

the main event

COULD IT GET ANY BETTER? STUDENTS AND SNOW COME TOGETHER FOR ONE HUGE PARTY, HOSTED BY THE BRITISH UNIVERSITIES SNOWSPORTS COUNCIL. LUCY PATON JOINS IN



The BUSC Main Event is what every red-blooded student who was born to ride dreams of. It's six days of non-stop riding, racing, boozing and behaving badly with 2000 other students in Austria's party haven of Saalbach Hinterglemm. What's not to love?

The week kicked off with the opening ceremony in Hinterglemm's snow park at the foot of the slopes, a sight to behold which set the tone for the rest of the week. Everything was bigger, badder and wilder than in previous years – the collective freestyle crew made sure of that as they flew off the huge kicker, flat-down box and 14m rollercoaster rail to the sounds of the massive sound system brought in to

get the crowd pumped. To up the ante, this all took place between five metre high fire jets that went off as each person jumped. Let me hear you say pyromania! The display ended with a classic love train – each rider hitting the kicker one after another – to a backdrop of fireworks.

But the night was only just starting, as the BUSCateers moved the party to the centre of Hinterglemm, where a stage and outdoor bars were ready to carry on the shenanigans into the small hours. Helped by DJs the Urban Knights, who combined banging tunes with visuals, this was Ibiza in a ski suit.

Bleary-eyed, the next morning's proceedings kicked off with the Planet SubZero Ski Giant Slalom. The weather was warm and the sun was out but the course held it together to challenge

even the top skiers. FIS racer Stephen DuPlessis from Birmingham took the gold for the men while Gemma Harris from Southampton Uni scooped it in the ladies. In the afternoon the Planet SubZero Snowboard Giant Slalom was plagued by even softer snow, but this didn't stop major BUSC player Moa Johansson from Edinburgh taking the gold. Chris Hazeldine of Loughborough sailed through the course a whole two seconds faster than everyone else to secure his place at the top of the podium.

Despite the warm slow conditions in the park, the Syndicate Slopestyle competitors still managed to impress. Once again, Edinburgh cleaned up in the snowboard category with wins from Hazel Clyne and Greg Matthews. Ben O'Brian from Bristol clinched the ski title by putting in an impressive performance of spins and rails, pulling a switch backflip to seal the deal.

That evening, the first of the fancy dress nights made the opening ceremony seem tame. Each university was given an animal to dress up as, as the theme was zoo – did you guess? – which created crazy sights in the already mad circus tent of the Goasstall bar. As tigers danced the night away with rhinos and penguins, it was straight out of one of Hunter S. Thompson's more vivid acid trips.

And so from sun for the slaloms to snow for the skier and boarder X. But unfortunately, besieged by driving winds and a steady snowfall settling on the course, the races were cancelled. This didn't stop some die-hard competitors from giving the course a go anyway, but it ended in tears when one captain, who shall remain nameless, did an involuntary backflip off one of the course's large rollers – he knows who he is!

That night was the legendary BUSC awards dinner. The attendees arrived in black tie for dinner; the gatecrashers arrived after, in DIY black tie.

photograph: ross henrys and steven mckenna

AS TIGERS DANCED WITH PENGUINS, IT WAS STRAIGHT OUT OF ONE OF HUNTER S. THOMPSON'S ACID TRIPS

The Ski Club of Great Britain Dual Slalom Event ran at its usual fast-paced standard, in spite of the dumping snow and the previous evening's dinner. The male final was a head-to-head grudge match between the heavy hitters of Newcastle and Edinburgh, with Newcastle just scraping it, while Bristol ladies and boarders both nabbed first places.

The final race was the D30 King of the Hill, a straightforward speed comp from the top of the mountain to the bottom, simply raced as fast as possible. If you were first down, you won. Skin-tight lycra-wearing Matt Bruton

from Newcastle was crowned the King (you'd hope so in a racing outfit), and Fabian Neuner from Birmingham was the King of the Snowboarders. They were awarded what every speed demon needs – protective padding from D30.

The Main Event came to a close with the Splash Comp – something even the

most inexperienced of riders could get involved in, where prizes were awarded for the most inventive ways of getting across the pool of slush. Scenes of gratuitous nudity followed and a personal fave was Jules Ball's piggyback for Cardiff's Becky Gowing. She got dropped in the slush pit while he walked out the other side as dry as a bone.

And so it was all over, and the BUSCateers wearily boarded their buses for the long trip home, leaving just the committee to enjoy their last night in a now empty Hinterglemm. I just hope that after putting on such an incredible week they still had some energy and enthusiasm left for the last shindig. Judging by the behaviour all

week, I wouldn't be surprised if they outdid themselves, vying each other for last

man standing, again. Check out the Natives video of BUSC in 60 seconds at <http://tiny.cc/LZY4J> and for more details on BUSC events throughout the year, visit www.busevents.com

BUSC would like to thank its sponsors: Nike ACG, Liberty Skis, d30, Rome SDS, Freeze ProShop and Syndicate Clothing.