

## FEATURES

### The Dolomitenprint

One thing for which the Dolomitenlauf will be for ever famous is the Dolomiten Sprint. The idea of a cross country sprint race was born in Robert Steiner's head. This event, which can lay claim to being the first ski sprint event in the world, takes place in the main square of Lienz, as part of the Opening Ceremonies and attracts a large crowd as the skiers compete over a 350 m lap which includes both a jump and a specially built spiral feature on each lap.

Who has seen it once at the town square, knows that it is not only the oldest but one of the most exciting sprint events in the world. Over the years in the city sprint there has been a lot of innovation by Franz Theurl, the President of the OC. In the meantime there are not only sprint skills but also technical capabilities needed to achieve the honorable victory at the town square. Annually only 30 world class athletes can participate in the Dolomiten-Sprint.

### The Course

The Dolomitenlauf is run in Free Technique along a 60 km course on the floor of the Osttirol's Drau valley, starting from the town of Lienz and passing through the villages of Lavant, Pirkach, Nikolsdorf, Doelsach and Tristach before finishing through the streets of the Lienz. The finish of Dolomitenlauf is in the main square, bringing the race directly to the local population, but involving a huge amount of work in the transportation and laying of snow through the streets of the town.

In recent years, global warming has brought with it a lack of snow at the low altitudes over which the race is run and the race had to be cancelled on three separate occasions between 1994 and 2002. This brought with it a reduction in the number of competitors, which had previously always stood at between 1100 - 1600 and the race faced severe problems if it was to continue.

The response of the organisers to this crisis was to form a liaison with the nearby village of Obertilliach (1450 m over sea level), which lies at higher altitude and has a snow-safe record. The possibility of moving the race to the Cross-Country and Biathlon Centre at Obertilliach in the event of lack of snow in Lienz has assured the future of the race. There is a longstanding



Skiers fighting for better positions

