rules, to disciplining and setting norms for the body. Weight, age, gender – everything is recorded and monitored, even down to hormone levels and the number of red corpuscles in the blood.

From the nineteenth century onwards, the growth of sport was accompanied, and even shaped, by processes of regulation and bureaucratisation, contributing not only to the formation of sports organisations and institutions, but also to the development of different types of sport and sporting practices. These evolved further amid numerous controversies, and underwent constant change under the influence of various groups with special interests such as athletes, sports organisations, the media, and spectators.

The central issue of this article is the evolution of sports and, above all, the changes made to its rules and techniques, as well as the driving forces behind this evolution. Here, the questions that must be examined are: Who has the power to define how a sport is to be played? Which groups are behind the changes that take place and which groups oppose the changes? And, lastly, who wins and who loses in the struggle for control and power?

In recent decades, a number of new sports have emerged, whilst other sports have undergone profound changes – changes that have been implemented in spite of considerable opposition and despite the fact that they have had a substantial impact on the character of the sport. This is just as true of the skating technique introduced into cross-country skiing as it is of the new *code de pointage* in gymnastics on apparatus, which both reflect the number and difficulty of the exercises without stipulating a maximum score. Further, the fact that women have been allowed into such traditionally male preserves as ice hockey and boxing has led to a transformation of the meaning and image of these sports. All these changes have been accompanied by a great deal of controversy, in which power and influence play major roles.

In this article, I will explore the changes made to rules and techniques in ski-jumping. This sport is an especially suitable object of study, first because, through a combination of scores for distance and style, the ski federations are given a considerable degree of control, and because of this, we can discover who has the power to define how the sport is played, what groups are behind the changes, and who wins and loses in the struggle for control and power. Also, ski-jumping is the only sport in which quantitative performance is not directly compared but rather converted into marks. Furthermore, with the introduction of the V-style, the sport changed substantially, leading to intense debate about not only the rules but also the bodies and identities of ski-jumpers. Last but not least, the introduction of women into the world of ski-jumping sparked off discussions about ski-jumping as a men's sport.

THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS AND HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

Physical cultures are shaped by anthropological characteristics and mental dispositions such as open-mindedness, curiosity, and the search for pleasure. However, the different styles of games and sport (in the broadest sense) are also dependent upon ecological, economic, political, and social conditions, as well as upon culturally formed ways of thinking and world views. Basically, each physical culture 'embodies' the values and norms of a given society; that is to say, it reflects, demonstrates, and reinforces them.

Pre-industrial movement cultures like the tournaments of knights, the folk games of early modernity, and the ball games of the first peoples of North America did not become universalised. Without records or competition against abstract figures, they were restricted to certain social groups and regions, and often had a cultic or magic significance. They took place, as a rule, on religious holidays ('holy days'), and mostly on streets and other open places of the town. Like eating and drinking, dance and music, sports and games were part of the boisterous festive pleasures, which ranged from 'goose riding' and foot races to football-like games, and were as much fun for the spectators as they were for the participants. The latter were not trained, and specialised athletes and the teams often came together haphazardly or were formed from certain groups of townspeople, such as people from a particular district. If one draws upon Norbert Elias's theory of civilisation in the interpretation of such phenomena, the festivals and games mentioned above can be considered typical of pre-industrial societies in which there was neither centralisation of the state's power nor a state monopoly on force and in which neither pressures were internalised nor emotions repressed.¹ This was equally true of physical cultures, which thrived without lasting organisations or mechanisms of control.

'Modern' sport, by contrast, which originated in England in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, is characterised by the (theoretical) equality of opportunity and an orientation towards organisation and competition, constructed according to a winner/loser dichotomy. The most important trait of modern sport is the determination to set and break records, which is connected with a new and quantitative form of performance.² Activities that cannot be measured quantitatively, such as gymnastics or figure skating, are evaluated, and these evaluations are quantified by means of a *code de pointage*. Games are organised in a complex and hierarchical system of tournaments and leagues, which determine the best team in a city, a region, a nation, or the world. Typical of modern sport is the key significance of records,

that is to say, an orientation towards an abstract 'best result', which must be surpassed after each new 'ceiling' has been reached.

In the course of time, numerous physical activities emerged as sports – sometimes only in certain regions or countries – while other sports have failed, or have lost the interest of both players and spectators, whose 'taste' (in Pierre Bourdieu's sense of the word) is likewise subject to permanent change.

The development of sport, as well as types of sport, is marked by continual standardisation, bureaucratisation, normsetting, and control, for which the national and international federations and associations are responsible. However, the norms and rules are constantly adjusted and modified.

Involved in the changes occurring in sport and sports are not only athletes, federations, and spectators, but also the media, science, and the market. The driving force behind technical progress in sport, however, is its inherent principle of bettering current records and outclassing opponents. This principle rewards those who perfect a style, body, or equipment and adapt it to the changing requirements of their particular sport. But the most important cause of change, including changes to the rules, is the constant desire to surpass the previous top performance, with athletes doing their utmost to stretch or bend the rules, thus compelling those whose task it is to enforce the rules to adapt them to new circumstances. Rules are also changed, however, in order to fulfil the expectations and conform to the tastes of the media and the public.

The principles and rules of a sport are in no way 'natural' or to be taken for granted; rather, they are a social arrangement oriented not towards maximum efficiency but towards the principles of a particular sport, and also towards changing tastes. This social arrangement, moreover, determines in each case what are considered the correct, proper, and aesthetic styles and movements.

Laying down the rules and ensuring their observance lie in the hands of the international sports federations. And, according to the 'one authority' principle, only one body may be in control in each sport.³ Thus, the federations have a monopoly on writing and interpreting the rules, although their power and control are constantly called into question by athletes, spectators, the media, and the market.

