

The FIS praises the “excellent” standards of the Finals and commits to bringing the World Cup back to Andorra

“Now the ball’s in your court, be prepared because we’ll be back as soon as possible,” the secretary of the association confirmed

They are going look for a “solution” to find a slot in their agenda so that the Avet slope can host a men’s event in the next few years

Shiffrin and Hirscher have been crowned the stars of the 2019 Andorra Finals, which have brought together almost 25,000 people over the course of the week

Andorra la Vella, 17 March 2019. Andorra has demonstrated that it is fully prepared to host events of a large international scale and the top management of the International Ski Federation (FIS) has witnessed this first hand. The love story with the Principality started to take shape twelve years ago when the first steps were taken to organise the World Cup here, resulting in Soldeu 2012 women’s events, as the **World Cup director for men’s races, Markus Waldner**, recalls. The relationship was consolidated with the competitions in 2016 and has grown stronger during the Finals held this week in **Soldeu el Tarter de Grandvalira**. And it seems very likely that the relationship will last for many years to come: **“We’ve put the ball in your court,”** said **Secretary General of the FIS, Sarah Lewis**, who believes that **Andorra is prepared for them to “be back as soon as possible,”** after hosting Finals that she described as **“excellent”**.

During the last technical meeting regarding the courses set by the FIS this season, and in front of the teams, organisers and all of those who have made this World Cup possible, Lewis thanked the Organising Committee for making **“these Finals the best possible event” and for “the great publicity”** that the country has given Alpine skiing. Waldner added to Lewis’ commendations, **“You can be proud of what you’ve achieved here”; what we’ve seen over these last seven days “is exceptional”**. They particularly highlighted **“the passion” and “the hospitality”** shown by the Andorran people throughout the week, giving the volunteers a special mention.



The Finals have come to a close this Sunday with the **last men's Slalom and the women's Giant Slalom on the Avet de Soldeu slope**, with 6,000 spectators watching from the grandstands, the finish line, the sides of the course and hotel terraces. **All in all, the week of competition has attracted almost 24,500 spectators.**

The Avet, ready to repeat very soon

Having reached this point, the question that is on everyone's lips is "What now?" The association is in no doubt. Although the calendars for the World Cup events are prepared four years in advance, Waldner pointed out that they are not confirmed 100% and said **"I would very much like to find a solution" to fit Andorra in with a men's technical event.** That's the decision they made after seeing the feedback from the competitors and their teams, who are **"very happy to compete" here**, he told us.

The FIS has confirmed that **the Avet is on a level with the best Slalom and Giant Slalom slopes** on the circuit. More so since the finish line has been modified with the new platform, "which was an important step forward", Waldner believes, also because it enables a larger public to be accommodated.

The pressure is high but the Organising Committee is willing to take on the task and continue building up Andorra's international dimension through the world of Alpine skiing. **The Director General of the Finals Organising Committee, Conrad Blanch**, explained that the FIS is encouraging Andorra to present an application to host the World Championships, which would mean going up another level, but from a very high rung on the ladder. In this sense, according to **the acting Minister for Tourism, Francesc Camp**, "it needs to be studied very well" because, in terms of investment, "we're talking about tens of millions of euros." That said, **"it's clear that, technically, Andorra is able to do it,"** he confirmed. The goal has been set **for 2027 or 2029.** However, before that "in 3 or 4 years, I'm sure we'll have" a men's World Cup event, the minister predicted.

To sum up, as Blanch highlighted, these Finals have represented **Andorra's "graduation"** in hosting events of this scale, within the scope of organisation, facilities and services. Also thanks to the weather, a key element of these Finals which other resorts envy, Lewis acknowledged, because it offers **spring-like weather but with winter standards on the slopes.**

A country applauds Shiffrin, and Hansdotter's unique descent

Mikaela Shiffrin has been on the top of the podium four times in these World Cup Finals and is indisputably the best skier in the world at present. Nerves, pressure and the possibility of living up to the achievements of the great Lindsey Vonn (winner of four Crystal Globes in a single season), were not enough to tarnish her victory on the Giant Slalom course. The Avet was buzzing in an exciting final in which the **very young Junior World Champion Alice Robinson from New Zealand snatched second place at just 17 years of age, 30 hundredths of a second behind the American, counting the two rounds.** She was invited by the FIS and came out wearing the last number, making her achievements this Sunday even more praiseworthy.

"It was crazy," Robinson summed it up, because at most she aspired to end up in the top 10. The young New Zealander was proud to stand on the podium with two great names in the discipline.



Third in the race was Slovakia's Petra Vlhová, who maintained second place in the general classification of the discipline and didn't stand a chance of overshadowing Shiffrin. The third spot on the podium for the overall classification was taken by France's **Tessa Worley**, who came fourth in today's race.

The skier from Vail handed over the limelight for a few minutes to **Frida Hansdotter, a Swedish skier who today ended her sporting career in Grandvalira**. To everyone's surprise, **she made her last descent dressed in typical Swedish costume and a basket full of kanelbullar**, cinnamon cakes that are typical of her country. She handed them out as she stopped at different points on the slope to greet and hug people who have contributed towards making her career a great one, including members of the FIS. **As she crossed the finish line she was given a standing ovation by the public and her fellow competitors**.

Born in 1985, Hansdotter's track record includes three World Championship medals and a Slalom World Cup and she is the current Olympic champion in this modality. The Swedish skier described this week as **"spectacular"**, **praising how involved the public was with the competition** and expressing her satisfaction at having finished her professional career in the world of Alpine skiing in Andorra.

Winning four Globes in the same season has allowed Shiffrin to **"make a dream come true"**, she said, and the competition this Sunday has rounded off her **"fantastic"** performance in Andorra.

Hirscher takes home the 20th Crystal Globe of his career

In the men's Slalom, young Frenchman Clément Noël, born in 1997, showed what he was made of and won the race, clinching his third victory of the season. With this triumph, the two men's technical trials of the Finals were dominated by French skiers, after **Alexis Pinturault** won the Giant Slalom on Saturday.

But Austria's **Marcel Hirscher**, despite not having the best day and finishing fourteenth, **won by points and was able to raise the Crystal Globe for this discipline and for overall champion in this World Cup**, totalling 20 titles in his career. **"This record is unreal, I never would have thought that I'd get here,"** he said. The Austrian still hasn't revealed whether or not he will continue to compete on the circuit next season or whether he'll hang up his skis at the age of 30.

The last race in these Finals was also special for **Germany's Felix Neureuther**, a specialist and legend of the Slalom, who announced yesterday that he is retiring from the world of competition.

In this Sunday's event, the podium was completed by Austria's **Manuel Feller** and Switzerland's **Daniel Yule**, whilst in the general classification of the Slalom, **Yule was able to maintain second place and third place was taken by the star of the day, Clément Noël**. His great role this Sunday enabled him to move up from fifth to third position.

Final ceremony to present the awards to this winter's best skiers

When all of the men's and women's races came to an end, the traditional award ceremony took place, in which the overall prizes were presented for the whole World Cup season. In the women's category, **Shiffrin was obviously crowned the champion and was accompanied on the podium by Vlhová, as well as Switzerland's Wendy Holdener**, a specialist in speed events.



In the men's category, for the eighth time in a row, **Hirscher** took home this **unique trophy that weighs in at nine kilograms**. The second best skier of the season was France's **Alexis Pinturault** and third position went to Norway's **Henrik Kristoffersen**.

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