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BADMINTON

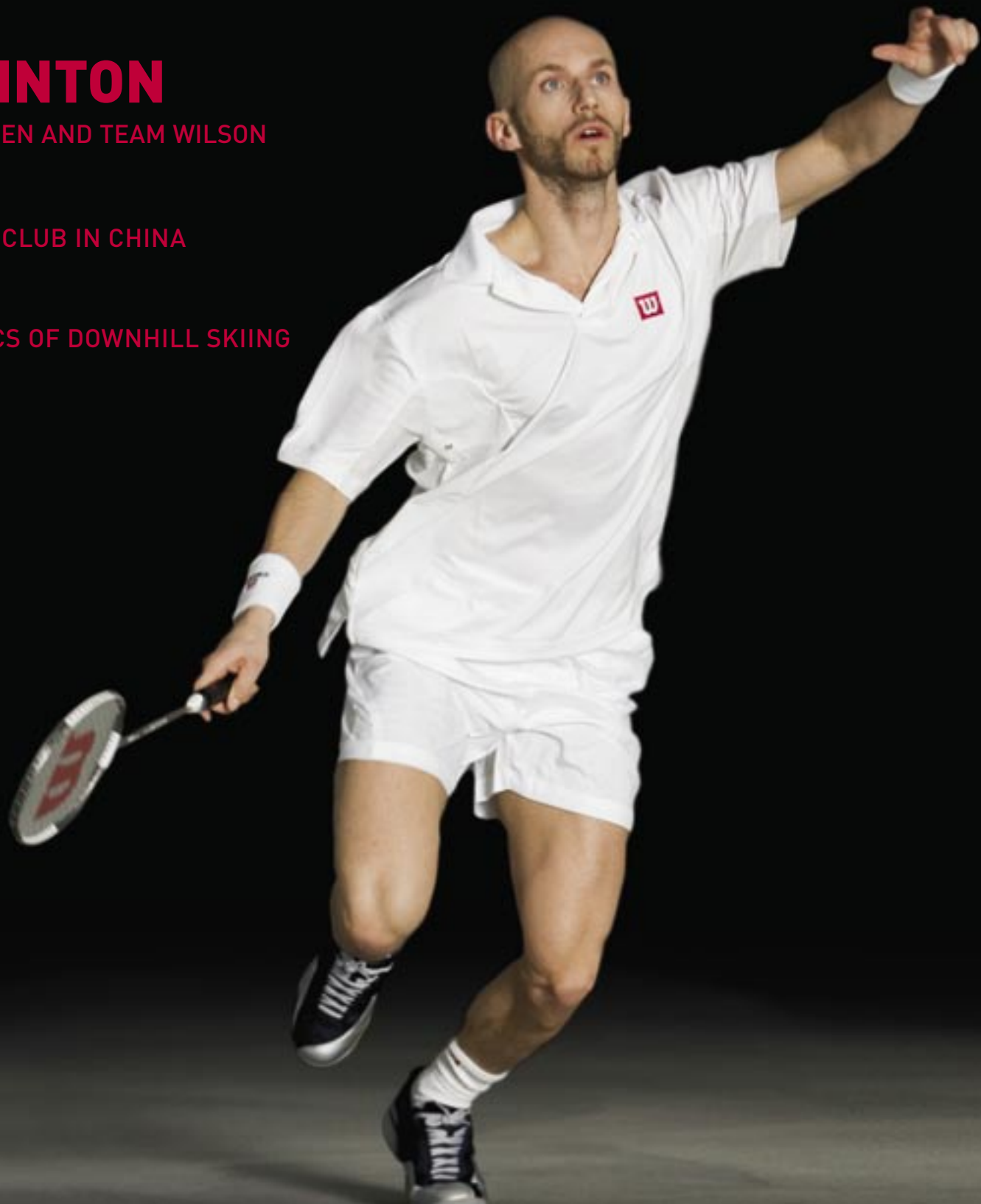
ANDERS BOESEN AND TEAM WILSON

FITNESS

AT A FITNESS CLUB IN CHINA

RESEARCH

BIOMECHANICS OF DOWNHILL SKIING



FOR TOP ATHLETES AND ENTHUSIASTS

AMER'S FULL-YEAR RESULT was made public in February. 2004 was a year of favorable trends in the sports equipment market. In this issue, our interview with CEO Roger Talermo provides an in-depth look at Amer's result for 2004 and the outlook for the year ahead (see page 26).

Wilson is the world's leading tennis brand. Our Racquet Sports business, which posted record earnings in 2004, also includes squash and badminton. Wilson has recently zeroed in on badminton. This issue showcases this exciting racquet sport. It's a game everyone knows and which is easy to get into. Many people have got their first feel for the game in casual matches, but when it's played by the best of the best, it's a whole different game. This issue presents Wilson's contract players and the new nanotechnology badminton racquets (see pages 6-13).

China is a hot topic. We decided to look at China from the point of view of sports and exercise – and find out what the Chinese think about exercise and how fitness grabs the people of Shanghai (page 20). The massive Chinese market is full of opportunities – which we're keeping a close eye on.

Atomic has been spectacularly successful in the World Cup and Alpine Skiing World Championships – many athletes have skied their way to victory on Atomic skis. Partnering up with top athletes beefs up our R&D as well. Atomic's special R&D projects also include its partnership with the University of Salzburg. The Christian Doppler Laboratory carries out basic research on the biomechanics of skiing (see page 16).



Tea Saari

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THE UNIVERSITY OF SALZBURG'S CHRISTIAN DOPPLER LABORATORY ESTABLISHES A SCIENTIFIC FOUNDATION FOR DOWNHILL SKIING EQUIPMENT R&D.

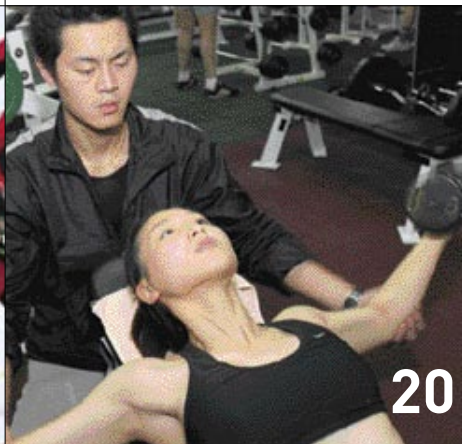
THE ASIAN FITNESS MARKET IS MASSIVE, BUT STILL IN ITS INFANCY. SHANGHAI IS SHOWING THE WAY.



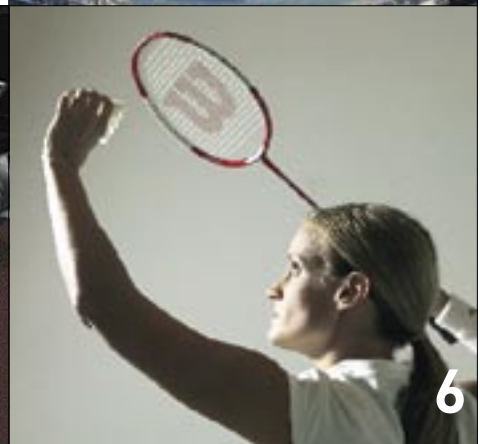
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20



6



HOT DOWNHILL SKIS. Atomic sx:b5 is the first Supercross series ski with a Beta 5 structure. It's ideal for hard slopes and high speeds, but flexes well for turning on soft snow, too.

A CLUB FOR EVERY SITUATION. In the Wilson Staff Pi5 Performance range of irons, the design of the club heads changes progressively from long to short irons. Thanks to this, the long irons provide a low trajectory and high accuracy, and the short irons provide higher ball flight. The clubs feature True Temper Dynamic Gold steel shafts and a very large sweet spot.



ONE TOOL IS ENOUGH. The Suunto D9 dive computer incorporates all dive-critical instruments. Among other features, D9 indicates decompression status and estimated air-time remaining. In addition, the computer has a digital compass and depth gauge.



RELIABLE NANOTECHNOLOGY. Wilson's new n3 is a tennis racket for the general player, featuring a large racket head that forgives minor mistakes. As in all nCode rackets, the voids between the carbon fibers are filled with silicone oxide crystals.

HIT FASTER. DeMarini EVO™ is the first Half & Half all-composite slow pitch softball bat. The bat combines a Flex-Tuned composite handle with an Evolution composite barrel. Evo's Half & Half optimizes balance in the bat handle and enables the player to hit the ball further with less effort.



A fun but **tough**

Badminton is an easy game to get into. Learning the basics is a cinch. But mastery takes a long time. At the competitive level, there are two interesting badminton events coming up. The World Badminton Championships will be played in America for the first time, and the next Olympics will be held in China, the top badminton country.

This is one way of playing badminton: The sun gets in your eyes when you serve. That doesn't dampen your spirits. But then a light wind carries the shuttlecock – which you aimed at the center of the field – right to the back corner. Oh well – the most important thing is to get exercise!

This is another: Your opponent snaps into action. He lunges for the shuttlecock – and, thanks to his lightning-quick reflexes, just about manages to hit it back. Your frantic back-and-forth exchange continues for a few more seconds. Sweat beads on your forehead and your heart is beating at a fast and steady rate. But you can't afford to think about your fatigue – you've got to be in the zone all the time.

Two different situations. One game. Badminton is suitable for many playing styles. Many active badminton players got their first feel for the game at the beach, in a park, or the countryside. Thanks to the lightness of the racket and shuttlecock, it's a really accessible game.