THE HISTORY OF SKI-JUMPING AND THE PROBLEMS OF RECORDS

From the end of the eighteenth century onwards, skiing became common in Norway as a means of getting from place to place.⁴ The skiers adapted their technique to the terrain: uphill slopes were followed by downhill stretches, and the skiers jumped over natural obstacles and soon used artificial mounds of snow as ramps. When jumping, the skiers drew up their legs and often landed on flat ground. Ski-jumping contests were held as part of downhill races in Oslo as early as the 1870s. In the course of differentiation processes found in all sports, ski-jumping contests were held separately from the downhill races from the 1870s onwards; and the scores of both events were added together. Now, the jumps were made from ramps, and the skiers landed on a more or less downhill slope. Subsequently, jumpers achieved distances of over 20 metres.

Ski-jumping was considered the crowning event of skiing, but ski-jumpers were 'all-round' sportsmen who also excelled in other skiing disciplines. Even in the 1930s, for example, the best ski-jumper, Birger Ruud, was also successful in the downhill and slalom events. In 1932 and 1936 he won Olympic gold medals in ski-jumping and in 1935, at the Alpine World Ski Championships, a bronze medal in the combination of downhill and slalom. In his manual *Winter Sport* (1930) Viscount Knebworth commented: "You cannot call yourself a complete skier if you are not able to jump with skis."⁵

As early as the 1880s, Norwegian immigrants introduced ski-jumping to the United States, where especially in the Midwest a number of ski clubs were founded.⁵ At the turn of the twentieth century, skiing spread to various European countries and, along with it, ski-jumping. In Germany, the first ski-jumping championship was held in 1901.

The development of ski-jumping is marked by constantly changing techniques, especially with regard to the position of the body in the flight phase, the two driving forces behind the changes being, firstly, increasing performance, and, secondly, aesthetic considerations. At first, the jump was carried out in an upright position, signalling elegance and guaranteeing high marks for style. Rowing movements with the arms were supposed to ensure balance in the air. In the following years, efforts to cover greater distances in the air were closely combined with the construction of ramps that made this possible as well as the accompanying changes in jumping techniques.

At first glance, the development of ski-jumping appears to obey the laws of 'sportification', and nothing seems simpler than to apply the principles of outclassing one's opponents and setting new records for ski-jumping. After all, since the length of the jump can be measured, it is not difficult to identify the skier who has covered the greatest distance.

In spite of the fact that the jumps can be measured in length, ski-jumping does not conform to the laws of 'sportification' in several respects. For one thing, performance depends very much on the ramp: its height, as well as the length and the gradient of the approach. In 1933, for example, a ramp was constructed in Planica, Slovenia, from which a jump of 100 metres was achieved in 1936. Furthermore, before the start of each contest, the length of the inrun is determined by the jury, depending on snow and wind conditions.

Since ramps cannot be standardised because of the different conditions prevailing at each location, it is impossible to make a direct comparison of the distances covered. Each jump has its own K- point, which serves as a kind of par for the course. If a skier lands on the K- point, he obtains 60 points; for each metre that he jumps behind or beyond the point, marks for distance are either respectively subtracted or added.

With each ramp allowing only a certain distance that can be jumped, records are not based on greatest possible distances since a critical point, the so-called jury distance, must not be attained since it would cause the jumper to land on the flat landing strip. If a jumper reaches 95% of the jury distance, the contest is interrupted while the three members of the jury consult with each other on whether to shorten the inrun. The chairman of the jury is the technical delegate of the International Ski Federation (FIS). If this occurs, all the scores that have been obtained so far are annulled and the contest begins anew. During the history of ski-jumping the officials tried several times to 'freeze' the records. In 1928 it was decided

that the points for the distance should not overrule the points for the style, in order to avoid the pursuit of records. In the beginning of the 1980s, the FIS determined, for example, that distances reached in ski-flying should not exceed 191 metres.⁶

In ski-jumping it is not only the length of the jump that counts, but also correct execution. This gives the judges (and thus the FIS, which speaks for the international ski-jumping community) considerable control and power over definitions.

Points for style were introduced as far back as the first ski-jumping contests in Norway and were the deciding factor in the ranking of the jumpers. The distances they achieved, on the other hand, only counted when two or more jumpers had scored equal points.⁷ In other skiing disciplines, too, aesthetics often played a more important role than measured performance in the early phase of sportification. This is true, for instance, of downhill races, in which marks were given for style in certain competitions. And in the first slalom events, the number of falls was a major criterion in the ranking.⁸ Whereas, in these skiing disciplines, it was the quantitative factor that finally established itself during the course of sportification, in the case of ski-jumping it was a combination of qualitative appraisal and quantitative measure of performance that prevailed.

In ski-jumping there are usually five, but no less than three, judges on the spot, appraising the jump, landing, and outrun, and each of them can award up to 20 points. Faults in these three phases are penalised by deducting points for each phase. Since, in the case of five judges, the highest and the lowest scores are not taken into consideration, ski-jumpers can score a maximum of 60 points for style. Points for style and distance are then added to arrive at a score for the jump as a whole. The weighting of the style marks gives the International Ski Federation, through its judges, considerable power to influence the development of ski-jumping, as the history of the sport shows.

Before the First World War, it had already been figured out with pencil and slide rule that the upright position of the body during the flight phase did not allow jumps of any great distance and that better results could be obtained by bending the upper part of the body forward while in the air. This position, however, was not considered aesthetic by style judges and they deducted points from the score. After the war, ski-jumpers like Jakob Thulin Thams, the first Olympic gold medallist in 1924, and Birger Ruud, Olympic gold medal winner in 1932 and 1936, achieved record distances with this forward style and extended, rowing arms.

