

Winter climbing in the Bernese Oberland

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Objektyp: **Article**

Zeitschrift: **The Swiss observer : the journal of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK**

Band (Jahr): - **(1932)**

Heft 582

PDF erstellt am: **21.09.2024**

Persistenter Link: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-696556>

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CHALLENGE FIRST LEAGUE.

Luzern1	Grenchen4
Locarno2	Bözigen1
Bern2	St. Gallen3
Oerlikon	.....2	Etoile Ch.deF.	.....1
Olten	.....4	Bellinzona	.....1
Solothurn	.....1	Old Boys	.....5
Brühl	.....2	Montreux	.....4
Cantonal	.....3	Seebach	.....8
Racing	.....2	Winterthur	.....3

In the Challenge National, Group 1 once again had much the better of the argument, scoring 5 wins (and 1 draw) against the 2 wins for Group 2 by Young Boys and Zurich.

The second day in the First League Challenge gave Group 2 or East the opportunity to make up for their previous shortcomings and they recorded 5 wins (and 1 draw) against Group 1 or West's 3 wins. Of course, Grenchen was one of them; Olten's victory over Bellinzona perhaps less expected, but Montreux's defeat of Brühl in St. Gallen most decidedly in the nature of a surprise. Almost as remarkable, but to me rather more acceptable, was the win of St. Gall in Bern. Old Boys too "pulled their socks up" and the palm goes to Seebach for their astounding score of 8:2 against Racing in Lausanne.

SWISS CUP, ROUND THREE.

Bellinzona3	Basel2
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(after extra time)
played on 8th December.

And so there is a First League Club left after all! The draw for the fourth round, to be played on 5th February 1932 is:

Grasshoppers	v	Zurich
Young Boys	v	Carouge
Lausanne-Sports	v	Lugano
Bellinzona	v	Crania

and the first 3 home clubs plus Lugano should become the semi-finalists.

INTERNATIONALS.

England4	Austria3
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7th December at Stamford Bridge.

Belgium1	Austria6
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11th December in Brussels.

I think these matches deserve being mentioned also in the S.O. in spite of the gallons of ink that have flown in this connection both here and on the Continent. It was my good fortune to witness that wonderful treat on the Chelsea ground and I am really sorry for all football enthusiasts who, for one reason or another, had to miss this match. Sceptic, would have been a mild term as applied to your reporter, right up to 2.15 p.m. on Wednesday. Too loud was the concert of brass trumpets blowing from the Continent; yet those who were the theme, the melody, the rhythm of all the noise kept commendably silent and modestly in the background, leaving it to their Eleven to show what they knew and what standard football in Vienna has reached. I humbly apologise for all I have said and thought. The Austrians put up a wonderful fight. In ball control, combination, "Flachspiel" and general tactics, they proved themselves at least equal to England's Eleven. Just a little more punch forward and there would be your ideal team. Perhaps the goalkeeper would be more sound still, could he forget to play "for the gallery" What of the charging? Chance is a fine thing! There were quite as many Englishmen bundled off the ball as Austrians and the explanation for this transposition of preconceived ideas lies in the superbly accurate and prompt and speedy passing of the Viennese players. Once the man has parted with the ball, there is no more any sense in charging. The other bogey: Austria will never be able to stand up to the speed of English International football. Wrong again, all wrong. The Austrians forced the game for all they were worth in the second half and kept it up with perfect ease right to the last whistle. It was a revelation, the game of the year and the finest exhibition of football it has ever been my privilege to see, put up by two marvellous sides.

So let us admit that Austria have passed out from their apprenticeship and are worthy foes for the best. But does this mean that Continental football, generally speaking, has reached such a high level? There I once more become sceptical. The superiority of the Austrians is too well known, again exemplified in Brussels where Belgium had to bow the knee to the tune of 6:1. Yet what Austria has achieved all the others should be capable to accomplish and we all hope to see good old Switzerland, in the not too distant future, to have an opportunity to gladden our hearts by an equally good performance against the Masters, proud Albion. M.G.

WINTER CLIMBING IN THE BERNESE OBERLAND.

An authority on mountain climbing has written that the fundamental reason for the popularity of the Swiss Alps over the mountains of, say, Norway or the Caucasus, is that the Alps are just the right height for the two-day man. They are serious enough to make one realize that one is climbing, yet not so exhausting as to take away the pleasure of viewing the scenery. Our climbs of the Gemmi, Hockenhorn, and the Blümlisalp-horn bore this statement out to the full.

The ideal number for rope work is four, but we were five when we left the camp at Kandersteg to essay, if we could get a guide, the Blümlisalp-horn, or, failing that, we meant to climb the Wilde Frau, a secondary peak of the Blümlisalp group. Equipment consisted of soups, sardines, chocolate and the wherewithal for the brewing of the strong tea favoured by climbers. In addition we had ropes, ice axes, and crampions, very useful for glacier work. A downpour of rain lasting for 2½ hours, aided by a passage through a thick, wet mist when proceeding up the path to the Oeschinen See, wet us to the skin.

Just before we reached the Oeschinen See, a beautiful lake at a height of about 6,000 feet, we were startled by a sudden hollow roaring over to our right. Its origin was on the upper slopes of the snow-clad Doldenhorn, 10,000 feet high. We were privileged, for the roaring was from an avalanche. It appeared to us, at first, to be a fine spray of mud, coursing through the deep channel down which the glacier water was wont to flow, then it burst into a wonderful spray of rock and debris over a 500-foot precipice. Ten minutes the avalanche lasted, while the air seemed to rock and quiver with the terrible noise. Then it slackened to a mere trickle, muddy earth sluicing down, vaguely hinting that where much had come more might follow.

