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Simon Ammann



How many times has Swiss ski jumping champion Simon Ammann taken off during his career, having started at the age of 11? About 4,000 jumps, with an average duration of four seconds. That works out at slightly over four hours floating between earth and sky. Given that ski jumpers describe these moments as timeless, that is a huge total. The time spent in the air stays in the mind. And that is 80 percent of the sport's appeal. The indescribable joy of ski-powered flying at more than 100 km/h - welcome to the sporting world of Simon Ammann, the ski jumper from Unterwasser in the canton of St Gallen, who keeps jumping despite regular media hints about his pending retirement. A photo from 2002 shows Ammann celebrating two gold medals from the Salt Lake City Olympic Games. His tousled hair sticks up over a pair of oval glasses. He is wearing a chestnut brown checked shirt. The Americans think he looks like Harry Potter. To the Swiss, he is the flying bird from Toggenburg. This son of a farmer is known as Simon, or Simi to his friends. Ammann is known for his compact position during take-off and his capacity to keep his form in flight. He also lands with remarkable precision. These qualities have made Simi a global star: four-time Olympic champion, double gold medallist. At the same time, he has known failure as well, having experienced a marked dip in form in 2015. However, from then on Simon has rediscovered his edge, having decided to lead with his right foot on landing. A minor revolution. In March 2023, Simi, aged 41, was the veteran and top Swiss performer at the world championships in Planica, Slovenia. And he will fly again.

STÉPHANE HERZOG

Switzerland significantly reduces its protection for wolves

The Federal Council has approved the preventive shooting of wolves with effect from 1 December 2023. Entire packs can also be shot in justified cases. This marks a significant downgrade in wolf protection. Previously, wolves could only be shot if they had caused damage or attacked farm animals. There are currently 32 wolf packs living in Switzerland. According to Environment Minister Albert Rösti, a minimum of 12 packs nationwide are to be left untouched. That is not enough to ensure the species' survival. Three years ago, Switzerland's chief wildlife officer, Reinhard Schnidrig, told "Swiss Review": "There is enough space in the Swiss Alps and the Jura mountains for about 60 wolf packs, or 300 animals. That is the upper limit of what is ecologically tolerable. At the lower end of the scale, 20 or so packs are necessary for the wolf to remain in Switzerland for generations." This watering down of wolf protection is thus more political than ecological. By the way, did voters not come out strongly in favour of protecting the wolf three years ago? – Read the interview: revue.link/wolves.

(MUL)

Ukrainian refugees can stay longer

Tens of thousands of Ukrainians have sought refuge in Switzerland since the Russians invaded. Switzerland has granted them Protection Status 'S'. That enables rapid admission on a temporary basis without undergoing the asylum process. The Federal Council has now decided to extend Status 'S' for Ukrainians refugees, until at least 4 March 2025. The federal government does not anticipate a rapid end to the conflict. Switzerland is now in line with the EU, which had already approved this extension. (MUL)

Antisemitic attacks on the rise

The number of antisemitic incidents in Switzerland has increased by about a quarter since the terror attack by Hamas against Israel and the Israeli response. The president of the Federal Commission against Racism, Martine Brunschwig Graf, says that what is striking is not only the number of incidents but their intensity. However, she has also observed a rise in anti-Muslim sentiment. The Swiss Federation of Jewish Communities strongly denounced the trend in November and called on the Federal Council to be clearer in its condemnation of antisemitism. (MUL)

Qualified applause for the Swiss football team

The Swiss national football team will again take part in a major tournament next year. The Swiss qualified for the summer 2024 European Championship in Germany. The team, managed by Murat Yakin, initially saw themselves as favourites in a qualifying group consisting of Andorra, Belarus, Israel, Kosovo and Romania. But it didn't really turn out that way. (MUL)