

Pete Sampras's big surprise

- On track for a good **full-year result**
- **Skier Cross**, Formula 1 on skis

Editorial

TIMO RAUNIO



Where are the limits?

The continuous development of products generally, and in our case sports equipment in particular, makes many people wonder where the limits of this process lie. For example, how big can the head of a golf club get before the positive performance trend turns negative. How short can a ski be before it becomes something akin to a skate. Practice and results ultimately dictate the answers to these questions. In product development based on the needs of recreational users, the expertise and experience of top-class athletes are also important because they serve as the pioneers of product innovation. Recreational sports participants vote with their product choices and the governing bodies of sports decide in their rules. The goal is the best solution for the sport in question.

Product development is based on the desire to make participation in different sports even more enjoyable and satisfying. The combination of good products and enthusiastic users brings better results. Product development enables the performance characteristics of sports equipment to be continuously developed almost limitlessly.

Wilson, Atomic and Suunto are all specialists in their respective sports, but the expertise of each company is actually based on an interest in different sports. In this issue we tell about Suunto's research and product development (page 6). Behind the companies' specialisation are highly motivated people who work together closely to advance matters of common interest. Our personnel comprises solid professionals who often bring to their work a great passion for a particular sport. More on sports expertise and breaking both limits and records on page 16.

Tea Saari ■ Editor-in-Chief

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Venus (left) and **Serena Williams** are easily the best women tennis players on the world stage at the present time. In the US Open final Serena was the better of the two.

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Amer Group's first-half net sales and operating profit were similar to last year's level when discontinued operations and the patent settlement in 2001 are taken into consideration.

Results continue to hold up well

Amer's first-half operating profit was EUR 38.5 million compared with EUR 47.9 million a year earlier. However, the 2001 result included a EUR 9 million patent settlement received in the second quarter of the year.

Amer's equity ratio rose from 46.7% to 52.8% over the 12-month period to 30th June 2002.

Cash flow remained strong. The Group's net financing expenses fell by a half to EUR 3 million. Net debt was EUR 85.8 million at the end of June, compared with EUR 114.5 million a year earlier.

Amer will pay more tax than in 2001. According to CFO **Pekka Paalanne**, this year's tax rate will rise to 28 per cent, compared with 23 per cent last year.

Paalanne says that movements of the euro/dollar exchange rate had hardly any impact on first-half net sales and operating profit. On the other hand, the stronger euro coupled with more effective utilisation of capital strengthened the balance sheet.

Amer's operating profit and cash flow are expected to remain good and the balance sheet to strengthen further.

Significant improvement in golf

The Racquet Sports Division's first-half net sales and operating profit increased slightly. Full-year operating profit is expected to improve somewhat, while net sales will remain flat at last year's level. Triad tennis racquets continue to sell well, and sales of performance tennis footwear have grown with the introduction of new products. The company will be

bringing new racquet and footwear models to market during the second half of the year.

The Golf Division's net sales declined but profitability improved significantly. President and CEO **Roger Talermo** stresses that Wilson's strategy in difficult market conditions is to focus primarily on improving profitability. This has been achieved by lowering operating expenses and raising the proportion of performance products in the product portfolio.

Sales of performance clubs such as Deep Red grew strongly. "Wilson has sold more performance clubs than ever before," says a satisfied Roger Talermo.

In June, Wilson introduced the new 425 Deep Red driver to the U.S. market.

The golf ball market continued to be extremely competitive. Wilson will be launching a new range of balls in the fourth quarter.

The Team Sports Division once again improved its operating profit. Wilson maintained its position as the number one team sports company in the USA. DeMarini extended its bat family with the introduction of the new F2 Half and Half softball bat, in which for the first time the head and shaft are made of different materials. Team Sports' full-year sales are expected to increase slightly, driven by new products and the basketball adoption contract with the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA).

Atomic's season begins

For Atomic the second quarter of the year is always the time during which pre-ordered products are manufactured. Shipments to distributors begin in August, with September the

busiest month of the season. Atomic's pre-orders are at last year's level and the demand for alpine skis at the top end of the product range has risen. There was continued strong growth during the first half in the USA, where Atomic's sales rose by 31%.

Ski boot development and the production of ski boot shells will be transferred to Altenmarkt, Austria during the final part of 2002. Ski boot assembly will be outsourced in the future.

The winter sports market as a whole is expected to decline slightly in 2002 due to economic uncertainty and high inventory levels in many key markets.

"No Atomic products are being held in the distributors' inventories. Everything is looking reasonably good to put it mildly," says Roger Talermo.

Atomic's full-year net sales are expected to rise slightly, while operating profit will fall somewhat short of last year's record level.

Slight increase in Sports Instruments' operating profit

Suunto's first-half operating profit fell EUR 0.9 million due to continuing investments in R&D and marketing communications. Suunto's fastest growing product category was wristop computers with a 36% increase in sales. Sales of Suunto's diving instruments remained at last year's level. Sales of diving and water sports suits rose by 5%.

Global shipments of the Suunto X6 wristop computer and the Suunto D3 diving instrument started in April. Shipments of the Suunto X6 HR, which features a heart rate monitor

Amer 2002



Padraig Harrington has been playing with Wilson clubs since 1998. He is currently using Fat Shaft RM Signature irons, the Deep Red driver and Deep Red fairway woods.