Whereas tennis rookies end up spending most of their time running frantically after the ball, beginning badminton players are soon enjoying long exchanges. What's more, badminton is quite a cheap sport. Court rental fees are reasonable and you can pick up a very good racket for just 50 euros.

The accessibility of badminton also works against it. Because anyone can pick up a racket and start playing the game quickly, many people are content to just play light-heartedly and do not sign up for proper training. By contrast, just about everyone considers beginners' courses a must in tennis. Solo learning is no substitute for guided training – a coach can always introduce the player to the secrets of the game faster and better.

WHETHER YOU PLAY BADMINTON for fun in the backyard or more seriously on a court, it's a tough sport. You have to keep on the move on the small court if you want to return every shuttlecock.


Players only get short breathers between serves – and this steps up the intensity of the game. The work/rest ratio of top players is generally about 1:1, and never more than 1:2. In other words, after a five-second exchange, the player gets a breather of no more than ten seconds. During an hour-long badminton match, the player performs the same workload as he would playing three hours of tennis.

BADMINTON DEMANDS excellent fitness from serious players. But more than anything else, it's a game of skill. If you're not on top of your strokes, the game will not be kind to you. Speed is also highly important in this fast-paced game.

Thanks to its versatility and fun, many top athletes play badminton to round out their training. Unfortunately, badminton is not without its risks for top athletes, either. The Achilles tendons are put under great stress, especially if the correct movement technique isn't used. Hitting with a light racket stresses the shoulder as well. Lunging for shuttlecocks subjects the back to rapid movements and nasty torso twists. Fitness training is essential for the active player. You must also remember to warm up properly before each game.

Badminton originated in India. From there, the sport spread to other Asian countries and was introduced to Europe by the Brits.

■ Text by Harri Lindfors ■ Photos by Getty Images



game

The popularity of the sport surged after it was first included in the Olympics in 1992.

Its Olympic status finally turned what had once been viewed as a backyard game into a respected and acknowledged competitive sport.

According to a study carried out by the International Badminton Federation a few years ago, there are close to 225,000,000 badminton players in the world. And almost two million of them are registered enthusiasts.

The number of players grows steadily each year. Many racket sports centers are adding new courts for badminton play.

China is the world's top badminton country, both in terms of the number of players and its success. It is estimated that one-third of the world's badminton players are Chinese. In Europe, badminton is most popular in the UK.

Although badminton is played in virtually every part of the world, success in championships is shared by only a few countries. The Olympics are representative, as only seven countries have won medals in Olympic badminton: China, Indonesia, Korea, Malaysia, the Netherlands, Great Britain – and Denmark.

DENMARK IS A NICE LITTLE CONTENDER amongst the great badminton countries. The Danes immediately took to the sport once it had been introduced to Europe. Maybe the Danes had a need for a new indoor sport, as Denmark hasn't traditionally been strong in winter sports. Over the years, the country has developed a robust badminton culture that fosters excellence – and success always breeds success.

Badminton has evolved at a great rate in recent decades, becoming much more physical. Advances in equipment have had a great impact on this trend. Only a few decades ago, the rackets were heavy, made of wood with steel shafts. Today's highly advanced rackets are

made of carbon fiber and weigh under 100 grams – enabling players to hit harder. The highest measured initial velocity of a shuttlecock has been 350 kilometers an hour!

At the top level, the Asians in particular are renowned for their physical and aggressive playing style that emphasizes spectacular high smashes. Strength plays a great role in the physical playing style.

In addition, the tempo is very fast in modern badminton. The acceleration of the game's speed is evident in both the movements and strokes – the feints are faster and the shots shorter.

The Europeans have countered the physical approach with tactical play. However, tactics haven't developed as rapidly as the physical style. But all top players train professionally these days, and tactics will thus assume a greater significance in the future. This is clearly evident in coaching.

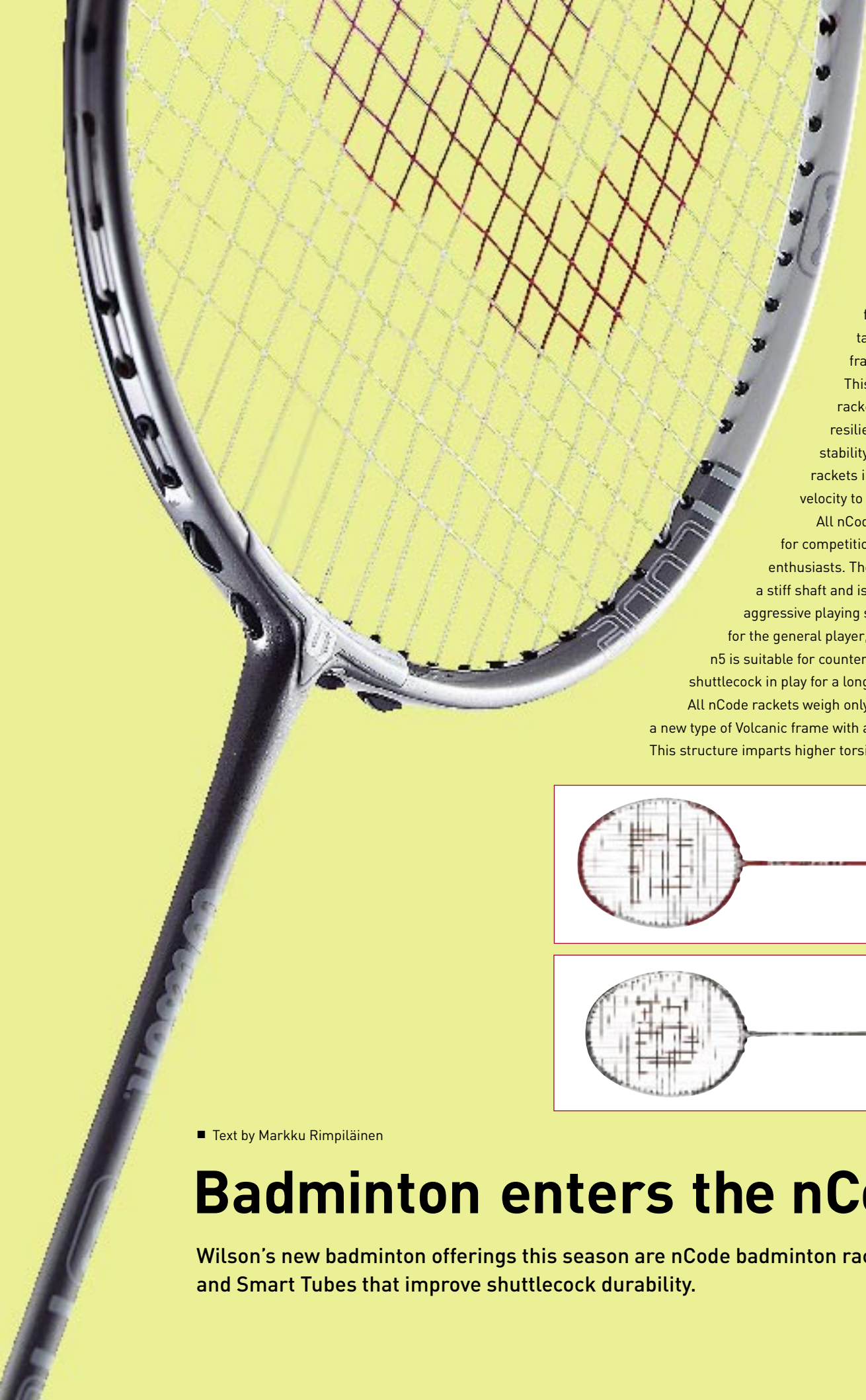
Handing out Olympic medals between only a few countries does no good to the growth of the sport. Accordingly, the International Badminton Federation wants to spread the word about the sport to more countries. The Federation has a particularly great desire to crack the highly contested US market.

NEXT FALL, BADMINTON FANS might see this dream come true, because the World Badminton Championships will be held in the US for the first time. In August 2005, it'll be shuttlecock time at the Mighty Ducks' home arena in Anaheim, California.

The championships will showcase a high caliber of sportsmanship – that said, the venue is massive, and we can only hope that the organizers manage to create a great mood. There will no doubt be many representatives of the large Chinese-American community in the audience.

True-blue badminton fans will definitely be hoping that the Americans will watch the games on TV. If the championships are a hit, they'll raise the profile of the sport virtually overnight.

The biggest celebration of badminton is four years down the line, when China hosts the Olympics. The sport's dominating country will definitely want to show the sports world who's the top dog. And one thing's for sure: at the Beijing games, there definitely won't be enough seats for all those who want to watch the badminton finals, no matter how large the venue is. ■



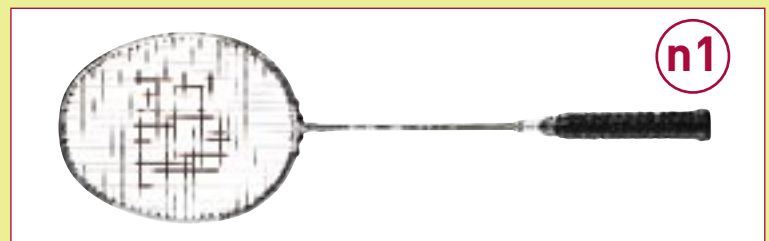
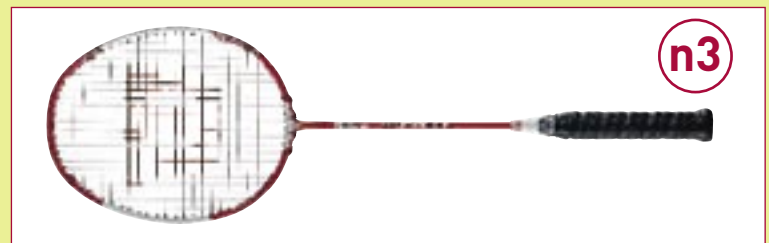
nCode rackets

Wilson has now introduced nanotechnology to badminton as well.

