

workers challenge



With over 200 competitors and many more spectators, the eighth year of the Natives Workers Challenge pushed the adrenalin button once more for season workers across the Alps. Superb weather in January and February, but not so spring-like conditions

in March and April proved that the mountains, like our competitors, can never be underestimated. Check out Natives.co.uk/race for details of the 2009 series.

The Respect The Mountain Slalom, Méribel

After several days of pretty constant cloud cover, the first event of the 2008 series – Respect The Mountain Slalom – brought the welcome sight of the sun to the Three Valleys. While some season workers were tempted by the possibility of fresh powder, around 100 competitors took part in the day's events, an individual Giant Slalom in the morning and Team Dual Slalom in the afternoon.

In a new twist for this year, racers had two runs down the international standard course on the Stade Corbey. With only the best time of the two counting, it was time to throw caution to the wind.

The two stand-out competitors of the day were GB Skier X team racers, Emily Sarsfield and Sarah Sauvey. Sauvey set the fastest time of the day, and only the winner of the men's race, Craig Conkie – his third win in this competition – kept it from being a 1-2 for the ladies. He just edged out Sarsfield into third.

Rab McNab took second spot in the men's, winning the Masters category, and was joined on the podium by Martin Jeffers, who skied straight from instructing a class to the top of the course and into third place in his only run of the day.

Among the boarders, Scott Dunn employees Gareth Hollingsworth, Mark Yates and Chris Boogers filled the podium places for the men. In the women's, Roz Fisher's remarkable run of success continued with her fourth win in this competition.

WORKERS ACROSS THE ALPS TOOK UP THE NATIVES CHALLENGE – THREE EVENTS, ON THREE DAYS IN THREE RESORTS. IAIN MARTIN REVEALS THE VICTORS



From left: The Get it up ye winning team; Working the edges; Trying to reach the far side in St Anton

Natives.co.uk
the season workers' website

Lynsey Gemmell from Courchevel and Hannah Wrixow from Méribel took second and third respectively in the women's snowboard, while Ben Almond Jones snapped up the telemark prize and Daniel Hughes the novice category.

The Méribel teams quashed local rivals from Courchevel to face each other in the afternoon's Team Dual Slalom final. Marked by some gamesmanship over the choice of lanes, the final was so closely fought it had to go to a best of three. Get It Up Ye clinched the honours in the end – but given the team included both the men's individual winner Craig Conkie and third fastest overall Emily Sarsfield, it wasn't that surprising.

The Rossignol Big Air, St Anton

With snow forecast, competitors and spectators were delighted when the freezing cold wind turned out to be a blessing in disguise as it blew away the clouds and brought out the sun.

Perfect conditions greeted the start of this year's Big Air and a large crowd enjoyed the tunes from DJ Martin S and the great view of the action from Rendl Beach.

This year's action continued the high standard of 2007 with entrants from many resorts as well as St Anton. And it was the locals who won the day, with Chris Haselwander and Marlon Holzmann first at board and ski respectively.

While Matty, the only Argentinian in town, called the moves for the benefit of the crowd. ▶



there were a number of hits that stood out. Among the skiers, winner Chris's 540 true nose grab wowed the judges, while Martin Rotner (third) impressed with his super-cool switch backflip.

For the boarders, Luke Moffitt pulled off the day's riskiest trick – a one-foot backflip forced after his binding broke to claim third, while the wonderfully named Michael Macho pulled a switch backside indy 7 to claim second.

In the ladies competition, Yvonne Murphy impressed everyone as the only female skier with the gumpion

to enter – even more impressive as she was only on holiday in resort for that week. For her troubles, Yvonne won a massive swag of prizes. Boarder Lizzy Dalton, multiple previous winner, held off a German challenge to win the women's category for another year.

Prize-giving took place in a lively Scottys, doubling up as a Natives Show Love Tour date. The winners walked away with some fantastic prizes from the Workers Challenge sponsors, while season workers enjoyed free Extreme Drinks and Thunder Toffee Vodka.



Bases like these need to be seen



From left: Competitors listen up for the pre-race briefing; Sitting down on the job; Male boarder x winner Robert Emmanuale (on left); Shooting start out the gates

The Scott Dunn Skier/Boarder X, Val d'Isère

High winds and driving snow greeted competitors for the final event of the Natives Workers Challenge 2008 race series – the Scott Dunn Skier/Boarder X.