EUR million	1-6/2002	1-6/2001	Change
CONSOLIDATED RESULTS			
NET SALES	552.2	550.8	
OPERATING PROFIT	38.5	47.9	-20%
Net financing expenses	-3.0	-5.9	
PROFIT BEFORE TAXES	35.5	42.0	-15%
Taxes	-10.0	-9.7	
Minority interest	0.0	0.0	
PROFIT	25.5	32.3	
Earnings per share, EUR	1.10	1.35	
Adjusted average number of shares in issue, million	23.2	23.9	
Equity per share, EUR	17.96	17.92	
ROCE, % *)	16.1	16.9	
ROE, %	11.7	14.9	
Average number of personnel	3813	4203	

*)12-month's rolling average
Own shares have been eliminated from shareholders' equity and the number of shares in issue.

Operating profit

EUR million	1-6/2002	1-6/2001	Change
Wilson	46.9	39.4	19%
Winter sports	-8.3	-5.0	
Sports instruments	4.7	5.6	-16%
Tobacco	5.0	4.9	2%
Headquarters	-5.2	7.0	
Group goodwill	-4.6	-4.7	
Sold operations	-	0.7	
Total	38.5	47.9	-20%

function, will start in August. Shipments of wristop computers for specific sports, the Suunto M9 for sailing and the Suunto G9 for golf, will start towards the end of the year.

The growth in wristop computers is expected to continue thanks to the introduction of new models. For the year as a whole, it is expected that sports instrument sales will

continue to grow and operating profit will improve slightly.

Amer Tobacco's operating profit down slightly

Amer Tobacco's first-half net sales grew by 11% and operating profit was unchanged. Amer Tobacco started tax-free deliveries of

Marlboro products to neighbouring areas, as well as sales of Cricket-lighters.

Full-year net sales are expected to grow somewhat and operating profit to weaken slightly due to increases in raw material costs.

Suunto's wristop computers bring to mind the exquisite miniature eggs crafted by Carl Fabergé of St. Petersburg. The similarities are obvious: superb precision mechanics and an unbelievable number of technical solutions packed into the smallest of spaces.

Suunto is sexy



Eero Punkka: "We do our utmost to avoid the kind of the toy-like gadgets that some of our competitors come up with. We don't want to make toys, just useful products that genuinely help sports participants to improve their performance."

Precision mechanics has been one of Suunto's strengths ever since its first successful product, a field compass, was introduced back in the 1930s. Today the company's main strength is its ability to successfully combine its expertise in mechanics, electronics and software. In fact, a large proportion of the R&D personnel hired by Suunto in recent times have been software experts.

Suunto's Research Development Manager, Dr. **Eero Punkka**, has been with Suunto for three years. Over the past two years the number of R&D personnel has doubled. The company has had no problem attracting qualified people because, as Punkka says, Suunto is sexy.



Observer

Observer is hardly any thicker than an ordinary wristwatch, but there is an amazing amount inside. Suunto is able to pack microsensor-based measuring systems into the smallest of spaces.

Very many of the company's employees are active participants in some or other sport. Of course, for such people it is a pleasure to work for a company that makes products which they use in their own leisure time – and it is good for Suunto too! As is the case with all of Amer Sports' brands: it is much easier to communicate with the end-user if you fully understand the sport in question.

"It is very important for genuinely customer-centred product development," says Eero Punkka.

It is not possible to be in direct contact with the customer when Suunto is developing something new and unexpected, and you cannot afford to let the information leak out to the market either.

"We can't really walk out onto the street and ask people what they would like to wear on their wrist. A new product is born out of expertise in the sport in question. It pays to maintain a high level of sports expertise because then we know that things can't go wrong – at least not badly."

Sports clubs are one of the ways in which this expertise is maintained in Suunto. Among the company's employees there are divers, orienteers, hikers, golfers, tennis players, sailors and triathlon enthusiasts.

Professionals test and provide feedback on Suunto's products. This information is passed on to the product managers and to product development by the marketing department; indeed, the co-operation between marketing and product development is close.

Technical physics is Punkka's specialist field. He became very familiar with measurement technology and small devices in his previous job with VTI Hamlin Oy, (now VTI Technologies Oy), a manufacturer of acceleration- and other micro-sensors.

Top expertise

Suunto's products are highly regarded and from time to time they are even copied. Recently, the Japanese were so exact in copying Suunto's two-year-old dive computer that they even duplicated a small and inconsequential design flaw in the mould for the computer's casing.

How has Suunto made its name and what are its areas of core expertise? The list is a long one:

"Mechanical construction and design, small waterproof structures, electronics with ultra-low power consumption, measurement electronics, small sensors and their connection to other elec-



tronic components, industrial design, user-interface design, the combination of algorithms, in-depth software expertise, electronics packaging technology,” lists Punkka. Suunto packs its micro-sensor-based measuring systems into less space than any other manufacturer in the world.

“We do our utmost to avoid the kind of the toy-like gadgets that some of our competitors come up with. We don’t want to make toys, just useful products that genuinely help sports participants to improve their performance.”

The Observer wristop computer is hardly any thicker than a normal wristwatch, but there is a amazing amount packed inside: a battery, frame metal networks that take electricity from the battery to the printed wiring boards, sensors, a microprocessor, a display, a back light, membranes, the frameworks that hold the construction together, a metal cover, O rings...