The 1920s saw an increase in scientific interest in ski-jumping. The key expert was the Swiss engineer, Reinhard Straumann, who investigated, among other things, the correlations between inrun speed, body position in flight, and ramp profile. As early as 1926, Straumann observed that, aerodynamically, the most suitable body position was one that corresponded to that of airplane wings. However, the results he obtained – some of them with the use of a wind tunnel – were not put into practice until after the Second World War. His guinea pig was Andreas Däscher, a fellow countryman who had been experimenting with the technique developed by Straumann since the end of the 1940s. Däscher employed the new position – the body stretching and leaning strongly forward with the arms held close to the body – for the first time in an international competition in 1950.⁹ At first, the new style was not recognised by the FIS,¹⁰ but it succeeded in establishing itself after trials in a wind tunnel had

confirmed the superiority of the 'Däscher technique'. Later known as the drop, or fish style, this technique became increasingly common up to the 1980s – although Helmut Recknagel, the first ski-jumper not to come from Scandinavia, won the Olympic gold medal in 1960 using the so-called 'superman' technique, with his arms stretched out in front of him. Until the 1980s, though, it was predominantly strength and the timing of the take-off that was of crucial importance for the length of the jump, with those skiers having a decisive advantage whose take-off momentum "catapulted them from the ramp like cannonballs into the air".¹¹

Although the tests in the wind tunnel turned ski-jumping into a scientific field of experimentation, perhaps the most decisive innovation in jumping techniques was stumbled upon by chance. It is said that a Polish ski-jumper discovered the V-technique as early as 1969, without it becoming widely known, however.¹² In 1986, while making a faulty jump in training, the Swedish jumper Jan Boklöv noticed that he could jump further if he opened his skis at the front. With his trainer he perfected this new technique and soon began to use it in competitions.¹³

The FIS, and in particular the chairman of the committee in charge of ski-jumping, Torbjørn Yggeseeth, objected to this break with tradition. Boklöv was penalised with a considerable deduction of style points since his technique did not conform to the ideal of the whole leadership of the ski-jumping world and allegedly destroyed the "beauty of soaring".¹⁴ The media poured scorn on Boklöv, calling him disparagingly the 'frog king' and labelling the new V-technique the 'frog style'. The struggle about the V-technique was much more than a controversy about the style points; it was a fight about the traditional and true nature of the sport.¹⁵

In 1988/89, Boklöv was able to win five World Cup competitions since his distances were sufficient to make up for his low style points. His success caught the imagination of other ski-jumpers, who began to try out the new style. In the early 1990s the great success of jumpers using the V-technique, as well as the positive reaction of both the media and spectators, forced the FIS to recognise the new style. Increasing numbers of parallel jumpers went over to the use of the V-technique when it was slowly becoming clear that competitions could no longer be won using the old style.¹⁶ Out of ski-jumping grew ski-flying, with record distances of well over 200 metres.

Scientific studies had shown in the meantime that, using the V-technique, ski-jumpers have 26%–28% more lift and can thus achieve greater distances. The V-position of the skis enables the jumper to lay his body flat over the skis in the flight phase and to use the air as a gliding cushion. The V-style revolutionised not only the technique of the jumpers but also influenced their bodies, not least because it put light athletes at an advantage. Studies showed that one kilogramme less body weight meant one to two metres more distance. Therefore, over the last decade, ski-jumpers have become thinner; some of them even anorexic, but their performances have improved incredibly, not least because of the results of applied research, especially in the areas of aerodynamics and biomechanics. Studies have been made, not only of the training and the technique of jumpers, but also of their equipment (the length, shape and material of their skis, their suits, their boots, and the position of the bindings, etc.) to discover where there is potential for increasing performance. By shifting the binding slightly to the rear, for example, one can achieve greater distances, albeit at the cost of a less stable flight.

These new developments confronted not only ski-jumpers but also the FIS with major challenges and led to numerous additional regulations.¹⁷ In order to minimise the advantages of small and light jumpers, for example, it was stipulated that the length of the skis had to vary in accordance with the height of the jumpers, meaning that smaller athletes had to jump with shorter skis. Tall jumpers now tried to lose weight in order to use the advantages of the longer ski. The ski federation reacted by implementing the body mass index (BMI) as a gauge: if the BMI was under 20, the athlete had to use shorter skis. In addition, the position of the binding was specified in order to prevent falls due to an unstable flight phase. Since skiers wore oversized overalls in order to make maximum use of upwinds, the federation laid down strict specifications for the thickness and size of the suits used.

The motives behind all these regulations were primarily related to ensuring equality of opportunity and minimising dangers. The question arises, however, as to why ensuring equality of opportunity should be taken so seriously in ski-jumping in particular. In basketball, for example, tall players are not constricted in any way to override the benefit of their height, nor are distance runners, for whom low BMI is a distinct aerobic advantage, given any additional ballast to counterbalance the physical advantage. Further, in no other sport is body mass index used as a gauge for the size of players, even though in numerous sports women, especially, are at risk of becoming anorexic.

In ski-jumping, two specific factors play a role in the introduction of the rules mentioned above: firstly, a continuous increase in performance is problematic because this would require either the new construction or the reconstruction of ski-jumps. Performance must therefore be kept within certain boundaries by means of official regulations. Secondly, the skinny bodies of jumpers, along with the presumption of anorexia, were tarnishing the image of the sport, which in the past had always been symbolic of strength and masculinity. The image of ski-jumping as a men's sport is in jeopardy, partly because of the appearance of the jumpers and partly because of the participation of girls and women, who have been officially allowed to take part in ski-jumping competitions since the 1990s.