In the new nCode rackets, the microscopically tiny voids between the Hyper Carbon fibers are filled with silicone oxide crystals, resulting in a durable and fracture-resistant structure. This makes it possible to make rackets that are light, very resilient, and boast high torsional stability. In skilled hands, nCode rackets impart a tremendous initial velocity to shuttlecocks.

All nCode rackets are designed for competition players and skilled active enthusiasts. The head-heavy n1 features a stiff shaft and is designed for a hard-hitting, aggressive playing style. The n3 is a racket for the general player, while the medium-stiff n5 is suitable for counterattackers who keep the shuttlecock in play for a long time.

All nCode rackets weigh only 87 grams. They feature a new type of Volcanic frame with a triangular cross-section. This structure imparts higher torsional stability to the frame.



■ Text by Markku Rimpiläinen

Badminton enters the nCode era

Wilson's new badminton offerings this season are nCode badminton rackets and Smart Tubes that improve shuttlecock durability.



Vision racquets

The highest-performance racquets in the Vision range are suitable for competition players and demanding enthusiasts. Numerous technologies are incorporated to enhance playability.

The frames and shafts are made of Hyper Carbon. Resilience and stiffness are enhanced by their ISOGRID structure of cross-woven carbon fibers. The frame features the Stable Step system for improved torsional stability. The racquet handle has a Pro Flex Top Cap grip positioned at the thumb – it is pleasantly soft and improves grip accuracy. Iso-Zorb grommets cushion vibration when the shuttlecock is struck outside of the racquet’s sweet spot.

The shaft of the V 2 Classic racquet is rated as extra stiff. It’s designed exclusively for extremely hard-hitting aggressive top players. V 4 is an intermediate model, combining features of both aggressive and general players’ racquets. V 6 is meant for general players, while V 8 is for defensive players and juniors.

Vision racquets V 10, V 12 and V 14 are designed for enthusiasts and offer good performance at an affordable price. The racquets feature the same ISOGRID structure as the top models in the Vision range. Their pricetag is lower because certain technical features have been left out. The racquets weigh only 82 grams.

Shuttlecocks

Wilson’s greatest shuttlecock innovation is not actually a shuttlecock – but rather its packaging. The cap of the Smart Tube maintains an optimal moisture level inside the tube. When the air dries out inside the tube, the cap releases moisture, while in humid conditions, the cap binds it. This ensures that the feathers of the shuttlecocks do not dry out and become fragile. The Smart Tube increases the lifespan of shuttlecocks.



Shoes

Blitz is the state-of-the-art in badminton shoes – and it has now upgraded to the next level. Its Dura Last sole rubber is softer than before. In addition, the shoe covering material is now lighter. Blitz is purpose-designed for badminton. Its flexible sole provides an extremely good feel for the court.



ANDERS BOESEN

Anders Boesen is one of the world's top players. He is ranked fourteenth on the men's singles list. Boesen aims to consolidate his position among the best 16 players on the ranking list – this would enable him to enter the World Badminton Championships as a ranked player. "My goal for the season is a medal at the world championships," says Boesen.



When Boesen unleashes his explosive jump smash, the shuttlecock hurtles off with a loud crack. In Boesen's hands, the racket head achieves tremendous speeds. Nevertheless, he considers himself a predominantly defensive player.

"I play more in the classic European style – I avoid mistakes and control both the game and the shuttlecock. But these days you don't get points for free. You have to know how to win your exchanges."

You won't find many players anywhere in the world whose physical condition and technique are a match for Boesen's. Lately, he has also incorporated mental training into his program.

"Players are now very evenly matched, so the mental aspect plays a very great role. When a match has lasted for over 40 minutes and the players start to get tired, the key to victory is in one's mental endurance. And you have to control the game at the mental level as well if you want to win it."

Although Denmark is one of the strongest countries for badminton in Europe, the country's badminton association has hired a Chinese technique coach for the national team.

"Our coach, Zhang Qiang, is great. He knows how players from the Far East hit and is helping us to develop our approach to the game so that we're effective against Asian players."

Team Wilson

Top European badminton players are members of Team Wilson.

These are the players to watch. ■ Text by Markku Rimpiläinen ■ Photos by Kari Kuukka



AAMIR GHAFFAR

Aamir Ghaffar seems to always have a good time.

He smiles and talks a lot. Could this be the reason that Ghaffar, who is of Pakistani origin, is very popular in Middlesex, his hometown in England?

"I think I'm lucky to have an Asian background but live in Europe. Because of my roots, I'm given lots of coverage on Asian TV channels, which are also watched by audiences in Europe," says Ghaffar.

2004 was an inconsistent year for Ghaffar. In September, he won the Canadian Open – but a month later, he was eliminated from both the Danish Open and the German Open championships in the very first round. After that, Ghaffar got back on track. In the Irish Open, he reached the quarter finals.

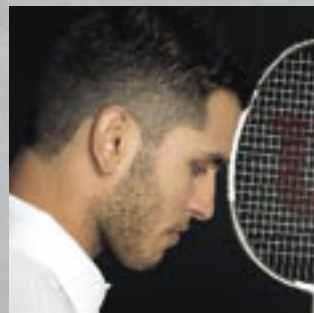
"Men's singles are very unpredictable these days. Even in large tournaments, it's happened that the first-ranked player is eliminated in the first round. Before, two or three players dominated the tournaments. Now there are 25 players who are capable of beating each other at any time. The games are tough and the outcomes hard to predict."

At the end of the year, Ghaffar was ranked 34th, but he hopes he'll rise into the top 20 this year. Ghaffar's best ranking to date has been 27.

"The differences between the players are due to tiny factors. One player might be lucky in the draw, while

another has a good day in an important match. You've just got to keep beating higher-ranked players. Then you get the self-confidence you need. In the end, success always comes down to self-confidence. If you play badly all year, your self-confidence is gone."

► continues





PERNILLE HARDER

The Dane Pernille Harder changed partners in women's doubles last October. Harder and Mette Schjoldager parted amicably.

"We both needed fresh inspiration. For me, the change means that I'm now the more experienced partner. I can make more tactical decisions on the court, because my new partner, Helle Nilsen, is younger than I am," says Harder.

Their partnership has got off to a good start. In the finals of the Irish Open in December, the Danish pair beat the Malaysian Pek Siah Lim and Hooi Yee Chor. In spite of this, Harder tries to curb her optimism.

"Some things work, some don't. When you have a new partner, you must not set your expectations too high at first, because it takes some time to get in synch. We still have a lot of work to do together."

Harder is experienced enough to know exactly what types of pairs succeed in the doubles.

"You have to be able to trust your partner, because you're totally dependent on her. Or maybe you yourself make some mistake – but that could be because your partner had not moved on the court in the way you'd agreed. You have to be able to communicate and keep to the tactics you've agreed on."



ANU WECKSTRÖM

The small nation of Denmark is a badminton superpower. This is why top players from many other countries live and train in Copenhagen. One of them is Anu Weckström, a Finn. She moved to Denmark eight years ago.

There, Weckström trains at the International Badminton Academy. Her coaches are the academy's own Lars Uhre and Michael Kjeldsen. Uhre also coaches the Finnish national team. Weckström has been working with the Danish duo for a long time.

Last fall, Weckström got bad news: a stress fracture was found in her leg. She had to miss many tournaments.

"My ranking dropped, even though I'd intended to raise it," she says.

Now she's back in training. She's got a lot of work ahead of her, as she'll have to improve her current ranking (49th) before the World Badminton Championships.

Although China dominates the world of women's badminton, there are enough opponents to go around in Europe.

"The standard of players in Europe is better than it was. We have players who've got what it takes to play a good game against the Chinese."

JOHANNA PERSSON

The Swedish Olympic Committee made a wise choice when it granted coaching support to the mixed doubles team of Johanna Persson-Fredrik Bergström.

Persson and Bergström battled their way into the quarter finals in the Athens Olympics. Then they faced off against the dynamic Chinese duo of Ling Gao-Jun Zhang, who finally won the entire tournament. Ling Gao also won gold in the women's doubles.

"We played very well at the Olympics. 2004 has been the best year of my career," says Persson.

She has played with Bergström for just under two years. They work together very well as a team.

"We started out very strongly, then floundered for a bit, and are now making headway again. Fredrik takes the back, and I the front, because Fredrik hits really hard. We plan our tactics together. Knowing how to communicate is very important to us."

Persson and Bergström don't have as much time to train together as they'd like. Persson lives in Stockholm, Bergström in Uumaja.

"Many other pairs have more time to train together. We have to solve things our own way. In Sweden, we train in Stockholm. From time to time, we travel to the Netherlands, Denmark, and France to train and play training matches."

