

Zermatt Ski Club turns 100

He was immediately fascinated by the things these rich and aristocratic English of the 19th century could pull off on their skis. As an employee of the Gornergrat train, he spent every day on the Gornergrat ridge. Soon, he too would put on his skis and dash down the valley to Zermatt – the ride on the train was now too slow for him. He was Rudolf Maag, one of the first locals to ski in Zermatt.

By Philippe Welti | After the English and before the few natives, the Swiss border and fortress guards used to slide down to the valley on their skis. Rudolf Maag, however, was so enthusiastic about this “new” type of locomotion, that he soon converted others to his passion. Exactly 100 years ago, he founded the Zermatt Ski Club.

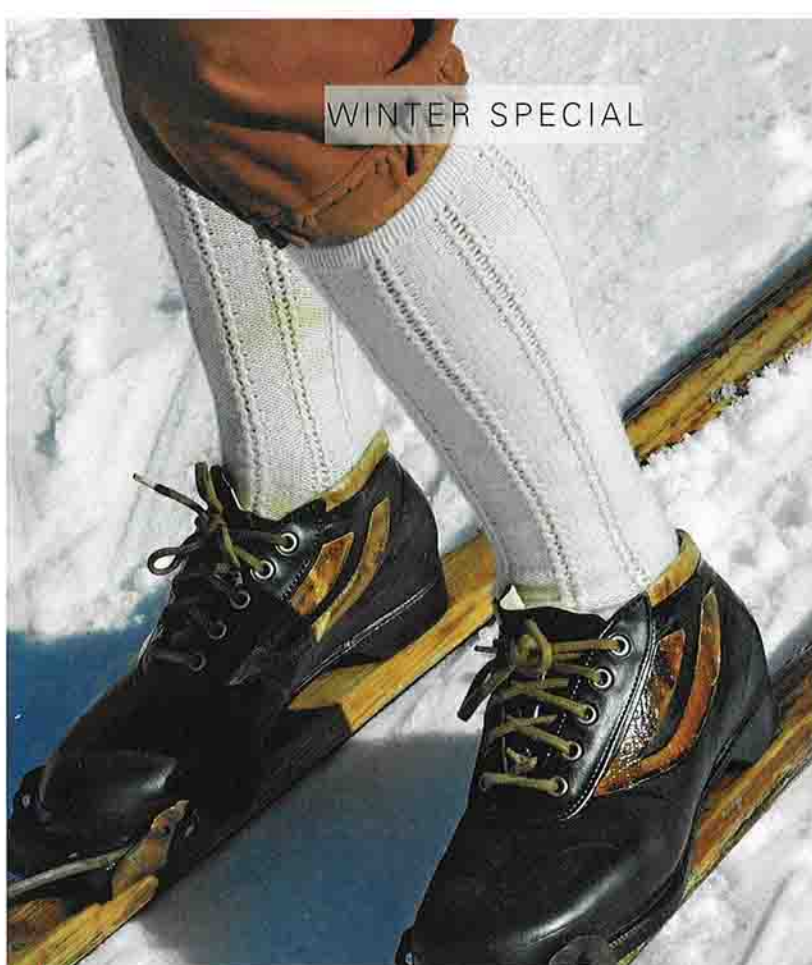
The goals of this project were physical fitness, the acquisition of skiing techniques and athletic competition. First, however, he had to teach the members how it worked. Soon the first skiing lessons were organised. The only problem was, where would one find a ski instructor? Eventually, Gustav Walthy from Davos, a “stranger”, agreed to induct the people of Zermatt into the art of skiing.

Zermatt: Alpine hub of the ski world

The club has been teaching members how to ski ever since. It now counts 330 members; many are locals, but there are also an increasing number of foreign members.

“We want to get the young people enthusiastic about skiing. The challenge in sports is also good training for life,” says Karl Eggen, president of club.

It is therefore no surprise that the ski club’s systematic promotion of young sportsmen and women has produced a continuing succession of professional athletes. The absolute highlight was when homegrown hero Max Julen brought home the Olympic gold medal in 1984, after winning the giant slalom in Sarajevo. Upon his return, the entire village turned out to greet him. Continuing this tradition, the Zermatt Ski Club is repre-



Zermatt Ski Club

Membership is open to everyone. The annual fee is SFr 55. The only entry condition is that one must already know how to ski. Children participating in the youth organisation courses with parents who are members of the ski club receive a free subscription for the Zermatt mountain railway. On its homepage, the club also runs an exchange, where skis and equipment can be both purchased and put up for sale.

Interested parties can register for Zermatt Ski Club membership directly with President Karl Eggen: +41 (0)79 220 76 24.
www.skiclubzermatt.ch

Vintage equipment, circa 1910

sented today at the world’s top, by World Cup skier Fränzi Aufdenblatten.

Courses for children aged five to 16 start in the autumn on the glacier of the Plateau Rosa and in the Trockener Steg/Klein Matterhorn region, and take place in cooperation with the schools. For the kids, the highlight of the year is the youth cup races. The club offers racing courses starting as early as summer. In addition, there is a freestyle skiing division, where trained instructors show course participants half-pipe tricks, and courses for snowboarders. One great advantage of this club is the opportunity to ski during the summer in Zermatt.

To celebrate its 100th anniversary, the club organised a jubilee ski race on the Furggsattel (at 3,365 metres). Among the participants were world-famous Olympic and World Cup athletes such as Max Julen, Pirmin Zurbriggen and Mike von Grünigen.

Surprisingly, the winner of the giant slalom was not a world-famous athlete, but Zermatt artist Heinz Julen. But this just shows that Zermatt is indeed the Alpine hub of the ski world, and sooner or later, anyone can become a good skier here.