GENDER CHANGES

Masculinities

Until the 1980s, ski-jumpers had displayed strength, skill, and courage; they had embodied the virtues of 'true masculinity' and were thus revered as heroes by the media and spectators. The media emphasised the traditional characteristics of masculinity, describing, for instance, the first Olympic gold medallist in 1924 in the following terms: "This heavy, knotted Jakob Tullin Thams was one of the heroes of Chamonix. When he flew through the air after a mighty jump, his upper body distinctly bowed forward, he flew straight into the hearts of the elegant women, whose breath he almost took away by such strength and daring."¹⁸ After his record jump of 68 metres, Birger Ruud was described as a 'racing bull', a 'cyclone', and a 'fearless daredevil', whose jump had something 'superhuman' about it: "Never before has anything so gigantic been seen". From the crowds of spectators "a cry went up like a sudden gale. The audacious jumper alone remained calm and unaffected".¹⁹ Strength, courage, dynamism, composure, and lack of emotion make ski-jumpers appear as the prototypes of heroic masculinity.

As outlined above, the V-style made new demands of ski-jumpers, transforming both the bodies and the image of the athletes. The shift away from the hegemonic masculine ideal, as defined by Robert Connell in 2002, is to be observed above all by the presentation of ski-jumpers in the mass media.²⁰ This is exemplified here by the German print media, which between 2000 and 2005 focused on two outstanding ski-jumpers, Sven Hannawald and Martin Schmitt. Besides winning numerous titles and records, Hannawald is the first and only ski-jumper to win all four events in the famous *Vierschanzen-Tournee* (Four Hills Tournament, or grand slam) in 2002. Martin Schmitt has won the World Cup four times and the World Championship five times, as well as earning one Olympic gold and one silver medal.

In the media studied, the focus was not so much on the competitions themselves but on the jumpers, in particular their bodies, their state of mind, and their private lives. There was, for example, an intense debate about their weight and nutrition, with reports of the jumpers accusing their coaches of forcing them to lose weight. A further subject of some interest for readers was anorexia among jumpers, especially the case of Sven Hannawald, for whom weight loss was presumed to be caused by physical and mental exhaustion.²¹ In general, the bodies of light, slim jumpers scarcely conformed to the traditional ideal of masculinity, nor did the way they appeared in public. In contrast to the jumpers before the change to the V-technique, the appearance of Hannawald and jumpers like him was an important subject of media fascination. Hannawald and Schmitt attached great importance to the way they looked, dying their hair and dressing in fashionable clothes, for instance. Whereas jumpers in the past tended to look like rugged outdoor types, the jumpers of the new generation exhibited a certain metrosexuality.

Heroic masculinity is also threatened by the way in which jumpers and journalists spoke of risk and fear. Even if severe accidents in ski-jumping are rare, there is a broad consensus among journalists that ski-flying is dangerous and that ski-flyers take great risks. Thus, the courage of the jumpers is emphasised, the sport is labelled heroic and jumpers are hailed as 'real men'. Christoph Duffner, in the same team as Hannawald and Schmitt, described the extreme conditions of leaping from the huge jumps, stating: "It is here that men are made, not on the soccer field."²²

Nonetheless, fear is a central issue, and the athletes confess openly that they are afraid and that they tremble, pray, and sweat, sitting on the little bench high up on the jump and looking down to the landing area. The risk-fear discourses in the media give the impression, on the one hand, that the athletes have a right to be afraid, but they destroy, on the other hand, the picture of the invincible, 'cool', and self-assured masculine hero. This picture is tarnished, furthermore, by the numerous reports about the athletes' emotions – their ups and downs, their fragile nerves, their psychological crises, and their 'burn-outs'.

A further topic, which troubled perceptions of masculinity, and was seized upon by the media, was the athletes' private lives. Hannawald, particularly, was described as a houseman who liked to clean his flat and named baking cakes as his favourite hobby. Neither Schmitt nor Hannawald had girlfriends and this prompted the media to ask questions and make suggestions. "Schmitt needs a girlfriend", remarked the *Bild Zeitung* on 28 February 2001, insinuating that a man without a woman is not a real man. Doubts about the jumpers' sexual potency and rumours of homosexuality, along with their appearance and behaviour, contributed

to the construction of a metrosexual masculinity among jumpers that was in an ambivalent way supporting and contradicting both heteronormativity and homophobia.²³

Questioning the jumpers' masculinity did not seem to have deterred the media, sponsors and fans of the sport, however. On the contrary, enthusiastic supporters attended the competitions in their thousands, and millions more followed ski-jumping events on their television screens. The greatest appeal that the jumpers had, with their youthful looks, was among a totally new fan community: screaming teenage girls who mobbed the jumpers on their way to and from the ramp and who exchanged pictures and personal feelings about their favourites on fan websites. The hordes of fans crowding around the best jumpers were so great that they had to be escorted to and from the ramp by bodyguards.

The media constructed the masculinity of the athletes as being contested and ambivalent; their masculinity differed from the traditional ideal of the male hero: strong, without emotions, fearless, and the active participant in the search for a woman. The prototype of the macho male, or the alpha male, was the big hefty downhill skier Hermann Meier, characterised by fierce ambition and a determination to win. By contrast, ski jumpers were celebrities with a fragile ego, skinny bodies, boyish looks, feminine interests, and a fan community of teenage girls; they presented ambivalent images and new masculinities, combining the hero/the eagle with the fragile and 'sweet' boy.

According to the media studied, moreover, ski-jumpers had become objects of female desire. In contrast to traditional scripts, the girls were more active in 'hunting', whereas the ski-jumpers were described as passive and not overly interested in the 'other sex'. But it was this contrast and ambivalence, the combination of a hero with a 'sweet' boy that made the jumpers so attractive to girls.

A further threat to the heroic image of ski-jumping arose from the increasing interest of girls and women in this sport, the infatuation of the girls for their idols sometimes prompting them to take up the sport. This was met with bitter and unremitting opposition. In some cases, officials responsible for ski-jumping did not fail to use their powers of deciding upon admissions to the sport to preserve ski-jumping as a men's domain and to uphold the sport's aura of heroic masculinity.