After the Olympics, Persson was forced to rest. Training for the Olympics resulted in a stress injury, which she decided to treat only after the games. Then the fall went well – the pair won the Norwegian International Championships and the Scottish International Badminton Championships. They reached the semi-finals in the highly respected Bitburger Open in Saarbrücken. At the end of the season, the pair was ranked 11th.

Persson also plays women's doubles in the Swedish national team, but her main game is mixed doubles. Playing against hard-hitting men does not make her nervous.

"If a tall guy smashes hard, it's hard to return his strokes. But poor or stupid strokes are easy to return, even if they've been hit hard."

It's already public knowledge that her partner, Fredrik Bergström, will not stay in the game until the Beijing Olympics.

"I don't know yet what I'll do when Fredrik quits. Maybe I'll go back to singles."

Off the court, Persson studies psychology. "My game has benefited a great deal from my studies. Everyone trains hard, but only some win. It's a question of mental skill." ■



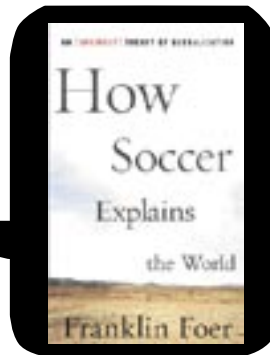


Books

Franklin Foer:
**HOW SOCCER EXPLAINS
 THE WORLD: AN UNLIKELY
 THEORY OF GLOBALIZATION**
 HarperCollins 2004

Soccer is much more than a game, or even a way of life.

According to Franklin Foer, it is a perfect window into the crosscurrents of today's world. Soccer clubs and their fans don't represent geographic areas; they stand for social classes and political ideologies. Taking the reader from Brazil to Bosnia and from Italy to Iran, Foer's book chronicles how soccer can illuminate the faultlines of a society, such as poverty and racism.



Daron Rahlves and other elite skiers compete in the final of the Alpine World Cup at Lenzerheide on 9–13 March.



Online

- ▶ All about the Four Hills Tournament. Background information, links, and daily news about the year's premier ski jumping event. In German.
www.vierschanzen.org
- ▶ A huge and informative site about ski jumping. In German.
www.skispringen.com
- ▶ The German fan site of ski jumper Janne Ahonen. See Janne Ahonen smile.
www.janne-ahonen.com
- ▶ The biggest and best news site devoted to badminton around the world.
www.worldbadminton.net
- ▶ The excellent site of Ski Racing magazine, which is published in the United States. Information and news about alpine skiing and Nordic sports.
www.skiracing.com



Atomic

BEST QUOTE

"It wasn't that perfect. You can never achieve perfection."
 Janne Ahonen after the Willingen ski jumping competition on January 9, 2005. At Willingen, Ahonen jumped a hill-record of 152 meters – 22 meters beyond the hill's K point. His jump took him almost to the outrun.



What's on?

MARCH

March 8–13
ALL ENGLAND OPEN 2005
 BIRMINGHAM, ENGLAND
 This is the tournament all badminton players are waiting for – traditions and good cheer, year after year.

March 9–13
ALPINE WORLD CUP FINALS
 LENZERHEIDE, SWITZERLAND
 How many World Cups will Bode Miller take home? We'll see in the finals.

March 17–20
FREESTYLE WORLD SKI CHAMPIONSHIPS
 RUKA, FINLAND
 Never before have freestyle championships been held this far north. The moguls run – Battery Run – is a sight to behold.

March 19–23
FIS NORDIC JUNIOR WORLD SKI CHAMPIONSHIPS
 ROVANIEMI, FINLAND
 Featuring the future stars of ski jumping and crosscountry skiing.

APRIL

April 7–10
THE MASTERS
 AUGUSTA, USA
 The first major golf tournament of the year – and always a highly anticipated event. Betting on the winners already began at the end of 2004.

April 27–30
SQUASH EUROPEAN TEAM CHAMPIONSHIPS
 AMSTERDAM, THE NETHERLANDS
 Squash is typically an individual game – and so team competitions are always eagerly awaited events.

Suunto K-95 When tactics are key

■ Text by Jussi-Pekka Aukia
■ Photos by Marja Helander

The Suunto K-95 TAC compass helps competitive yachtsmen to choose the right tactics and react rapidly to changing wind conditions.

The differences between modern racing sailboats are marginal. Moreover, the skills of the yachtsmen tend to be evenly matched. Victory in a race depends on the right choice and execution of tactics. In addition, it's vital to keep track of small changes, or shifts, in the angle of the wind.

Suunto's K-95 compass is a tactical tool for Olympic course or round the buoys racing. The working principle of the compass is simple. When the wind direction changes the course of the boat, the compass shows the exact change in the wind angle. The green and red sectors of the compass indicate a lift or an unfavorable shift in the wind. When the wind angle shifts, the needle of the compass moves into the red or green sector.

Before the race is on, K-95 indicates the favored end of the starting line, enabling you to steer clear into the wind without risking being blocked by the other competitors. When sailing close-hauled, K-95 helps you choose the ideal tacking angle and to maintain it in changing wind conditions. On the running legs, it tells you which tack gives the best angle.

On the close-hauled legs, a competitor must simultaneously choose the ideal close-hauled angle to the wind, accurately assess the wind speed and direction, and set the sails correctly. On top of this, you must keep track of what the other competitors are doing.

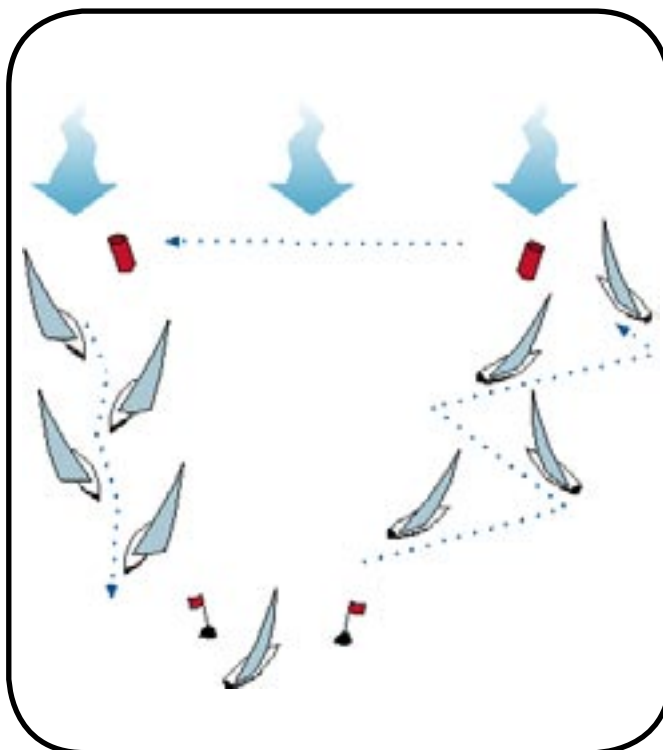
When sailing, there's no such thing as a perfect performance. One of the attractions of the sport is that you can always improve your performance.

The sector in which the boat is as close-hauled as possible is quite narrow. The challenge is increased by the fact that the speed and direction of the wind change constantly, and so the boat can easily drift off its tacking course.

If you sail too close to the wind, the distance is shortened, but speed drops. And if you sail too free, you not only lose speed, but also lengthen the distance. The latter error tends to be cumulative, leading the boat further and further off course. ■



K-95 is supplied with flush mounting that screws into the deck. This makes it easy to detach the compass for transport. When detached, the mount hole is covered with a hatch. K-95 is also available with mast/bulkhead and surface mounting.



1. When the wind direction has been set before the start, the compass frees you from having to do mental calculations and automatically shows the favored end of the starting line.

2. After the start, Suunto K-95 helps you keep an optimum course to windward and maintain your chosen heading in variable wind conditions.

3. When running with the wind, the compass helps you navigate the best course to the downwind buoy, maintain the chosen course in variable wind conditions, and choose the tack that gives you the best angle.



The snow lab

The era of trial and error is over in downhill skiing equipment R&D. The Christian Doppler Laboratory specializes in the biomechanics of skiing. Its research is shedding light on the real needs of downhill skiers.



The techniques employed in all types of skiing – alpine, crosscountry, ski jumping, and snowboarding alike – have changed radically during the past decade. This fact is well known by both competitive skiing pros and skilled enthusiasts. New techniques are evolving at breathtaking speed, ushering in new challenges – and, to meet them, equipment manufacturers must roll out innovations at an ever-faster rate.

The new Christian Doppler Laboratory of the University of Salzburg's Institute of Sports Science seeks to establish a scientific footing for the continuous product advances unveiled by sports equipment manufacturers.

"Until now, about 80 percent of new downhill skis and their new technical features have been developed on the basis of trial and error. While the intentions behind these efforts were certainly worthy, the consistent basic research – such as that used to develop new carving ski technology, for example – has been almost completely nonexistent," says Professor **Erich Müller**, the head of the Christian Doppler (CD) Laboratory.

"It's our task to perform this basic research, assessing the biomechanics of skiing through field testing. On the basis of our results, it's finally possible to develop equipment to meet the actual, tested needs of different types of skiers, both crosscountry and downhill." ▶ continues

■ Text by Tapio Nurminen
■ Photos by Christian Doppler Laboratory and Rami Lappalainen

What kinds of forces are the joints of skiers subjected to when carving? How should skis be designed to minimize stresses? These are some of the questions that the research of the Christian Doppler Laboratory seeks to answer.