As the aim is to keep the device as thin as possible, dimensional tolerances in the vertical direction can be as little as a few dozen micrometers. If a wristop computer has a rechargeable battery, it is impossible to achieve the thinness of the Observer. Of course, the advantage of a rechargeable battery is that there is no need to replace it.

Information is processed

Combining algorithms means that the user is not presented with raw measurement data, as is the case with most of Suunto’s competitors. The measurement results given by different components are made to “talk” to one another.

“We process the information obtained from the measuring instruments so that the user is presented with precisely the information that he

or she needs. This turns our instruments into computers. For example, a dive computer measures water pressure, but it also tells the diver how long he or she can remain underwater and the rate of ascent possible without the risk of getting ‘the bends’.”

Suunto’s latest, soon-to-be-launched wristop computers, the M9 designed for sailors and boaters and the G9 for golfers, contain the world’s smallest GPS positioning sensor. It is Suunto’s most impressive achievement in terms of packaging technology. The sensor is about the size of a postage stamp.

GPS co-ordinates by themselves aren’t much use to a sailor or boater – especially if you’ve left your charts at home. When racing, Suunto M9 provides the user with the information to take the shortest course to the buoy. When navigating, Suunto M9 offers simple access to a wide selection of speed, distance and time derived information

“Suunto has its own logic for the use of GPS. In our opinion GPS is really just one of a number of sensors capable of telling you where you are and how fast you are travelling. Of course, it is a very good sensor for that particular purpose.”

Easy to use

The design of a device’s operating logic is an important part of product development work. If the user cannot use the device with ease, the operating logic is too complicated and the consumer will desert the brand for another. The story is exactly the same in the mobile phone business.

Operating logic at its best is to be found in Suunto’s dive computer: there is no need to do anything. The diver doesn’t have to do anything at all to the dive computer either before diving or while under the water. When the dive begins the computer immediately senses that it is underwater, activates itself and starts to provide information: when sufficient depth has been reached, when the diver should return to the surface and at what rate of ascent.

“We aim to achieve the same thing in other sports too. In diving the environment is so clearly defined that its is easier for the device to monitor performance automatically.”

The rules of sports make development work simple in so far as they impose limits. Sometimes, however, they also act as a brake on technical development. The electrical compass, for instance, was not allowed in small boat sailing races until just a few years ago.

X6 HR Cross Sports



Will the GPS-equipped G9 be allowed in competitions?

“Some say yes, others no. It states in the Rules of Golf that distances in front of the player cannot be measured, and G9 measures distances already covered. When you hit the ball, G9 will tell you afterwards how far the ball travelled. Looking forward, it only measures the distance to the green, not to the hole. If a player first assesses distances by sight and then looks at the wristop computer to see how far out the estimate was, he or she will learn to judge distances. It is important to know and not to think you know how far the ball travels when struck with different clubs,” stresses Eero Punkka.

Not even the professionals can succeed without measurements.

“They always know exactly how far it is to the target because their caddies measure the course with electronic devices the day before.”

Design awards

Industrial Design is a key element of Suunto’s product strategy. Most of Suunto’s products come out of the company’s own design department. Design work is also outsourced, in which

G9 golf





such as the “watch companies” Casio and Swatch. Their concept and approach are essentially different from Suunto’s.

“They operate in the world of wristwatches, whereas we are in the business of making wristop computers. There’s a big difference. They manufacture devices that can be used in the widest possible range of pursuits. They want to sell huge volumes, and that is incompatible with meeting the special needs of specific user groups. Nokia is certainly capable of producing specialist products, but it doesn’t sit well with the company’s strategy of pursuing high-volume sales,” says Eero Punkka.

“Our main competitive advantage is that our products are designed specifically for the environment in which they will be used, i.e. they are specifically tailored to one sport or pursuit. It would be quite a change of direction for our big competitors to adopt this approach. We are light on our feet. When we get a good idea, we can turn it into a product much more quickly than a large company. And the early bird always catches the worm.”

Suunto knows exactly how many people are actively involved in the sports it caters for. Segmentation is continuously taking place in target groups, as is the case in all sports. Entirely new sports branch off from existing ones, and the people who follow them are interested in novel measures of performance and their associated instruments. That poses a challenge for Suunto’s marketing and product development. Suunto is clearly the global market leader in diving instruments - an astonishing performance for a company that is based in a land where ice covers the lakes and sea for a large part of the year and where underwater visibility is generally poor due to the high humus content.

Suunto is developing sport-specific products that are designed specifically for the environment in which they will be used. Suunto’s products help the sports enthusiast to improve his or her performance.



case the design department co-ordinates to ensure that the work is in keeping with Suunto’s design policy and objectives. The company’s products have received many design awards in the past.

“The fact that all of our products are continuously winning design awards is a bit of a burden on us. The bar is already so high that it is becoming increasingly difficult to reach it,” chuckles a satisfied Eero Punkka.

Rigorous testing

Suunto’s research and product development department never wants to see a half-baked product released to the market. The products are tested in severe conditions: for instance, dive computers are tested to a depth of 300 meters. The world record depth for scuba diving is 283 metres.

Sometimes new products are somewhat delayed beyond their announced launch dates.

“We do everything in our power to ensure that our products are flawless,” stresses Punkka.