Ski-Jumping Women

As skiing spread through Europe and the United States at the end of the nineteenth century, the new sport attracted enthusiastic followers among girls and women too. Since skiing was considered a healthy and enjoyable pastime, women taking up this sport met little opposition, especially as burgeoning winter sport resorts did everything they could to woo the fair sex as customers.²⁴ There was, however, considerable controversy over the participation of women in skiing contests, which led to the partial exclusion of women skiers in several types of competition. The only skiing discipline to be regarded unequivocally and unquestionably as a male preserve was ski-jumping. The skill, strength, and dangers involved in ski-jumping made it a typical male sport that remained officially inaccessible to women until 2000.

As early the 1860s, however, Norwegian women ventured onto the hills used for jumping and, in the second half of the century, even took part in a number of competitions in Norway.²⁵

But although several women's ski-jumping contests were held in the country in the 1890s, these met with little approval from the (male) population. Reservations on the part of doctors, especially, concerning the imagined risks in the landing phase, were (and still are) among the standard arguments against women's ski-jumping. The sport was regarded as a "reckless experiment on the female body," an experiment that women should leave to the "stronger sex".²⁶ Similar arguments were still being put forward in the 1990s, by such people as Helmut Weinbuch, who until 2002 was the General Secretary of the German Ski Association, who believed that women's backbones were not up to the impact of the landing and that the vertebrae might spring out of the spinal column. In a lecture he gave to the Willingen Nordic Forum, the current president of the FIS and member of the Olympic Committee, Gian-Franco Kasper claimed that the impact of the landing could destroy the womb.²⁷

In spite of these warnings, at the turn of the twentieth century, a number of German women skiers like Margarethe Engelbrecht from Munich took part in ski-jumping as well as in men's downhill races.²⁸ The most famous woman ski-jumper is Countess Lamberg from Kitzbühl, who, wearing a long skirt, achieved a distance of 23 metres. In the 1920s, 14-year-old Hilda Braskerud and 17-year-old Johanne Kolstad attracted great attention in Norway with their skilful jumping. However, they were only allowed to demonstrate their skills before the start of men's competitions. In 1938, Johanne Kolstad set a record of 72 metres during a demonstration in the United States. In the 1970s and 1980s, several Norwegian and Finnish women likewise took part as trial jumpers in men's competitions, during one of which Tiina Lethola reached a distance of 110 metres in 1981.²⁹

In spite of these achievements, women's ski-jumping remained a marginal phenomenon, not least because competition organisers, national ski federations, and also the FIS strictly rejected the participation of women in contests and used a variety of means to prevent it. Women were not allowed to use the ramps on alleged grounds of subsequent insurance and liability problems, for example, and often could not even take part as trial jumpers before the main events.

The situation only changed when the fathers of two ski-jumping girls, Eva Ganster and Michaela Schmidt, became involved in the active support of women's ski-jumping. Both girls had begun ski-jumping at an early age and were successful not only as trial jumpers but also in youth contests in which girls were also allowed to take part. In 1997, Eva Ganster was the first woman to jump from a ski-flying ramp, achieving a distance of 167 metres. In 2003 her performance was surpassed when Eva Iraschko jumped 200 metres. Edgar Ganster and Hans-Georg Schmidt, meanwhile, succeeded in organising the first contest solely for women in St. Moritz during the 1998 junior world championships. Only after lengthy discussions did the FIS give their blessing for this event, in which 17 female ski-jumpers from seven countries took part. After this, further contests were held, and girls and women were given the opportunity to act as trial jumpers before men's competitions. In 1999, a section was established in the Austrian Ski Federation for female ski-jumpers, headed by Edgar Ganster. National teams were formed in Germany in 2005 and in Norway as early as 2002.³⁰

This increased participation of women does not imply that women's ski-jumping has really become accepted; and women jumpers have repeatedly met with the opposition of officials. Walter Hofer, in charge of organising the World Cup in the FIS, for instance, remarked that

“it is not the federation’s job to found a new sport”, while Toni Innauer of the Austrian Ski Federation, declared: “We are so busy with our sport that we can’t afford the time to undertake pioneering activities besides”. Neither official has yet explained why ski-jumping is supposed to be a new sport just because women have started to jump.³¹ A particularly obdurate opponent of women’s ski-jumping was Torbjørn Yggeseeth, chairman of the ski-jumping committee in the FIS and opponent of the V-technique in the 1980s, who repeatedly cited FIS resolutions when he was against allowing women to jump from ‘large hill’ ramps.³² Consequently, Yggeseeth was opposed to women jumpers taking part in competitions on such famous hills as Holmenkollen, where in 2003, for example, women were first allowed on the ramp after considerable protest on the part of the Norwegian world-class jumper Anette Sagen – even though they had already provided ample proof in 2000 of the fact that they were perfectly able to jump from this hill.³³

In March 2004, during the Continental Cup in ski-flying in Vikersund, Norway, women ski-jumpers demanded that they be allowed to carry out trial jumps before the main events.³⁴ Torbjørn Yggeseeth, who was in charge of the meeting, refused to meet the demand, again citing the FIS regulations, and threatened to ban the women even from normal jumps. The success of the Vikersund competition was not going to be compromised by the participation of women. The FIS, however, had not laid down any rules concerning the sex of trial jumpers, and in talks with Yggeseeth, Anette Sagen accused the FIS of discrimination. Letters published in newspapers emphasised again and again that women jumpers were just as good as the men and that the risk was the same for men as for women. In addition, the exclusion of women from the ski-jumping competitions was interpreted as a violation of the Gender Equality Act, which had already been adopted in 1978. The evident unfairness of the decision and the indignation of the Norwegian public finally forced the officials to allow women to jump in Vikersund.³⁵