Atomic is one of the two large private sponsors of the CD Laboratory. The other is BTM, a producer of infrared cabins. About half of the lab's funding comes from public sources.

"For the first time, we now have the financial resources for long-term research into skiing biomechanics. We have guaranteed annual funding of several hundred thousand euros for the next seven years," Müller says gratefully in his office just outside Salzburg.

The challenges of female skiers

During field testing, the CD lab can perform three-dimensional measurements of all the stresses, pressures, and torque that the human body is subjected to by today's skiing techniques, such as those used in alpine skiing. Different downhill skier types and their equipment needs can be determined on the basis of the results.

"One of the key groups of alpine skiing enthusiasts comprises women. Until now, it's been difficult for different types of skiers to find the right combination of skis, bindings, and boots for their needs," says Müller as he presents field test results on his laptop.

"We've now been able to clearly define four major downhill skier types, all of whom have their own special needs," he adds.

According to Müller, concerns about the dangers of carving skis have been partly exaggerated in recent years. This is due to the lack of basic research into the effects of new techniques and equipment.

"Such discussions have failed to make a clear distinction between competitive skiers and enthusiasts. Strong carving and sudden turns subject a skier's limbs to too much stress only if the skier in question is an enthusiast who happens to be in less-than-average shape, but is nonetheless going downhill at the same speed as a competitive skier. However, in real life conditions, there are very few such cases," says Müller.

"Most non-pros let the skis slide when turning. This means that they don't subject their legs to the same kind of pressure as competitive skiers who execute a turn purely by carving."

Erich Müller says that women favor a safe and controlled downhill skiing style. For this reason, women want skis that can be easily steered away from a tight skiing line when the accel-

eration becomes too high and they are unable to keep their turns under control.

Nordic walkers ... on skis

When it comes to crosscountry skiing, the greatest challenges for equipment manufacturers – and thus for Müller's CD laboratory, too – are posed by the growing group of people who do Nordic walking in the summer, but find that the current range of crosscountry skiing equipment makes that sport too tough and no fun.

"Nordic fitness skiing is physically stressful, and as such is suitable for only a fifth of potential crosscountry skiers. In other words, most people shouldn't even try it out," Müller emphasizes.

"We're trying to create a profile of the fitness enthusiast who should try to keep it up in the winter, but isn't capable of doing Nordic fitness skiing or traditional high-tempo crosscountry skiing. Something must be done to make going up hills easier and ensure safe downhill."

The potential of crosscountry skiing and its new techniques is also increased by the unavoidable ageing of the population. For those who are getting on in years, Nordic fitness skiing is in most cases the wrong sport.

The University of Salzburg and Müller's research team have long experience of cooperating with Amer Sports and Atomic's Finnish management. **Roger Talermo**, CEO of Amer Group, was instrumental in the choice of the University of Salzburg as Atomic's key R&D partner.

"We carry out independent scientific basic research that's at everyone's disposal. However, as our partner and provider of finance, Atomic has first access to our laboratory's results," says Müller.

Also the president of Atomic, Dr. **Michael Schineis** is very excited about this unique cooperation. "Already at winter ISPO 2005 in Munich we were able to present innovative products which were based on the results of the latest research at Christian Doppler laboratory. "These new products include the brand new IZOR Skis, with the use of Nano technology for the first time in the skiing industry, the "Balanze" women, skis which perfectly meet the special needs of women and the snow helmets.

In the same breath, he emphasizes that when the research process draws to a close, the university will gain possession of the equipment

that has been developed on the basis of the previous research results. The university will use this equipment in its research. Thanks to this chain of cooperation, the suitability of the end product for each skier type is truly based on scientific research, not trial and error. ■

THE FIELD TESTS THREE-Dimensionally EXAMINE THE STRESSES AND PRESSURES THE DIFFERENT PARTS OF THE HUMAN BODY ARE SUBJECTED TO DURING ALPINE SKIING AND SNOWBOARDING.



1. The instruments in the skier's backpack record measurements.

2. The forces on the bindings are measured and the data is transferred to the recording equipment via cables.

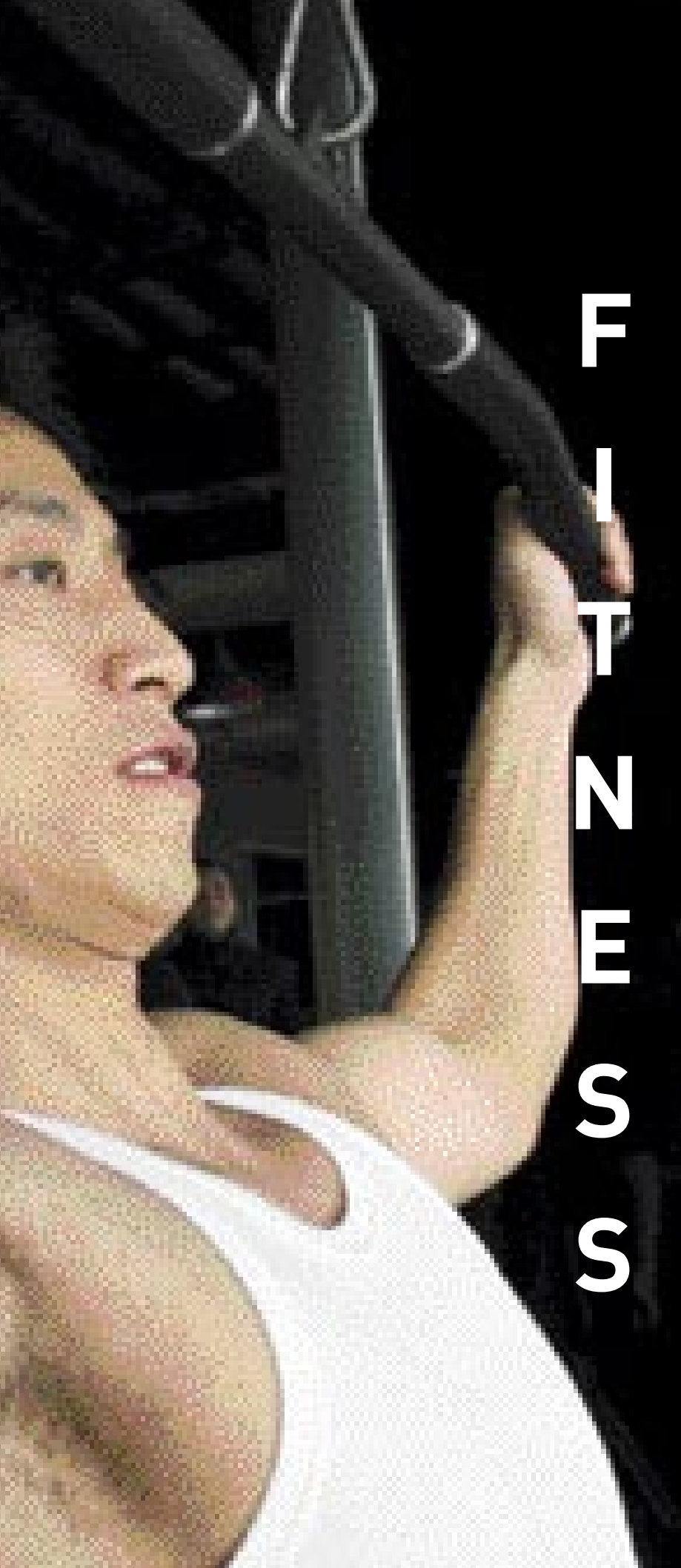
3. The locations of the measuring devices alongside the track are determined using accurate optical instruments.

4. Sensors have been placed next to the track. They accurately measure speeds and acceleration. They can be used to three-dimensionally determine all the stresses on muscles and joints.

5. Tests are performed on snowboards, too.







FITNESS

SHANGHAI



In Shanghai, fitness clubs compete for popularity just like the hottest nightclubs.



**THE PEOPLE'S
REPUBLIC OF CHINA
IS OFFICIALLY
COMMITTED TO
THE HEALTH OF ITS
CITIZENS.
ARTICLE 21 OF
THE COUNTRY'S
CONSTITUTION ENDS
WITH THE SENTENCE:
"THE STATE DEVELOPS
PHYSICAL CULTURE
AND PROMOTES MASS
SPORTS ACTIVITIES
TO BUILD UP THE
PEOPLE'S PHYSIQUE."**

- Text by Joesetta Mykkänen
- Photos by Qilai Shen

Modern fitness centers have sprung up all around Shanghai. The photo shows the Total Fitness Health Club. Its windows provide a vista of the city roofs.



Marketing Manager Jiang Yuwei doing aerobic training.

Physiotherapist Zhang Di is a regular customer at the Total Fitness Health Club.



Jiang Yuwei and her trainer, Andy Liu.



Morning dawns in Shanghai. Hundreds of thousands of apartment doors open. Spry old-timers, as silent and punctual as the rising sun, slip out for their morning exercise.

They don't head out to jogging tracks or gyms – rather, they exercise in gardens, concrete yards, and the streets. Each and every morning, they enliven this still-slumbering city of 17 million people with their tai chi routines, fan dances, backwards walking, couple dancing, and rhythmic stretching exercises.

IN CHINA, IT'S THE ELDERLY WHO EXERCISE THE MOST. Experts say that younger people hardly exercise at all. China is becoming modern and increasingly affluent at a breathtaking speed – and a growing number of people now commute to work by car rather than bicycle. The local one-child families consider food the panacea to all ills. The young spend their time glued to their desks at school and doing homework. The army complains that most of the conscripts flunk their fitness tests.