Tell your friends too

Almost all of Suunto’s instruments have a PC interface so that measurement results and performance can be analysed on the user’s home computer. The PC software enables the user to make detailed analyses and graphs, review historical data, and keep in touch and compare notes and performances with other like-minded sports participants via the Internet.

In Suunto’s thinking the direct feedback given by its sports instruments accounts for 60 per cent of the user’s enjoyment, 20 per cent comes from further analyses on the PC and the remaining 20 per cent from the possibility to exchange views and compare performance data with friends.

M9 is the first such instrument in the world offering the opportunity to access a worldwide library of sea charts via the Internet. The user’s own information can be processed to produce a unique chart on which, for example, favourite fishing spots are marked.

Early bird catches the worm

Suunto’s competitors include not only numerous small companies but also large corporations



VYTEC
diving



SKIER CROSS

brings colour to alpine sports

Head-to-head racing, jumps, overtaking and spills - Skier Cross is the Formula 1 of the slopes and its popularity is booming.

Sorting out new trends has always been difficult, but for ski manufacturers it is an absolute must. The focus of attention is most often on youth: what new innovation would get under-twenty-year-olds interested in skiing on two skis?

Now it seems that the ski industry has struck gold in a big way. The magic word is Freeride, which comprises a collection of new and spectacular disciplines that appeal not only to young people but also to television companies and advertisers. The Freeride disciplines are various jumps, free skiing down precipitous alpine mountainsides and Skier Cross, which has grown quickly to become an extremely popular sport.

Inspired by snowboarding

Skier Cross, or SX for short, is a direct descendent of snowboarding. From four to six skiers start at the same time. The shortish course has gates, banked turns and jumps. The rules are simple: the first to the finish line is the winner.

Fast and furious

"It's bumpy, turny, jumpy," says Frenchman **Jean-Pierre Baralo**, who leads Atomic's Freeride Team.

Under Baralo's leadership Atomic skiers have already won three consecutive Skier Cross X Games in the United States. **Shaun Palmer** skied to victory in 2000, **Zach Crist** in 2001, and his brother **Reggie Crist** in 2002. The Crist brothers in particular are popular and well-known among young people who follow the sport.

The X Games could be described as the Olympics of extreme sports, which include ice climbing, snowboarding, and speed sledging. As one might expect, TV is crucial to the success of the X Games. The main backer is the US sports channel ESPN.

The X Games has been a very important factor in the development of Skier Cross. The sport was presented to the public for the first time at the 1998 Games.

Baralo believes that the X Games is still Skier Cross's main event, but there are other showcases too: the Crossmax Tour will climax with the finals in Les Deux Alpes.

The International Ski Federation (FIS) has also included the sport in its programme. Skier Cross will join the established freestyle disciplines already in the coming season.

Full of drama

Skier Cross is already now a popular sport. Jean-Pierre Baralo explains why:

"The sport is spectacular and dramatic. The races seldom last longer than a minute and the spectators can get very close to the action. The sport actually represents a return to the roots of alpine skiing: everyone starts from the top at the same time and the first to the bottom is the winner. Skier Cross is also an ideal TV sport. The action is packed with speed and danger, and camera coverage of the whole course can be easily arranged. And unlike other alpine sports, the competitions can be held whatever the weather conditions."





← Atomic's range of Skier Cross skis and boots and called SX:11.

Head-to-head racing adds to the drama of the sport. Fully clad for battle in helmets and a variety of shin and elbow guards, the skiers launch themselves towards the first gate and the battle for the lead begins. The jumps and physical contact that are all part and parcel of the sport ensure that the lead changes several times during the race.

Traditional alpine skiers are already competing in Skier Cross.

"Most successful Skier Cross racers have an alpine background. They have competed in either the World Cup or the Europa Cup. There are also some mogul skiers in the top ranks of the sport."

Besides the Crist brothers, **Xavier Troubat**, **Rex Thomas** and **Nath Fresnois** are the best-known skiers in the Atomic Freeride Team, which was founded in 2000.

The expectations for next winter are high. "We have won four out of five possible first

places in the X Games. It would be nice to extend that streak, but the odds against it are already starting to lengthen," says Baralo.

New sport, new skis

Skier Cross equipment is specially designed for the sport. The skis are a hybrid cross between mogul and slalom skis: they carve but are also extremely reactive, which maximises acceleration after jumps and sharp turns. The boots have exactly the same features and characteristics of racing boots.

Atomic's range of Skier Cross skis and boots are called SX:11. The skis feature a new Aerospeed topsheet and a titanium Beta profile. The binder type is the SX 614. The strikingly colourful skis and boots have already been featured prominently in the sport's press.

Atomic's Skier Cross skis are expected to sell very well next winter due to their exceptional performance and versatility.



Hermann Maier will continue with his career, even though he injured himself again at training camp in Chile.

MAIER to continue with Atomic

TEXT **MARKKU RIMPILÄINEN** ■ PHOTOS **ATOMIC**

Probably the best-known alpine skier in the world, **Hermann Maier**, is to continue working with Atom-

ic. Atomic and Maier signed a ski contract in Altenmarkt at the end of July.

"I have always known that I would continue to use Atomic skis in the coming seasons, which will be extremely demanding," said Maier at the signing ceremony.

Having recovered from a serious motorcycle accident, Maier started training at the beginning of July. In August the "Herminator" left with the other Austrian skiers for a training camp at Portillo in Chile.