At the Oeschinen See we had lunch, looking across at the lake which has its equivalent in England at Stickle Tarn in the Langdales; though the Oeschinen See is on a much more elaborate scale. Where Pavey Ark behind Stickle Tarn, rises a few hundred feet in a solid wall of rock, the rock wall behind Oeschinen See rises a matter of 6,000 feet, to end in the snow capped peak of the Blümlisalp-horn. While resting, two grey friars passed, rucsacs on backs, coming down from the pass leading to the Blümlisalp hut. They made a fine picture, with their long trailing gowns and close cropped heads.

In contrast to our start from the Kandersteg valley we left the Oeschinen See in brilliant sunshine, and set our faces towards the distant heights. Wilde Frau... Wild Woman! She rears her head out of the snow like an Amazon. Behind her is the Blümlisalp-horn, sublime in the knowledge of his greater height and more difficult passage. We climbed on and our reward came when, above the 6,000 foot level, we were amazed at the number of lovely butterflies that surrounded us. The flowers, too, were in themselves well worth the toil. Gentians of a gorgeous purple blue; Rockfoils, peeping shyly from the base of grim boulders where one least expected to see delicate floral beauty; Rock primulas, and even the sweet glacier buttercups.

At 7,500 feet, however, the nature of the climbing changed. We crossed snow fields and narrow, shaly ridges spiced with a hint of danger

to the unwary foot. The climbing became steeper, and the last lap to the Blümlisalp-hut was on a slope of 1 in 1½. Lungs were taxed, and the thudding of the temple pulses told the tale of a hard climb. At 6.40 p.m. we reached the hut, and were heartily glad to take off our rucsacs and think of dinner. The hut is set on a wonderful ridge, the culmination of two valleys.

Dinner consisted of a pint of soup, a quarter of a pound of dry bread, four sardines and a bar of chocolate. Rather a mixed menu, but in the mountains when one must carry all the food in the rucsac food values are carefully counted, and excess luxuries are left behind.

The night at the hut was a fantasy. There were powerful unshaven men, devouring spaghetti and dry bread, and heavily shod women in trousers. The air was filled with the Swiss language of the Bernese Oberland. The lighter side was provided by two men who looked after the hut. One was a giant of a man, heavily bearded, and appearing to have the strength of an ox. He washed the dishes, brewed tea, and made soup. His partner, a comparative weed of a man, had the unenviable task of bringing in water across a dangerous snow slope, a slip on which would have meant a swift gissade, then a drop on to rocks a couple of hundred feet below. At nine o'clock we were ushered off to the room upstairs, where the unmarried folk slept.

We were awakened five hours later with the feeling that the day of judgment had dawned. A terrific storm was raging, and the thunder was deafening, each bellowing roll being thrown from peak to peak in echoing crashes that almost made the senses reel, while the lightning flashes that lighted up the room with the brilliance one associates with magnesium flares made the snow-capped peaks and the glaciers stand out in ghostly grandeur. The storm gods were out in real earnest!

How long it lasted I cannot say. The thundering roll on the wood roof of the rain that followed lulled us to sleep, and when 5.0 a.m. came, and we went down to breakfast and prepare for our climb, all was over. The four guides had each a party, so that we had to start out alone, with the Wild Woman as our objective. The guides came out to watch us start, shaking their heads, and obviously thinking we were mad. Twenty minutes later, when only a thousand feet from the top of the Wild Woman, the predictions of the guides were borne out, and we were brought to a reluctant halt by the climber's deadliest foe — mist.

For a few minutes we stood in a state of indecision, watching the mist as it swirled around us, and mocked by the moaning of the wind as it played in and out of the crannies. Each moment the mist thickened, and with its thickening the danger of the return over the snowfield to the comparative safety of the hut increased, so that we were finally forced to return, not caring to attempt the crossing of the crevasse-pitted glacier that lay between us and the Wilde Frau's summit, near though it looked. One consolation we had: the day was so bad that not one of the parties climbed a peak, and we had gone farther than most.

Our two-day trip on the Blümlisalp was finished with a thirty-mile walk down the Bundstock valley to Kiental and Frutigen home. Walking down the mist-covered Bundstock, we were thrilled to hear someone on the mountain, unseen because of the thick mist, yodelling. Plaintive, yet beautifully sweet it sounded, and in thorough keeping with the sad atmosphere that pervaded the mountains.

A.C.

HUGGENBERGER BOOKS.

It may be a little late to come forward with the offer of Christmas presents, but during the holidays we shall all have a little more time to read and digest the books which we have put aside for future reading.

Our minds therefore will be more ready to revert to the books worth reading and among these undoubtedly are those of Alfred Huggenberger. Such a present may be late for Christmas, but it will never be too late for many hours of the purest enjoyment that we can wish for.

Mr. Huggenberger has agreed to provide each book sold in the Swiss Colony in London with a dedication on the fly-leaf. This will give the book a much higher value for the possessor. As no stocks of these books are kept in London, the Treasurer of the N.S.H. will be pleased to receive orders and forward them to the Author in Switzerland for direct delivery. Lists of the books can be obtained on application.

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