So, could this be the ideal market for fitness clubs and fitness club equipment? "China provides a huge market, but it is in its infancy," says **David Chan**, who established Megafit, the first Chinese chain of fitness clubs in Shanghai, and now works as a fitness consultant.

SHANGHAI NOW HAS 200 FITNESS CLUBS. In Shanghai, the country's trendsetter metropolis, fitness clubs battle for supremacy like trendy restaurants or nightclubs. Downtown Shanghai boasts dozens of fitness clubs, each larger and more impressive than the last. There are close to 200 in the entire city. The service portfolio offered to the residents of new highrises and other residential complexes almost without exception includes a fitness center for the residents. Including these, it's estimated that the number of fitness centers in the city is about 2,000.

And there's no shortage of customers. Ruddy-cheeked people stream out of the Physical club located on Huai Hai Road, perhaps the most fashionable shopping street in Shanghai.

"Oh, there are far too many people there in the evenings," exclaims **Zheng Xiaoli** after an hour and a half workout. A 34-year-old real-estate company employee, has been working out for a year. "At the office, I sit in my chair all day, and that makes me feel fat. I believe that exercise is the best way of losing weight," Zheng says. This is why she goes to kickboxing classes and pedals away on an elliptical crosstrainer.

David Chan says that this is a new way of thinking in China. After all, the first proper fitness club was opened just five years ago, and



**FITNESS HAS
BROKEN THROUGH
IN KOREA, CHINA,
AND TAIWAN.
DEMAND FOR
EQUIPMENT IS
SURGING.**

Zhang Di warming up.

playing sports for fitness has not yet become a lifestyle issue. The most popular sports are badminton, ping-pong, and swimming. "Clubs are more like social, fashionable, trendy places, where you want to be seen," he says.

The clubs are packed with top-of-the-line equipment. In spite of this, many of the customers actually spend most of their club time in the saunas or reading fitness magazines on a couch. Many of China's fitness magazines focus on the trendiness of sports rather than the health benefits.

FITNESS CLUBS ARE very much like nightclubs. Young people come to hang out in them. Customer turnover at Shanghai fitness clubs is about as high as in the nightlife scene – young people are eager to try new things and are always on the lookout for cheap offers, so it's not easy to get them hooked for long.

"It's like the 70s in California here now. I think it will be another 5 or 10 years until it gets really a part of their life," says Precor's **John**

Swete, Manager, Asia/Pacific, who has been in the fitness business since 1972.

But Swete has confidence in the market, because fitness has broken through in other East Asian territories. The American chain California Fitness opened a club in Hong Kong in 1997, kicking off strong growth. Japan and South Korea are good markets for fitness club equipment, as is Taiwan, which has also been a major equipment manufacturer during the past couple of decades. Taiwanese equipment manufacturers hold over 50 percent of the market in China.

This year growth is anticipated in China from the multihousing segment (residential complex gyms) in particular, for which Precor has developed new products.

The lack of a functional debit system will continue to create business headaches for fitness clubs in the years ahead. Chinese banks are not networked and very few Chinese people have credit cards. In other words, customers have to pay for their full-year



Jiang Yuwei making dinner after training (on the left).

Jiang Yuwei being massaged at the Dragon Fly Spa (below).



fitness club membership as one lump sum – a hefty outlay for the average Chinese.

But there are many who are prepared to fork out the cash. The ranks of the super rich are growing in China. Many clubs are building VIP sections for them. The fitness club business is also profitable in medium-sized cities – even as far as in the western province of Xinjiang – because competition has not heated up yet and there are plenty of wealthy people.

FOR MANY CHINESE, being a member of a fitness club is a status issue. Many of the neophytes are not totally clued in about how to use the machines: on the treadmills, you'll sometimes see people running backwards, the traditional way. The saunas are used for drying clothes. Some reckon that fitness clubs are just newfangled bathhouses.

Many of the trainers who lead fitness sessions are top athletes who've graduated from the national athletics education program.

Candy Cai, the whip-thin aerobics instructor at the Fitness First club, keeps in synch with the music, precise to the millisecond. She ends each series of movements on the same beat as the music – and with a perfectly executed flourish.

Cai was enrolled in gymnastics school at nine years of age. Rhythmic competitive gymnastics dominated her life until she was old enough to go to university – she had no holidays, started out her days with a jog at 5:30, and ate nothing but vegetables.

"You're not tired, I hope?" Cai asks the slack aerobics participants with no trace of irony in her voice. "Don't worry, you won't get visible muscles from this." After all, in this culture, it is not proper for women to look muscular.

"People want to feel comfortable when they exercise. No sweat, no tears," Cai says, frustrated. Energetically, she adds: "It's my mission to teach the Chinese to exercise – and to enjoy it." ■



Roger Talermo with products that have brought Amer success.

Strategy brings growth and results

A year of good results for Amer Group that was in line with the strategy decided in 2003.

Text by Pekka Rinne ■ Photo by Magnus Weckström

After two years of moderate expansion, the objectives set for Amer in 2004 were increased market share and the achievement of organic growth. "The object was to separate ourselves from our competitors. It was last year's most important goal. Organic growth means real added value for our shareholders, especially when it is profitable," says President and CEO **Roger Talermo**.

In 2003, Amer charted the areas in which the profitable expansion of sales was possible. Using this chart as a base, a program of focused, individual growth was drawn up for each business area in 2004. In some areas, this meant growth had to be obtained by the launching of new products, in others by the fine tuning of existing strategy. For example, in Racquet Sports a range of premium products was launched. Atomic was active in building a new category and developing the ski market, while the target set for both Team Sports and Fitness Equipment was achieving a more comprehensive offering through small-scale investment. In Sports Instruments, the decision was to stick to the existing strategic line. The primary objective in Golf was to improve profitability. One sector in the growth strategy is increasing the share of our own sales, and Amer Sports continued to expand into new geographical locations.

Results achieved

In February 2005, Roger Talermo could say with satisfaction that the strategy had worked. "We were very successful in meeting our objectives. Only in Suunto was there still some room for improvement."

Suunto launched several products, and one of these, the highly advanced D9 dive computer, generated considerable interest in the market.

"Growth is essential, because without it, Suunto will be unable to generate adequate reserves for product development and marketing in a competitive environment.

"A plus for Suunto is the fact that it is sowing the seeds and building a new market. Markets are not born by themselves, they have to be created. It's a very challenging position. Plenty of challengers have appeared in Suunto's sector, but its strength will always be that of being closer to sports enthusiasts than any of its competitors because it is part of Amer. Our strength is our in-depth knowledge of sports – and that is also Suunto's strength."

As regards future profitability, the strategic decision to divest its tobacco business was a very significant one for Amer. "We no longer sound as if we croak," says Talermo. ▶ continues

IMPROVING PROFITABILITY AND GROWTH DO NOT MEAN CUTTING BACK ON INVESTMENT. THE GOLF DIVISION RENEWED THE WHOLE OF ITS WILSON STAFF RANGE. ATOMIC'S METRON CREATED A COMPLETELY NEW SKI CATEGORY.

Wilson's Racquet Sports grew faster than the market, and the launch of nCode premium products clearly increased market share, as well as pushing up the average price of racquets sold. One of the targets set in 2003 was growth in badminton equipment sales, and this was also achieved. The Wilson Racquet Sports business area not only increased its profitability, it also posted a record result.

One of the background elements in our success was the organizational changes that began in 2003. Product and sales organizations in the United States were restructured, with resultant benefits in both Golf and Racquet Sports. Renewal brought new strength and dynamism to operations, and increased sales resulted. It came as no surprise that both growth in Wilson Team Sports and the results achieved were good. The business area's target-focused approach has produced good results year after year. "Right now, it is certainly one of the world's leading team sports companies," says Talermo.

In Baseball and Basketball, growth was particularly good and international expansion of business operations proceeded according to plan. First and foremost, growth is expected in Japan's huge baseball market. "Acquiring ATEC, a maker of pitching machines, has strengthened our position in team sports and increased sales of baseballs just as we expected. Wilson is also making progress in South America as planned."

An exception to the rule

Wilson Golf has been an exception to the rule. The primary objective has been profitability, not growth. Profit rose slightly into the black. "The most important thing is that Golf does not lose ground," says Roger Talermo.

Even though the target continues to be improving profitability, this does not mean that investment has been lacking. Wilson renewed the whole of its range of clubs in the course of last year. In his twenty years in the golf business, Roger Talermo cannot recall a similar achievement.

The second major task demanded by the Amer strategy from Wilson was the creation of a uniform brand strategy. In Golf, the most powerful evidence of this came through the Wilson Staff collection. Wilson's new strategy is based on combining the brand's long and strong traditions with ultra-modern technology.

The world's best ski factory

Atomic launched the modern Metron ski concept and also increased the rate at which top models are brought to market. Metron skis were a success. Every pair produced was sold and they were voted winners in several independent tests. Atomic's 'allmountain' skis such as Metron, which Talermo calls "four-wheel drive", are a completely new ski category. Supercross skis were also a success.

"The Atomic ski offering was exceptionally successful, and since both the shoe and binding collections were very popular and snowboards and crosscountry skis sold well, we moved Atomic up a gear or two. Considering the market situation, the organic growth was substantial."

Behind the growth and good results is Atomic's exceptionally-efficient, finely-tuned ski factory. Last year production totaled 940,000 pairs of downhill skis, a new record.