Maier started promisingly at the camp: in the first four Super G practice runs only **Stefan Eberharter** was quicker. In the fifth run Maier recorded easily the fastest time of the day.

The whole team was delighted for the maestro, but their joy was short-lived. Too much air time and a resulting fall left Maier with a leg injury serious enough to cut short the training camp.

Atomic's alpine team at training camp in Portillo, Chile.



Benjamin Raich

–teenage star fulfils his promise

Double Olympic bronze medallist Benjamin Raich has his sights set on gold.



Action-man **Benjamin Raich** found sailing a relaxing change when he tried it for the first time in his life aboard Amer Sports One in Gothenburg.

Benjamin Raich is only 24 years old but he has already achieved a lot in his career. Having won the junior world championship five times as a teenager, 'Benji' was hailed as Austria's most gifted alpine skier for decades.

Unlike many other junior champions, Benjamin Raich has fulfilled his promise in the senior ranks of the sport. His achievements already include World Cup Slalom Champion 2001, a silver medal in the World Championships this year, and bronze medals in the slalom and alpine combined at the Salt Lake City Olympics.

Despite being 1.81 metres tall, Raich is quite lightly built: the young man weighs only 75 kilos. He is known as skilful technical skier; many people have likened his style to the great alpine magician **Ingemar Stenmark**. However, Raich does not regard agility as the only factor behind his success.

"Success is a combination of many factors. You need good equipment, fitness, technique and mental strength. Then you have got to put it all together," stresses Raich, a member of Atomic Racing Team.

"The mental side is particularly important. Everyone has similar times in practice, but it's a different story in competition. Sometimes there are even big time differences between medal places. I don't suppose I do anything differently from the others, but I have things well under control on the mental side."

Shortening the skis from 193 to 160 centimetres caused Raich as many problems as it did everyone else.

"The difference is huge. It wasn't easy to change to shorter skis, but we worked hard to get the best out of them. We were successful, as the results show."

Finns in the same stable

A number of Finnish alpinists, such as **Kalle Pa-**

lander and **Sami Uotila**, also joined Atomic Racing Team in the early summer.

"Kalle and Sami are good mates and it's nice to have them on the team. They fit in well with the international group."

Austria has always been one of the most successful countries in alpine sports. Every year seems to bring a fresh crop of promising youngsters.

"We have good training conditions and plenty of up-and-coming hopefuls. Every year there's new talent on show, but it's difficult to know which of them will become the stars of the future."

A native of the Austrian Tyrol, Raich prefers to train in his homeland in winter, but when summer arrives he packs his bags and skis and heads off for New Zealand. His goals for the coming season include success in the Super G as well.

"I want to go fast and I think I have good possibilities in the Super G too," says Raich, who likes speed and excitement in his free time as well. In addition to skiing, his hobbies include rock climbing, mountain biking, bungee jumping and tennis. The all-action youngster is not in the least bit phased by the risks of his chosen sport, although he does admit that the new skis have raised speeds too much.

"The new skis don't really affect slalom speeds, but in alpine sports everyone is practising harder and taking bigger risks. Injuries are all part of the sport. Anyway, you can get injured anywhere – even in your free time."

Definite plans

Raich won't be left with an empty head when his skiing career is over. He has graduated from the prestigious Stams Academy.

"I don't yet know what I would like to do after my career is over, but I don't think I will have any problems in that area. I like to work and I think I will probably study something in the field of commerce."

Raich has achieved some great triumphs in his career and they have already put him among the elite of the alpine skiing world. Despite this great success, many people think he can go even further. And the man's faith in himself tells the same story.

"I still have my best years in front of me. I believe I can stay at this level for another ten years. I've got my sights set on the next Olympics in Torino. Many skiers are still competitive long into their thirties. Olympic gold is my great ambition."

