

First tracks

KEEPING YOU THREE TURNS AHEAD



Definitely not a Lech down

WHAT A SEASON!

With neck-deep powder and pistes in perfect nick, last winter was the stuff of legend

After a disappointing 2006/07 season, glee-filled doom mongers predicted the end of Alpine wintersports. But last season was one in the eye for them right from the beginning.

Austria got off to a flying start with Schladming the first non-glacial resort to fire up its lifts on 26 October, a full month early. But it was November when things really kicked off. Snow records tumbled, especially across the eastern Alps, prompting resorts such as Lech, Austria, and Davos, Switzerland, to declare it the best start to a season for 30 years.

December and January saw further snowfall before

warmer, drier air engulfed much of Europe during February. But the storms returned for March and April, bringing plenty of snow, especially at altitude.

However, although the season rightly goes down as a vintage one, statistically it was not especially snowy or cold. Granted, the Austrian Arlberg had a high old time with 10.2m of snow for Lech (which usually gets 7.4m) and an incredible 13.3m for little-known Schroecken (usually 11m).

Yet, in France, both Tignes' and Avoriaz's snowfall (5.8m and 7m respectively) was closer to average and in Cervinia, Italy, considerably below par at 4.4m – it

usually receives 6m. The reason for the apparent discrepancy between our impression of fabulous snow and actual figures is all in the timing.

The snowless spell was lengthy, but came mid-season, ideal for damage limitation when coupled with a remarkable start and a strong finish.

Over the pond, North America had a slow start, but ended up with the best season since 1996/97, avoiding the mid-season dip. Jackson Hole recorded 15.3m, a new record, for its upper slopes and Alta impressed with 16.5m. The east coast also did well with 7.2m falling in Killington (usually 6.4m). Canada saw fewer extremes but most resorts still fared admirably – Fernie's 12.2m was some 30 per cent above average.

Honey I lost the kids in Fernie



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