Extraordinary growth

Growth in a class of its own came in Fitness Equipment, where base growth in sales was faster than in Amer's other business areas. Markets are consolidating and the significance of Precor's comprehensive offering is growing. Precor's product palette and operating philosophy was expanded by the acquisitions of Fitness Products International (FPI), well known for its Icarian brand, and ClubCom. Precor is pioneering the offering of entertainment and value-added services to fitness clubs. The new strategy worked remarkably well and resulted in growth of 31 percent.

"Even with the acquisitions, growth was huge, and Precor's overall success was spectacular."

There was room for even greater sales, but difficulties were encountered at the end of the year – unfortunately, in the high season – during the commissioning of Precor's new factory, which will double the company's capacity in fitness equipment production.

"Starting up this kind of facility is a major proposition and it takes time before everything works smoothly. We expect the remaining problems to be solved by the beginning of spring," says Talermo.

A full war chest

Increased organic growth is a continuing objective, and the figure looked for in the current year is three to five percent, once again more than overall market growth. This will require increased market share, but profitability must be maintained using every possible means.

Growth through acquisition is possible if the right targets are identified, but they must be a very good fit with the strategy.

Amer Group's balance sheet is very strong and growing stronger, thanks to our owners' moderate dividend policy and our strong cash flow. Our war chest is big enough if the right target can be found.

"Our position is strong, and no moves take place in the market without our knowledge." ■



Suunto D9 is now AIDA's official depth instrument

Suunto D9 has been selected as the official depth instrument for all freediving world record attempts, world championships, and international competitions organized by AIDA, the International Association for the Development of Freediving.

Thanks to the one-second sampling rate and 200m depth display of Suunto D9, this partnership enables, for the first time, the accurate tracking of the profiles of record-breaking dives. AIDA publishes the profiles of all successful world record dives using Suunto's Dive Manager PC software.

Suunto t6 Team Pack gives coaches a helping hand

Suunto t6 Team Pack helps coaches ensure that each member of the team is training at a level that improves their performance.

Suunto t6 Team Pack comprises ten Suunto t6 wristop computers and the team version of the Suunto Training Manager PC software.

Suunto t6 performs heart-rate variation analyses, determining the actual effect of each training round, and presents the training stress of each athlete in visual terms. The PC software calculates these values for the whole team, providing the coach with comprehensive reports and comparison information on how hard the team is training.

The software also includes simple functions for feedback. The coach can use them to advise and motivate team members. With the PC software, stored training files can be sent by email, too, enabling long-distance coaching.

Suunto t6 Team Pack will be available in the spring of 2005.

Wilson products on Golf Digest's Hot List

Golf Digest, the world's highest-circulation and best known golf magazine, has included four of Wilson's new products on its hot products list. Hot List 2005 features the Wilson Staff Dd5 driver, Wilson Staff Pi5 irons, Wilson Staff Di5 irons, and Wilson Staff Px3 golfballs. The magazine described all these products as must-haves for every golfer. Hot List 2005 appeared in the February issue of Golf Digest.



Raining Medals

Atomic was very close to a real jackpot of medals in the Alpine World Ski Championship at Bormio. With the exception of one silver medal, Atomic's skiers carried off all the medals in the men's competitions. Best skier in the competition was the Austrian **Benni Raich** with four medals. He won the Slalom and Combined, took silver in the Giant Slalom and bronze in the Super G. **Bode Miller** won two golds, and **Daron Rahlves**, best known so far as a specialist in Downhill, took two silvers. Italian **Giorgia Rocca** also won two medals. In the women's competition **Marlies Schild** took bronze in the Combined Disciplines.

Atomic wins an award for its advertising

In January, Atomic was recognized by SnowSports Industries America (SIA) and the U.S. Ski Team as the recipient of Doc DesRoches Award. The annual award recognizes an SIA member for its integration of Ski Team athletes in its advertising campaign. Atomic won the award for its entertaining and innovative "Age of Atomic" cartoon campaign. Among others, it featured **Bode Miller** and **Daron Rahlves**, both of whom are Atomic skiers.



News, heart-rates, and a lot more

Suunto has rolled out a wristop computer that incorporates a heart-rate monitor and the MSN®Direct service - Suunto n6HR.

With MSN®Direct, Suunto n6HR users have access to local, national, and international news, financial news, entertainment, health, and tourism, sports results, movie show-times, horoscopes, general information, personal messages, and calendar reminders. The service works in the United States.

Suunto n6HR also features a heart-rate monitor, interval timers, and the Suunto n6HR Training Manager PC program.

The case of the computer is shock-resistant. Its large, round LCD screen is protected by a scratch-resistant mineral crystal glass face. Thanks to its round display, the image quality is excellent.

"Suunto n6HR is an astonishing instrument. We're excited by the innovation and design of Suunto's n series," says **Bill Mitchell**, Corporate Vice President of Microsoft Mobile Platforms.

Result better than expected

2004 was a year of positive trends in the sports equipment market, and demand for sports equipment was good. With the exception of the Golf Division, sales of all sports business areas grew in local currency terms. The comparable net sales of this business in local currencies grew by 11%.

Amer Group's consolidated net sales declined by 3%. Amer Group's net sales were EUR 1,058.8 million, while they were 1,094.1 million in the previous year. Exiting from the tobacco business reduced net sales by EUR 86.4 million compared to 2003. Foreign exchange rate movements reduced Amer Group's net sales by EUR 50 million, which was due to the strengthening of the euro, particularly against the US dollar.

The Group's EBIT amounted to EUR 122.0 million. The divestment of the tobacco business improved EBIT by EUR 10.1 million. Exchange rate movements had a slightly negative effect on EBIT. Earnings per share were EUR 1.19 (the number is bonus-issue adjusted).

Fourth-quarter spurt

The fourth-quarter result was better than expected. The Group's Q4 EBIT was EUR 35.1 million and earnings before taxes EUR 34.1 million. Net sales declined by 2% to EUR 261.0 million. The divestment of the tobacco business reduced net sales by EUR 25.7 million and foreign exchange rate movements by EUR 10 million.

However, underlying net sales of the sports equipment business in local currencies rose by 14%. The fourth quarter is high season for Winter Sports, which thus accounted for a larger share of the Group's net sales in Q4. Atomic's fourth-quarter net sales rose by 12% and EBIT rose 28% compared with the same period last year. Precor's comparable net sales in local currencies were up 32%.

Sales of Wilson tennis rackets up 7%

Wilson's share of the global market for tennis racquets was 36% at year's end. The Racquet Sports Division's comparable net sales in local currencies were up 6%. Premium tennis racquets in particular boosted sales.

Geographically, the biggest growth opportunities for the Racquet Sports Division are outside the United States, particu-

larly in Europe and Japan. The comparable growth of Racquet Sports in local currencies is expected to level off, with profitability remaining at a good level in 2005.

Improving profitability

The Golf Division achieved its objective for 2004: to get back in the black. Profitability was improved by the reorganization of Wilson in the United States, a process that got under way in 2003, and by the related realignment of its cost structure to better match its business operations. The Golf Division's comparable net sales in local currencies declined by 2%.

The Golf Division's net sales in local currencies are expected to remain unchanged. The Golf Division's main goal in 2005 will be improved profitability.

Earnings record

Team Sports continued to perform well, breaking its previous earnings record. Comparable net sales in local currencies rose by 13%. The products that particularly improved sales performance were baseball and softball bats; their sales increased by 25%. Of net sales, 89% were generated in the US market. Sales outside the United States grew by 16%.

Amer Sports' Team Sports Division's comparable net sales in local currencies are expected to grow as a result of new product launches. EBIT is also expected to rise.

Winter sports season reaching its end

The Winter Sports Division's comparable net sales in local currencies rose by 11%. In total, a record number of 940,000 pairs of alpine skis were sold during the year. Also Atomic ski boots had a successful year. Following many product improvements and a good year on the World Cup circuit, sales of ski boots increased 49%. Sales of bindings were up 30%, snowboards grew by 37% and sales of crosscountry skis by 21%.

The Company sees good growth opportunities in all product categories in USA and Japan. Comparable net sales in local cur-

rencies are expected to rise in 2005. EBIT is expected to be similar to 2004. Continued pressure on prices is expected in 2005.

A full-line supplier of fitness equipment

2004 was another successful year for the Fitness Equipment Division. Comparable net sales in local currencies were up 31%. The products that saw the greatest sales growth were elliptical fitness equipment, treadmills, and stationary cycles. The Fitness Equipment Division's growth was boosted by the acquisition done in January 2004. Of net sales, 78% came from North America, where sales increased by 32%. Outside North America, sales rose 27%.

In local currencies, the Fitness Equipment Division's net sales and EBIT are expected to rise clearly.

Sports-specific wristop computers

Suunto launched a number of new wristop computers like a unique wrist-mounted dive computer, Suunto D9, the first such instrument in the world to combine a digital compass with a dive computer. Suunto's comparable net sales in local currencies were up 3%. Wristop computers and diving instruments accounted for 64% of Suunto's net sales.

Sales of wristop computers in particular are expected to increase, with a strong emphasis on the training and cross-sports categories. Sales of diving instruments are also expected to rise. Operationally, the focus will be on the continental European markets, with other main markets in North America and Japan.

Profitable growth as a target

Amer's goal is profitable growth. Good profitability enables investments to be made in product development and marketing, which are essential for the achievement of global leadership in the sports equipment market.