In 2005, the FIS barred women from all participation in jumping from the famous ski-flying ramp in Planica, Slovenia, even though the Norwegian Ski Federation had supported the project and sponsors had funded the women’s travelling expenses. Mette Jahr, a member of the skifliers’ organisation committee in Vikersund, complained that women jumpers continued to meet with fierce resistance and much too little was being done for women’s ski-jumping. While Jahr laid the blame at the door of the federations, Torbjørn Yggeseeth emphasised that he was a supporter of women’s ski-jumping and the FIS had called on its member federations, albeit without any success, to promote it.³⁶ In other announcements to the press, too, Yggeseeth put the blame for the limited progress in women’s ski-jumping on the national ski federations.³⁷ This is by no means a valid criticism in the case of the Norwegian Ski Federation, which in 2003 set up a successful girls’ ski-jumping project.³⁸

The examples of obstacles put in the way of women ski-jumpers do not end here. In 2005 women were again to be barred from jumping from the Holmenkollen ramp. According to the FIS, too few women were able to master this difficult jump. The Norwegian federation, on the other hand, was of the opinion that there were enough Norwegian women jumpers capable of competing in Holmenkollen. Lene Jahr, one of the best women jumpers, held the view that, although a number of women had fallen in the previous year, this had nothing to do with the women’s ability but rather was caused by an incorrect decision made by officials; since the

event was being transmitted live by television companies, the jumping was not interrupted despite terrible wind conditions. Jahr agreed with Anette Sagen, furthermore, that there were some 20 women proficient enough to take part in competitions on the Holmenkollen ramp.³⁹

There are some rays of hope, however. In 2006, for instance, 71 women jumpers from 10 countries were entered in 21 competitions. In addition, a women's junior world championship has been introduced, along with a Continental Cup for women. In May 2006, the FIS finally gave official support for women's ski-jumping. It remains to be seen whether this signals a real change of heart on the part of the opponents of this women's sport, whether the new guard of officials are promoting the cause of girls and women out of true conviction, and whether the growing public interest in women ski-jumpers or the fear of losing control over the development of the sport are to be the true deciding factors in their decision. At any rate, the FIS's ski-jumping committee has agreed to allow women to compete in the Nordic World Ski Championships in Liberec, Czech Republic, in 2009 and to hold a team competition for women at the world championships in 2011.⁴⁰ However, the FIS's application to include ski-jumping in the women's programme in the 2010 Winter Olympics in Vancouver has been rejected by the Executive Board of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) on the grounds that the inclusion is not warranted due to the small number of women ski-jumpers and the limited geographical extent of the sport.

The Power of the Media and Markets

The controversies that have been going on since the 1990s over ski-jumping and the participation of girls and women are not only being fought out in the committees of ski federations but also, and above all, in the mass media – from print media to radio and television to the internet. Topics such as the performance of the jumpers are discussed, as well as the question of which hills women should be allowed to jump from. The media have mostly endorsed and supported women jumpers, and this position has forced officials and federations to seek compromises and even accept their demands. This can be seen, for example, in the disputes concerning the participation of women in ski-flying in Oslo and Vikersund, where the debates in the media obliged the organisers to make clear concessions.

In Germany, ski-jumping has experienced a surprising upsurge in media attention at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Until the end of the 1990s, as Sven Hannawald remembers, there were only “three spectators and one camera at competitions”.⁴¹ Martin Schmitt and Sven Hannawald made ski-jumping one of the most popular sports in Germany, transforming the image of ski-jumping from a sport for insiders into a glamorous and exciting event. Suddenly ski-jumping attracted millions of spectators and thousands of addicted fans – and it also found wealthy sponsors. Appearances on commercial spots brought ski-jumpers more into the public gaze, which in turn increased the public's interest in ski-jumping. The presentation of ski-jumping in the media reached new dimensions in Germany in the year 2000 when the private television channel RTL purchased the broadcasting rights of the Four Hills Tournament (*Vierschanzen-Tournee*) for seven years at a price of 75 million euros and built up ski-jumping as the “Formula One of winter sports”.⁴² RTL staged the event at enormous expense, with 30 cameras installed, requiring 63,000 metres of cable around

the jump, and with 20 transmission vans and a helicopter in operation. Viewers were guided through the tournament by star TV presenter, Günther Jauch. RTL used the potential of the event for building up suspense over the four separate competitions and thus spell-binding the viewers. On account of the relatively small number of active participants, the (seemingly) simple rules, and the straightforward programme of events, ski-jumping is highly suited to having spectators identify with the athletes, even if the former may have little knowledge of the sport. Moreover, as a dangerous sport, which is mastered by very few people, ski-jumping promises entertainment mixed with thrills and excitement.

However, as a product, ski-jumping has lost a lot of its attraction in Germany due to the lack of success of German jumpers. Its TV audience plummeted from 15 million viewers in 2001/02 to 5.5 million in 2005/06. At the same time, prices for advertising time were halved from 60,000 to 30,000 euros for a 30-second commercial spot.

In the mass media, ski-jumping is first and foremost entertainment, and not only the athletes but also the sport's officials have had to adapt to this fact. This means that the media take over power and control. They claim, among other things, that jumps must be carried out even under poor weather conditions since broadcasting times have been reserved long in advance. Organisers must also take into account the commercial breaks, even if the jumping is not interrupted because of advertising.

What really counts in the world of media sports is the presentation of spectacular performances and successes; of minor importance to a largely lay audience are technical aspects such as jumpers maintaining the correct position during the flight phase or the landing. Furthermore, the way performance is measured at present is rather obscure for the uninitiated, partly since, on account of the marks for style, the person who jumps farthest is not necessarily the winner. To many, this may appear incomprehensible or even unjust. It is not surprising, then, that it is currently being discussed whether to abolish the points for style. The proponent of this fundamental change to the rules of the sport is none other than Torbjørn Yggeseeth, the former chairman of the FIS's ski-jumping committee.