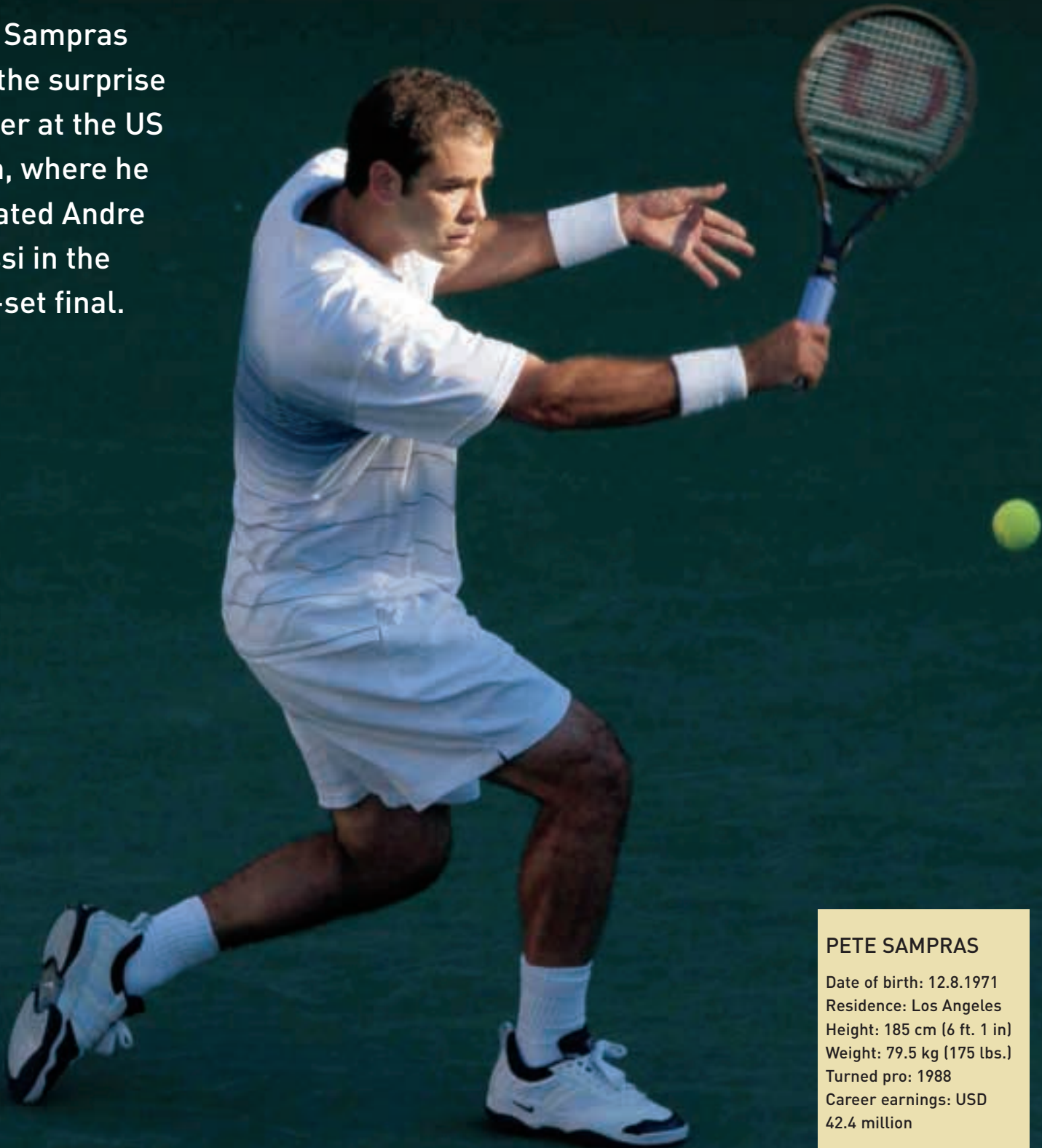


Slalom specialist **Benjamin "Benji" Raich** loves bungee jumping.



Pistol Pete does it

Pete Sampras was the surprise winner at the US Open, where he defeated Andre Agassi in the four-set final.



PETE SAMPRAS

Date of birth: 12.8.1971
Residence: Los Angeles
Height: 185 cm (6 ft. 1 in)
Weight: 79.5 kg (175 lbs.)
Turned pro: 1988
Career earnings: USD 42.4 million

Pete Sampras is still playing because he loves tennis and wants to compete.

again

Not many people would have picked the winner of the US Open men's title this year. **Pete Sampras** had been sparing in his court appearances in the run-up to the championships, preferring to concentrate on the big one with his coach **Paul Annacone**. It brought him his fifth US Open title. It had been over two years since Sampras won a tournament, and he had slipped to 32nd place on the ATP rankings. Sampras now has 14 Grand Slam victories to his name, two more than the man in second place, Roy Emerson.

When Sampras is playing at his best, he is very difficult to beat. His opponent in this year's US Open final, **Andre Agassi**, found that out – as did **Andy Roddick**, **Greg Rusedski** and others. Sampras really doesn't have any weaknesses. His serve isn't the fastest in the world, but it is deep and accurate. The half-volley is usually a defensive "forced" shot, but not for Sampras. He often launches an attack with a half-volley. His top-spin forehand and backhand shots are also strong, and it's all backed up with tactical expertise and a nerves of steel. Perhaps his only weakness is lack of mobility on clay – he has never won the Paris Open, the only Grand Slam event played on that surface.

Since turning professional in 1988, 31-year-old Pete Sampras has won 755 matches and lost 222. He has won the US Open on five occasions: 1990, 1993, 1995, 1996 and 2002. His Wimbledon victories came in 1993, 1994, 1995, 1997, 1998, 1999 and 2000, and Australian Open titles in 1994 and 1997.

After his win, Sampras said that he would take a couple of months to consider whether or not to continue his career. "I still love to play," he said, so perhaps he will.

Sampras has used the Wilson Pro Staff Original 6.0 throughout his entire professional career.



SERENA WILLIAMS

Date of birth: 26.9.1981
 Height: 173 cm (5 ft. 8 in.)
 Weight: 59 kg (130 lbs.)
 Turned pro: 1995
 Career earnings: USD over 9 million

Serena Williams had the time of her life in 2002. Only six other players in the history of the game have managed to win three consecutive Grand Slam tournaments: **Steffi Graf**, **Martina Navratilova**, **Billie Jean King**, **Margaret Smith**, **Maureen Connolly** and **Helen Wills**.

Three in row for Serena

Wilson has been the official US Open ball since 1979.



Serena and **Venus Williams** are clearly the brightest starts in women's professional tennis.

This year 20-year-old Serena won all the Grand Slam tournaments except the Australian Open, from which she was absent due to an ankle injury.

In the US Open she beat her sister Venus in two straight sets, 6-4, 6-3. Serena is only the seventh women player to win three consecutive Grand Slam tournaments. Serena's racquet is the Wilson Hyper Hammer 6.3.