Fortunately, visibility remained good and prevented a second postponement (from the original date two weeks earlier), and competitors from Tignes, Val d'Isère, Méribel, La Plagne and Verbier psyched themselves up for action.

While the organisers stopped sponsors' flags from blowing off down the valley, 30 hardy souls headed to the start for their *contre la montre* (against the clock) run down the specially created course. With rollers leading into kickers and banked turns there was plenty of time to gain speed for the final jump across the finish.

These individual times were used to seed the competitors for the knockout rounds, which started promptly amid fears the Natives gazebo would blow away! The skier/boarder X format really came into its own as racers fought it out head-to-head over the course. Tactics, nerves and sheer strength all came into play.

In the women's boarder comp, Kiwi and Val d'Isère local Stephanie Takarangi beat Roz Fisher (winner at the Méribel

leg of the series). The women's ski final saw Tignes season worker Lauren Merryfield edge in ahead of Elizabeth Horne from Val, while Edinburgh University student Shona Doran beat her fellow student Jessie Henson for the final place on the podium.

In the men's boarder final, Tignes also took the honours as masseur Robert Emmanuale took top spot ahead of another Tignes season worker, Paul Dickson. Credit must go to both Tom Eliase and Pat Souberbielle who took third and fourth respectively. Both still teenagers and in resort on holiday, they showed real guts to enter, and at prize-giving later, both were rewarded with special prizes.

The male ski category was the toughest competition, but unsurprisingly, the winner was Angus Morrison, who had earlier set the fastest individual time, and also had the great advantage of being Britain's number one Skier X athlete.

Morrison, however, needed all of his World Cup experience to win a very closely contested final. With all four athletes passing the finish line within a few seconds, French holidaymaker Julian Karcher took second spot, with the remaining place on the podium going to Val d'Isère local Nathan Van Puten. Swedish Scot John Andree took fourth.

NATIVES WORKERS CHALLENGE 2008 – RESULTS

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| <p> RESPECT THE MOUNTAIN SLALOM
Female Skiers</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Sarah Sauvey 2. Emily Sarsfield 3. Zoe Norton <p>Female Boarders</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Roz Fisher 2. Lyndsey Gemmill 3. Hannah Wrixow <p>Male Boarders</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Gareth Hollingsworth 2. Mark Yates 3. Chris Boogers <p>Male Skiers</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Craig Conkie 2. Rab McNab 3. Martin Jeffers <p>Best Non-instructor</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. James Shail 2. Team Dual Slalom 3. Get It Up Ye | <p> ROSSIGNOL BIG AIR
Female Skiers</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Yvonne Murphy 2. Elizabeth Horne 3. Lizzy Dalton <p>Male Boarders</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Chris Haselwander 2. Michael Macho 3. Luke Moffit <p>Male Skiers</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Marlon Holzmann 2. Marcel Pliessnig 3. Martin Rotner <p>Male Skier (Novice)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Miguel Dolton <p>Male Boarder (Novice)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. James Booth | <p> SCOTT DUNN SKIER/BOARDER X
Female Skiers</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lauren Merryfield 2. Elizabeth Horne 3. Shona Doran <p>Female Boarders</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Stephanie Takarangi 2. Roz Fisher <p>Male Boarders</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Robert Emmanuale 2. Paul Dickson 3. Tom Eliase <p>Male Skiers</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Angus Morrison 2. Julian Karcher 3. Nathan Van Puten |
|---|--|---|

The Natives Workers Challenge 2008 series was sponsored by Respect The Mountain, Rossignol, Scott Dunn, SH+, Bolle, Ride Freesports, The Ski Club of Great Britain, Extreme Drinks. We'd like to thank our local sponsors Freeride.fr, Evolution Group, Le Ski Lodge, Lodge d'Village, La Tsaretta (Méribel), Black Catz, Powder Monkey, Precision, Grand Stade, Le Petit Danois, Ski Republic (Val d'Isère) and in St Anton, Kirschbaum, Fly-In Rendl-Park, Scottys, Intersport Arlberg, and Rendl, plus our local team of Stu Freni, Catriona Morrison and Gunther Zangler.