This proposal has met with opposition in Norway, particularly, where ski-jumping looks back on a long tradition and has a great number of well-informed fans. For an audience without any close association with the sport or any insight into its workings, however, abolishing the system of awarding marks for style is only logical and reasonable.

By abolishing marks for style, ski federations would lose control over the 'correct' style of jumping. In that case ski-jumping would subsequently evolve in accordance with the principle of record breaking inherent in modern sport on the one hand and in accordance with the expectations of spectators on the other hand. This might contribute to the popularity of ski-jumping, thus strengthening the position of the sport within the field of a hegemonic sport culture, as well as increasing the power of its officials and controllers.

CONCLUSION

The history of ski-jumping is characterised by closely interwoven changes in technique, training, facilities, and equipment. The driving force behind it is the basic principle of modern sport, that is to say, the continuous striving for improved performance, although in ski-jumping limits

are set in the form of norms and ideals. It is not the length of the jump alone that counts but also the FIS's definition of the 'correct' body position. In this way ski officials succeeded and succeed – at least for a certain time – in asserting their idea of 'correct' ski-jumping. However, the FIS and its bodies repeatedly discovered the limits of their power and control where these ran contrary to not only basic sporting principles but also to public taste.

One of the driving forces in these interrelated processes is the central principle of sport, the record, a principle that puts continuous pressure not only on athletes but also on all other 'players in the game' to improve performance. As described above, records in ski-jumping are a matter for the athletes and judges, but above all, the jumping hills are of key importance. New records need new jumps and new jumps demand new techniques and equipment, which change not only the bodies but also the personalities and images of the athletes. As a result, new images and identities of ski-jumpers develop, combining courage and fear, sensibility and mental strength, masculinities and metrosexuality.

In addition, ski-jumping has become a market where the 'boy-group' image of the athletes is used and sold. The alliances between federations/event organisers, athletes, fans, and sponsors are only possible because the media provide not only the information and the material for creating dreams and fantasies but also an arena for self-presentation and a stage for performing gender and constructing masculinities.

The rapid technological innovations of recent decades, as well as the V-style with its effects on the bodies and equipment of jumpers forced and still force the FIS to introduce numerous regulations that primarily served or serve to ensure equality of opportunity but that were or are also intended to rescue an image of ski-jumping becoming tarnished by anorexic jumpers. The struggle to prevent girls and women from taking part in ski-jumping also seems to be related to the image of the sport. Besides concerns for the health and safety of female jumpers on the part of officials, which is by no means disputed here, it was above all the assault on ski-jumping as a male preserve that prompted officials such as Torbjørn Yggeseeth to put up such strong resistance to women's ski-jumping.

Like the history of numerous other sports, the history of ski-jumping can be interpreted as a struggle for recognition, legitimacy, tradition, and image. Involved in all this are various groups, from athletes to officials and from spectators to the media, who all have different interests and also different means of asserting them. Among them are the federations and their officials, who guarantee the identity and the continuity of traditions that form the essence of a sport, based as it is on social arrangements. However, their power and their attempts to maintain control over change come up against boundaries wherever their decisions run contrary to the fundamental principle of modern sport: the unlimited possibility of bettering performance.

- 1 Elias Nobert and Eric Dunning, *Spiel und Sport im Prozess der Zivilisation* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2003); Matti Goksoyr, "Cultural Diffusion, Sportification and Sport's Function as a Carrier of Nationalism" in *Spiele der Welt: Proceedings of the ISHPES-Congress 1993 in Berlin*, Gertrud Pfister et al., eds (Sankt Augustin: Academia, 1996), 367-374.
- 2 For further discussion, see, among others, Allen Guttmann, *From Ritual to Record: The Nature of Modern Sports* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978); Gertrud Pfister, "Cultural Confrontations: German Turnen, Swedish Gymnastics and English Sport – European Diversity in Physical Activities from a Historical Perspective," *Culture, Sport, Society*, 6 (2003): 61-91.