SUUNTO'S OWN FREE DIVING WORLD RECORD BREAKER



Topi Lintukangas works for Suunto as a user-interface designer. The former free diving world record holder has only been involved in the sport for just over a year. He has also been a professional triathlete.

TEXT **RIITTA NIEMINEN** ■ PHOTOS **KARI KUUKKA** AND **TIMO RAUNIO**

Straight down

Former competitive swimmer, professional triathlete and free diving world champion, **Topi Lintukangas** works as a user-interface designer in Suunto's product development unit.

Last July in Turkey, **Topi Lintukangas**, 29, set a new world record for the purest and most demanding form of free diving, unassisted constant ballast, at 48 metres. Later the same month **David Lee** went one better when he took the record to 51 metres, but Lintukangas has high hopes of regaining the title in Greece this autumn.

The road to the world record was sinfully simple for Lintukangas, who went from novice diver to world champion in just one year.

A year ago last spring Lintukangas had never dived deeper than seven metres. His employer, Suunto, sent Lintukangas on a scuba diving course. The young man wanted a decent pair of fins, like the ones used in

Luc Besson's classic film about free diving - *The Big Blue*. Lintukangas found his fins and went to the pool to see how far he could swim underwater. A hundred metres proved to be no problem at all.

A month later Lintukangas broke the Finnish distance diving record. Then he tried depth diving, got into the Finnish World Championship Team, and dived with fins to a depth of 51 metres.

At this stage the bottom came to the top: the waters in and around Finland are so shallow that depth diving can only be practised safely by throwing one's fins in the corner. Lintukangas therefore decided to turn to the purest form of free diving, unassisted constant ballast, which means swimming down

head first using the breast stroke. The equipment used comprises a neoprene suit, a nose-clip, which facilitates pressure equalisation, goggles and a weight belt.

Meditative sport

Free diving is based on extreme fitness and a comprehensive understanding of physiology. The free diver has good reason to know and respect the limits of his own performance, because pushing too far will certainly backfire. Free diving is a demanding and dangerous sport. In spite of safety precautions, the diver is very much on his own in the water.

On the other hand: "Relaxation and tranquillity are the keys to free diving. It's a very



meditative activity. It's an exceptionally soothing experience when you slip into the darkness, eyes closed, perfectly relaxed and vital functions just ticking over," says Lintukangas.

The slowdown in vital functions is due to activation of the so-called diving reflex. The free diver uses this automatic reflex to advantage on deep dives. Under pressure the body adapts to the situation: the diving reflex slows down the heart rate significantly, reduces blood pressure, and diverts blood flow from the extremities to the vital organs.

The respiration centre of the central nervous system registers the partial pressures of oxygen and carbon dioxide in the arterial blood, and activates the breathing reflex, a compul-

sive need to breathe, when the partial pressure of carbon dioxide exceeds a certain threshold. The body of an experienced free diver tolerates carbon dioxide better than an ordinary person and can delay the breathing reflex for a short time. Even after the breathing reflex has kicked in, the diver must still remain relaxed.

Plenty of training, but not too much

Lintukangas prepares his body for deep diving by first making two practice dives with empty lungs, the first to 12-15 metres and the second to 15-20 metres. He descends very slowly to the base depth and stays there holding on to the rope. The pulse drops in a few seconds to as little as a third of what it is on the surface after a long cycle of deep breaths.

Training includes practice at holding one's breath and general conditioning work – rowing, cycling, swimming, running – and dives, sometimes deep, sometimes shallow for a long time over a large distance.

"I make a lot of practice dives, but you have to be careful about recovery. The sport is psychologically demanding. It involves fear and battling against the breathing reflex; you have to psyche yourself up to conquer them. Too much training is a bad thing because you can lose your desire to dive," he explains.

Lintukangas has not yet reached his limit: "I believe that I can dive with fins to 70-80 metres, and without fins to 60 metres. My apnea times are already sufficient for that."

Perhaps this autumn.

Suunto D3: FOR FREE DIVING

■ **Topi Lintukangas** wears the **Suunto D3** on his wrist during practice and competition dives. This light-weight and streamlined wristop computer has been designed especially for free diving.

D3 calculates and records the diving depth and time at one-second intervals. It is an exceptionally good analytical tool as each dive can be transferred to a computer and displayed as a graphical presentation. Surface time is given in minutes and seconds. D3 can also be set up to make diving time alarms, for instance at 30-second intervals.

Scuba divers can also use D3 as a second exposure time meter. It is not, however, a dive computer and does not calculate decompression times.

Same sport, many variations

No-one knows how many free divers there are in the world. Not even the sport's international bodies, the Swiss A.I.D.A. (Association Internationale pour le Développement de l'Apnée) and the American FREE, have any figures.

Systematic training in the sport has been under way for only a short time. And it is not always easy to draw the line: in principle, the sport encompasses all forms of diving without breathing apparatus – even spearfishing.

Nowadays there are a number of separate free diving disciplines, but they all share a common requirement: just one lung-full of air.

Static apnea means holding one's breath while floating face down on the surface of a pool or the

D3



sea. The record is 8 minutes 6 second. **Dynamic apnea** is distance diving in a pool or the sea using basic equipment. The record is 181 metres.

