

Jan Ove Ekeberg

Norway

past // present // future

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binding and even a new type of ski. Nordheim's binding runs around the boot heel, making it possibly to jump and make quick turns without the ski coming off. His other invention, the Telemark ski, is side-cut in the middle to increase the ski's turning abilities.

Inventors of Ski Sports

Sondre Nordheim was instrumental in bringing ski sports to the rest of Europe and the USA. He toured extensively, performing daring jumps over snow-covered roofs. The well-known term *slalom* has its origins in Nordheim's native district, Morgedal in Telemark. *Sla* is an old Norse word meaning 'hill', while *lām* means 'track' or 'trail'. Recent years have seen a renaissance for the Telemark ski, particularly in Norway, Sweden and the USA, but even in Central Europe there is a growing interest in the original techniques for traversing steep slopes and overhangs.

Norwegian polar explorers have significantly boosted international interest in ski sports – and not just the old heroes like Nansen or Amundsen. As recently as 1993, Erling Kagge, currently a highly successful Norwegian publisher, made an unassisted ski trek from the Weddell Sea to the South Pole, a distance of 1,300 km measured in a straight line. Two years later a woman, Liv Arnesen, repeated Kagge's feat.

But first and foremost, skiing remains a national sport. A number of recreational events take place throughout the winter, most notably *Ridderrennet*, for visually-impaired contestants with escorts, and *Birkebeinerrennet*, a 54 km cross-country track leading to the Olympic city of Lillehammer with close to 15,000 contestants ranging from international athletes to 80-year-old fitness enthusiasts.

Even so, *Holmenkollen Ski Festival* remains the main attraction. International top athletes participate in the cross-country and ski jumping competitions but the festival maintains a broad appeal through its own recreational ski event and a separate one-day children's ski event.

When the city of Oslo hosted the Winter Olympics in 1952 and the Nordic Ski World Championships 1966 and 1982, the more than 100-year-old ski jump at Holmenkollen was the main arena. It was visible from the city centre, and has ever since been a great tourist attraction with its own ski museum. In 2011, the city of Oslo will again host the Nordic Ski World Championships, this time with a brand new ski jump and cross-country facilities. All the disciplines will take place at the new national arena in the Holmenkollen area, which consists of Holmenkollbakken ski jump, Midtstubbakken ski jump and cross-country arena.

The Arctic Challenge

The unbroken ski trail runs through Norwegian history, and with the new generations, this ski trail is expanding to include snowboarding. The snowboarders Terje Håkonsen and Daniel Franck started *The Arctic Challenge*, a popular snowboarding competition, first held in Lofoten in 1999. In 2004 the competition was moved to the Holmenkollen area, where it now is a yearly event attracting the best snowboarders from all over the world.