In its day-to-day operations, Amer's primary focus is to achieve organic growth on the back of the development of innovative products, effective marketing, good customer service, and an efficient supply chain. In addition, Amer will continue to be an active participant in the structural changes taking place within the industry and it intends to make selective acquisitions that support its strategy, strengthen the position of the Group and deliver shareholder value.

In 2005, the Company expects that the growth in demand for sports equipment will plateau in the United States, while demand is anticipated to keep recovering slowly in Europe and Japan. In 2005, Amer Group's comparable net sales in local currencies are expected to grow by 3-5% compared with last year. Earnings per share for 2005 are forecast to be EUR 0.90-1.05. ■

Consolidated Results (IFRS), EUR million

	2004	2003	CHANGE, %
NET SALES	1,058.8	1,094.1	-3
COST OF GOODS SOLD	-620.2	-673.3	
GROSS PROFIT	438.6	420.8	4
LICENCE INCOME	14.3	10.3	
OTHER OPERATING INCOME	3.3	28.5	
R&D EXPENSES	-31.3	-30.7	
SELLING AND MARKETING EXPENSES	-246.5	-231.2	
ADMINISTRATIVE AND OTHER EXPENSES	-75.1	-80.0	
GAIN ON SALE OF TOBACCO BUSINESS	18.7	-	
EBIT	122.0	117.7	4
FINANCING INCOME AND EXPENSES	-3.4	-8.2	
EARNINGS BEFORE TAXES	118.6	109.5	8
TAXES	-33.8	-31.0	
MINORITY INTEREST	-0.3	-0.4	
NET RESULT	84.5	78.1	8
EARNINGS PER SHARE, EUR	1.19	1.12	
EARNINGS PER SHARE, DILUTED, EUR	1.18	1.11	
ADJUSTED AVERAGE NUMBER OF SHARES			
IN ISSUE, MILLION	71.1	70.0	
ADJUSTED AVERAGE NUMBER OF SHARES			
IN ISSUE, DILUTED, MILLION	71.3	70.2	
EQUITY PER SHARE, EUR	6.41	5.95	
ROCE, %	21.5	21.1	
ROE, %	19.2	18.8	
AVERAGE RATES USED: EUR 1.00 = USD	1.24	1.13	

THE NUMBERS OF SHARES IN ISSUE AND OTHER SHARE-BASED KEY INDICATORS HAVE BEEN ADJUSTED FOR THE DECEMBER 2004 BONUS ISSUE.

EBIT by Business Area, EUR million

	2004	2003	CHANGE, %
RACQUET SPORTS	26.9	20.6	31
GOLF	0.5	-12.4	
TEAM SPORTS	24.6	23.3	6
WINTER SPORTS	29.6	28.3	5
FITNESS EQUIPMENT	23.9	26.8	-11
SPORTS INSTRUMENTS	8.0	7.7	4
HEADQUARTERS	-11.1	-6.6	
PATENT SETTLEMENT	-	20.5	
	102.4	108.2	-5
TOBACCO	19.6	9.5	
EBIT, TOTAL	122.0	117.7	4



From left to right: Janne Ahonen psyching himself up in the tower. In Oberstdorf, the jumps take place close to the downtown area. Janne Ahonen in the skies of Bischofshofen. Photo on previous page: Janne Ahonen soaring towards Innsbruck.



A party at the foot of the jump

The Four Hills Tournament is not just a celebration of ski jumping. It's a hugely popular party.

- Text by Markku Rimpiläinen
- Photos by Lehtikuva

The four competitions of the Four Hills Tournament attract tens of thousands of spectators to Oberstdorf, Garmisch Partenkirchen, Innsbruck, and Bischofshofen every year.

The Four Hills Tournament – Vierschanzen-Tournee in German – is the people's own winter sports party. It's rivaled only by the Norwegians' Holmenkollen. But while the Norwegians like to sip hot chocolate from their own thermos jugs, the German way is to knock back brews in giant beer gardens all week long. The mood in the beer gardens becomes spirited long before the competition begins – and usually the party continues for as long as the crowd is having a good time. In other words, for quite some time.

But sports are the main draw. The fans wait patiently for their favorites. Even in the worst sleet, the mood in the spectator areas remains high. When a German or Austrian gets going

down the ski jump, he's urged on by roaring cheers from the crowd.

The most important jumps of the year

The Four Hills Tournament is one of the most anticipated events of the year for the ski jumpers, too, eclipsed only by the Olympics and World Championships.

The tournament comprises four individual competitions – and the winner is without a doubt the best man of the early season, and often of the rest of the season as well. **Hannawald, Malysz, Ahonen, Widhölzl** ... the list of recent Four Hills winners is full of names of ski jumpers who, after the tournament, have gone on to dominate their sport for the entire season. Success in the tournament gives the ski jumper an extra shot of self-confidence – which is especially important in ski jumping, possibly more so than in any other sport.

► continues

From left to right: When the sun goes down at Oberstdorf, the lights go on and the competition continues. Concluding his tour, Janne Ahonen touches down in Bischofshofen. Skis bend slightly on landing. The master and his admirers. Janne Ahonen speaking to the press in Innsbruck.



Only the best of the best compete in the Four Hills. Only those players who've scored points in World Cup or Continental Cup competitions either in the current or previous season are permitted to participate. This year's tournament featured jumpers from 23 countries.

The jumps are made from very modern ski jumps. The Bergisel ski jump in Innsbruck was modernized in 2001, and the Schattenberg ski jump in Oberstdorf and the Bischofshofen ski jump were refurbished in 2003.

Born in 1952

The idea of an international ski jumping competition came about when the Austrian tournament in Innsbruck, Bischofshofen, and Kitzbühel was a great success in the winter of 1952. However, Nordic ski jumpers took home all the medals at the Oslo Olympics later that year. In Tiroli and Germany, it was reckoned that only an international, well-funded competition series would ensure that the ski jumpers of continental Europe would be second-to-none. What was needed was a competition of such a high caliber that ski jumpers from the Nordic countries would also participate.

The founders of the Four Hills Tournament finalized their plans and competition locations in May 1952 in Haus Meier, Partenkirchen.

The tournament was created entirely by volunteers. The prime mover was Putzi Pepeunig of Innsbruck. Many of the meetings took place in the backroom of his store.

The first Four Hills competition was held in Garmisch-Partenkirchen on New Year's Eve 1952. Even then, the tournament attracted over 20,000 spectators. After the Oberstdorf competition, the tour and ski jumpers were transported by bus to Austria. The trip went well for the most part, except the Swedish team got held up for a while at the Oberjoch border station on account of missing visas. Traveling in politically divided Europe could be difficult – and athletes were not immune. The Four Hills Tournament helped to unite the people of Europe.

TV coverage of the tournament began in 1956. This further consolidated the tournament's stature. Four Hills was one of the reasons why Innsbruck was given the honor of hosting the Winter Olympics in 1964. The Innsbruck event of 1964 was held on the Bergisel ski jump that had been completed for the Olympics. ■

FOUR HILLS WINNERS

- Jens Weissflog of the DDR won the tournament four times: in 1984, 1985, 1991, and 1996. The three-time winners are Helmuth Recknagel from the DDR, Björn Wirkola from Norway, and now also Finland's Janne Ahonen. Weissflog participated in Four Hills a record 15 times.
- Swen Hannawald is the only jumper to win all four of the individual competitions.
- The most individual competition wins (10) are held by Jens Weissflog and the 60s Norwegian ski jumping legend Björn Wirkola.

PRECOR^{USA}

Padraig Harrington's practice routine



Most golfers think top professional players practice for more than four hours a day. This is certainly true of Padraig Harrington, who practices up to six hours a day – plus an extra two hours of fitness training. When he plays, he practices for an hour before each round. Here Padraig gives an insight into his comprehensive practice routine:

WARM UP

I arrive at the course 1hr 45 minutes before start. I then spend half an hour with the physio who assists with my stretch exercises, before spending 10-15 minutes getting ready for the round.

I then spend an hour on the practice range. Half of that time is spent hitting 27 shots – two with each club in the bag and five practice drives. Another ten minutes is spent chipping from around the green and on bunker shots, followed by another 13 minutes on the practice putting green before going to the 1st tee.

PRACTICE DURING A TOURNAMENT

As well as the pre-round routine, I will generally go to the practice ground to improve the weakest part of my game from the previous round. This means that I'm practicing normally for an hour and a half after the round was completed. During that time, I normally use my 5 iron to practice my iron play, which I hit 178 meters.

Before the tournament starts, I play one practice round if I know the course, two rounds



if I don't know the course, and three if it's a Major.

PRACTICE OUTSIDE TOURNAMENT

I spend up to six hours a day practicing when I'm not playing in a tournament. This is made up of four hours on normal shots and two hours hitting putts and chips around the green. Another two hours is spent on fitness training and stretching. During every week I have off from the Tour, I will spend two days with my coach Bob Torrance up at Largs in Scotland working on my shots.

FITNESS

At the top level of the game, every bit of extra fitness helps. The main areas that I work on are:

- strength in order to hit the ball longer
- flexibility to prevent injury and increased flexibility
- cardiovascular to reduce fatigue & increase mental awareness
- core stability for the golf swing every day
 - sometimes twice a day
 - I will be working on the cardio and stretching exercises. At the moment, I'm also working on my strength, but this varies from time to time.

Good luck practicing!
Padraig Harrington