Constant weight or constant ballast is depth diving and the most traditional form of free diving. The diver uses basic equipment and a weight belt. There is no limit on the amount of weight, but the diver must bring the same weight back to the surface. Weights are not used if the water is so warm that a suit is unnecessary. The record is 86 metres. **Constant ballast, unassisted** means diving with weights but without fins. The weights are the same on the descent and ascent. The diver may not touch the rope. The record is 51 metres.

Variable weight is depth diving with basic equipment. The diver is pulled down by a sled that can weigh a maximum of 30 kg, but abandons it at the maximum depth and ascends by pulling himself up the rope. The record is 131 metres. **No limits** is an exhibition sport rather than a genuine competitive discipline. The diver descends on a sled of unlimited weight, and ascends with the assistance of an air-filled balloon.

The record-breaking duel in the 1970s and 1980s between Frenchman **Jacques Mayol** and Italian **Enzo Majorca**, two giants in the world of no limits free diving, was the inspiration for **Luc Besson's** film, *The Big Blue*. Mayol broke the magical 100 metres barrier in 1976. Now the record stands at 165 metres.

(records: www.apnee.net)

APPOINTMENTS

■ **Urs Maron** will join Atomic Austria GmbH at the beginning of November 2002 in the newly created position of Director Product Marketing. Urs Maron has been working for IIC - Intersport International Corporation in Bern as a business unit manager.

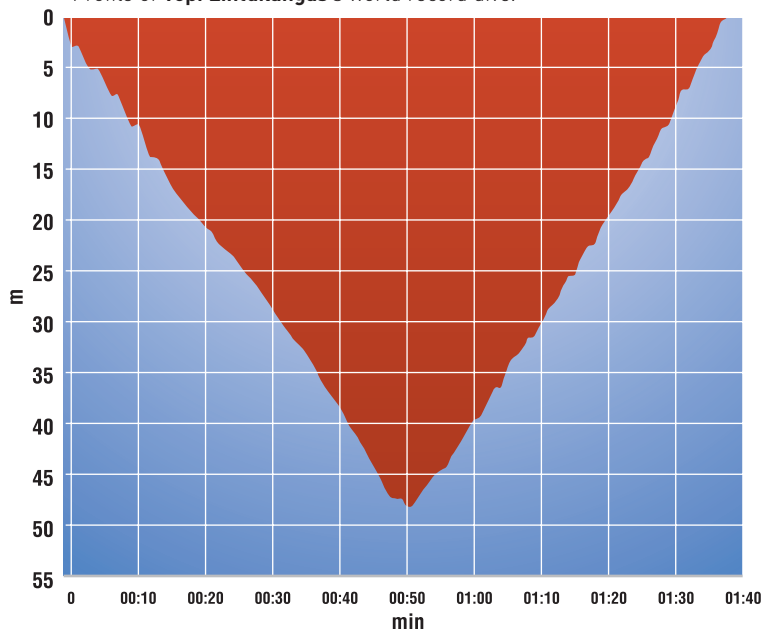
■ **Thomas Ammer** has been appointed as Project Manager "Brand Identity" with effect from 1st July 2002. He has previously held a position in Amer Sports Deutschland GmbH, where he acted very successfully for three years as Marketing Manager for the Atomic brand in the German market.

■ **Laurence Applebaum** has been appointed as Amer Sports Europe's Business Director, Racquet & Team Sports Europe.

■ **Jim Baugh**, President of Wilson Sporting Goods Co., has been appointed as General Manager of Wilson Golf. Mr. Baugh will undertake this role in addition to his existing duties.

Photo: Kari Kuukka

Profile of **Topi Lintukangas's** world record dive.



Jarkko Nieminen

■ Jarkko Nieminen won the Tampere Challenger tournament at the end of July. Nieminen's rapid climb up the ATP-rankings began at last year's Stockholm Open. At the beginning of September he was ranked 31st.



VOR ATTRACTS WIDE AUDIENCE

■ The round-the-world **Volvo Ocean Race** attracted a great deal of interest. The race was regularly featured in 1,535 newspapers with a combined circulation of over 218 million and a total readership of 606 million. The race was followed on television by almost 800 million people, and there were over 3 million unique visitors going to the VOR's website 17,5 million times. Amer Sports' own website was visited 110,000 times.

The most important outcome of the race from Amer Sports' perspective is that the profile of both the company and its brands was significantly raised. The majority of customers attended as guests at one or more of the race's various stopovers. With the exception of New Zealand, Amer Sports has a sales organisation in all of the stopover cities.

The winner of the race was Illbruck Challenge of Germany. Amer Sports One was third and the all-female crew of Amer Sports Too came last in eighth place. However, Amer Sports Too easily attracted the most media interest.



GOLF

Deep Red 425

The Deep Red 425 driver, the latest addition to Wilson's Deep Red product family, is now on sale in the United States. The head of the club is one of the biggest currently on the market. The Deep Red models have been a great success. According to Golf Datatech, Wilson's share of the US market for drivers and fairway woods has tripled this year. Sales of Wilson irons have risen 55 per cent.



RACQUETS

Triad 3.0 110

Triad 3.0 110 is Wilson's new model for women. The best-selling racquet in the United States is the 115 square inch Triad 3.0, followed by Wilson's Hammer 5.2 and the choice of many professionals, the Pro Staff 6.1.



[SKI_X_heroes]



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