- 3 See "The International Ski Competition Rules, approved by the 42nd Ski Congress, Melbourne (Australia), Edition 2000" International Ski Federation. <http://www.gst.no/info/FIS-NC-Rules-General.pdf>, last accessed on 15 October, 2006.
- 4 For the history of ski-jumping see Jens Jahn and Egon Theiner, *Enzyklopädie des Skispringens* (Kassel: Agon, 2004).
- 5 John B Allen, *From Ski Sport to Skiing: One Hundred Years of an American Sport, 1840-1940* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1993).
- 6 "Skisprung-Geschichte 1876-2006" (History of Ski Jumping). http://www.4schanzentournee.com/CMS_Files/68_item.asp?root_id=27&node_id=68&item_id=11, last accessed on 3 October, 2006.
- 7 Ibid. See also *Berliner Zeitung*, February 9, 1994, 43.
- 8 See "das Mathias Zdarsky Archiv im Internet". <http://www.mathias-zdarsky.de/>, last accessed on 1 February, 2007.
- 9 For the history of ski-jumping with a special focus on the techniques, see <http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Skisprung-Technik>, last accessed on 3 November, 2006. Also, see "Skisprung-Geschichte 1876-2006".
- 10 "Historisches Lexikon der Schweiz". <http://www.hls-dhs-dss.ch/textes/d/D14011.php>, last accessed on 3 November, 2006.
- 11 *Der Spiegel* 51, (1999): 178.
- 12 According to "The History of Ski Jumping," <http://eskijumping.com/index.php?a=contents&b=contents&pokaz=historia&id=74>, last accessed on 14 December, 2006, Miroslaw Graf, a Pole from Szklarska Poreba, invented the V-style.
- 13 See, for example, "Skisprung Technik". <http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Skisprung-Technik>, last accessed on 3 November, 2006.
- 14 Ibid.
- 15 "Skisprung-Geschichte 1876-2006".http://www.4schanzentournee.com/CMS_Files/68_item.asp?root_id=27&node_id=68&item_id=9, last accessed on 8 October, 2006.
- 16 Jahn and Theiner, *Enzyklopädie des Skispringens*, 249.
- 17 Equipment has to conform to FIS regulations and new developments have to be improved by the FIS, see the "International Ski Competition Rules".<http://www.gst.no/info/FIS-NC-Rules-General.pdf>, last accessed on 15 October, 2006.
- 18 Kurt Jeschko, *Winter-Olympiade 1964* (München: Südwest Verlag 1964), 16; see also *Der Winter* 18 (1923), 8, 112.
- 19 *Der Winter* 24 (1929): 9, 156.
- 20 I have researched the media coverage of both athletes and the coverage of the "Four Hills Tournament". Sources are all the articles in *Der Spiegel* about ski-jumping between 1999 and 2004, articles that refer to Schmitt and/or Hannawald in *Die Welt* (Prestige Press) and *BILD* (the largest-selling German tabloid).
- 21 This debate intensified when one of the athletes in the German Ski Association accused the federation and the coaches of supporting diets and putting pressure on athletes to lose weight, *Der Spiegel* 51 (2003): 135.
- 22 See *Die Welt*, 12, 2, 2000.
- 23 See the discussion on the fan page. <http://www.adlerschwinger.com/SvenFAZ.html>. last accessed on 7 October, 2006.
- 24 Gertrud Pfister, "Gracefully and elegantly downhill – women and the sport of skiing in Germany, 1890-1913", in *Winter Games – Warm Traditions. Selected Papers from the Second International ISHPES Seminar Lillehammer 1994*, Matti Goksoyr, Gerd von der Lippe, and Kristen Mo, eds (Sankt Augustin: Academia, 1996), 223-240.

- 25 Alexandra Preuss, "Anfänge und Entwicklung des Frauenskispringens", unpublished Master Thesis (Münster: University of Münster), 2005; Annette Hofmann and Alexandra Preuss, "Amazonen der Lüfte: Geschichte und Entwicklungen im Frauenskispringen", in *Internationale Skihistoriographie Und Deutscher Skilauf*, Deutscher Skiverband, ed. (2005), 105-114; Gerd von der Lippe, "Ski Jumping" in *International Encyclopedia of Women and Sport*, Karen Christensen, Allen Guttmann, and Gertrud Pfister, eds (New York: Macmillan, 2001), 1046-1047; Jans Jahn and Egon Theiner, *Enzyklopädie des Skispringens* (Kassel: Agon, 2004), 394 ss.
- 26 Quoted in Hofmann and Preuss, "Amazonen," 113.
- 27 See "Es begann mit einer Gräfin," <http://jungle-world.com/seiten/2004/48/4416.php>, last accessed on 15 October, 2006 about the resistance against women's ski-jumping. See also Kathrin Zeilmann "Der Schanzenfloh ist weiblich und im Aufwind". http://www.sportsfrau.com/cms/red/download/19-20_Skispringen.pdf, last accessed on 15 October, 2006. Jahn and Theiner, *Enzyklopädie des Skispringens*.
- 28 Gertrud Pfister, "Gracefully and elegantly downhill"; Preuss, "Anfänge".
- 29 See Preuss, "Anfänge"; Jahn and Theiner, *Enzyklopädie des Skispringens*; Hofmann and Preuss, "Amazonen".
- 30 Zeilmann, "Schanzenfloh".
- 31 "Es begann mit einer Gräfin". <http://jungle-world.com/seiten/2004/48/4416.php>, last accessed on 3 November, 2006.
- 32 "Anette Sagen". http://no.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anette_Sagen, last accessed on 3 November, 2006.
- 33 *Aftenposten*, February 3, 2003.
- 34 The struggles between the ski-jumpers, especially Anette Sagen, and the FIS, as personified by Torbjørn Yggeseeth, were extensively covered in the Norwegian mass media; see Gerd von der Lippe "Female flying bodies in Norwegian Sports Media" in *International Perspective on Sporting Women in Past and Present: A Festschrift for Gertrud Pfister*, Annette Hofmann and Else Trangbaek, eds (Copenhagen: Institute of Exercise and Sport Sciences 2005), 321-345.
- 35 "Es begann mit einer Gräfin". <http://jungle-world.com/seiten/2004/48/4416.php>, last accessed on 3 November, 2006. See also the press release of the Norwegian Ski Federation. <http://www.skiforbundet.no/files/%7B6B70DC5F-A33C-48F7-859F-CBFB23678A54%7D.doc>, last accessed on 3 November, 2006.
- 36 *Dagbladet*, December 23, 2005.
- 37 G, February 29, 2004.
- 38 "Press release of the Norges Skiforbund 12th February 2004". <http://www.skiforbundet.no/files/%7B6B70DC5F-A33C-48F7-859F-CBFB23678A54%7D.doc>, last accessed on 3 November, 2006).
- 39 *Dagbladet*, January 25, 2006.
- 40 "Women's Ski Jumping wins F.I.S. vote in Portugal". <http://www.womensskijumpingusa.com/pressrelease.htm>, last accessed on 3 November, 2006. See also VG *NETT* May 23, 2006. <http://www.vg.no/>, last accessed on 3 November, 2006.
- 41 *Der Spiegel* 47, (2000): 236.
- 42 Cf. the information on the RTL contract in *FAZ Net*, December 27, 2006; see also "Sportrechte". <http://www.kek-online.de/Inhalte/sportrechte.html> last accessed on 4 November, 2006.

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