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Sport: Preparation for St. Moritz

The month of February 1972 will gladly be remembered by Swiss and also by foreigners. For it was then that the Swiss skiing experts obtained one medal after another; three gold medals (Russi and M. T. Nadig), three silver medals (Collombin, Bruggmann and Steiner), also five bronze medals (Mattle, as well as the team of Alois and Alfred Kaelin, Giger and Hauser).

Magglingen near Biel, the Theodul Glacier near Zermatt and the Plaine-Morteratsch Glacier above Montana are well-known to the Swiss skiing champions, for it is there that they have trained for many a victory. As a contrast to the Bernese sports centre whose amenities look more like a huge laboratory, the sportsmen have a chance of enjoying nature and above all high-altitude air over 3000 metres up in the Valais. Thus the teams alternate between these regions, usually for a stay of about a week. The work demanded is considerable, but it is carried out in excellent spirits.

It is easier to reach the top of the table than to remain there. Although the results of Marie-Therese Nadig at Sapporo were excellent and caused just appreciation, there may now be some disappointment. Hans Schweingruber, one of the coaches, stated: "Three years ago when we started to build up a team, we aimed at producing a strong one within five years. We have not yet changed this attitude. This means that, without giving up the acquired positions, we must continue our efforts on this basis. We must consolidate and expand,

and this we have done during the last years. Once Marie-Therese Nadig had overcome the effects of her successes in Japan, she, too, like the other youngsters, had to work ceaselessly." The Olympic champion stated: "It is far too early to judge the coming season, but I am in good form and am hopeful for St. Moritz."

One should improve every year. But on skiing as in every other sport, patience is of prime importance. In addition, several prejudices have to be eliminated. First of all, the public had to be convinced that skiing for women was a different matter, and that training for men and women could not be alike. A further point is that girls mature earlier than boys. In other countries, these matters have been taken into consideration for a long time, but not in Switzerland. Thus the established pattern had to be changed. To look after and train girls between 10 and 12 years old, means dealing with a new problem, that of schooling. Schweingruber stated that this particular problem was practically being solved this season. In agreement with the schools concerned, a teacher was engaged who was in charge of the curriculum as well as of homework. Thus nobody at a training camp would go short as far as schooling was concerned. The realisation of this problem is extremely important.

The specialists in descent again went to Portillo for a time, for they know this part very well. It was already the third time that they were there. According to Jaeger, this particular stay



Philippe Roux

had been very useful as snow conditions were particularly suitable, unlike last year. The question whether such an expedition was really necessary, remains open. Jaeger added that it was not always the participants at the Portillo training camp who got the best results. He is of the opinion, though, that it is of great advantage to the skiers to be able to train in good snow conditions.

Philippe Roux is expecting the new season with great impatience. His logical promotion to the team is the result of untiring work. This downhill skier from Verbier stated that his stay at Portillo had been of great benefit to him. In the descent, he felt as strong as last year, and he had made good progress in the giant slalom.

Capable men assist the Swiss ski sportsmen with help and advice, so that one may expect new successes at St. Moritz.



Philippe Roux in Crans-Montana Downhill, 2nd February 1973