

Zeitschrift: Swiss review : the magazine for the Swiss abroad
Herausgeber: Organisation of the Swiss Abroad
Band: 48 (2021)
Heft: 3

Rubrik: Top pick : Lara Gut-Behrami

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Download PDF: 28.04.2025

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Lara Gut-Behrami



Lara Gut-Behrami won two gold and one bronze medal at the FIS Alpine World Ski Championships in Italy in February, catapulting proud ski nation Switzerland back among the world elite. After this memorable achievement, the 30-year-old from Ticino now belongs in the same company as Swiss ski legends Erika Hess and Vreni Schneider. Yet the ambitious Gut-Behrami does not enjoy the same level of popularity as “Golden Vreni” did in the 1990s, not least because she refuses to be pigeonholed, let alone branded as Switzerland’s “ski darling”. From criticising piste conditions to giving monosyllabic answers to journalists – Gut-Behrami has always been regarded by the media as difficult. Her father works as her personal coach – an arrangement that has also raised eyebrows. She likes to do things differently.

Gut-Behrami first burst onto the scene as a talented junior at the age of 17, when she won two silver medals at her first-ever World Championships in 2009. She now has over 30 World Cup race victories to her name. In 2016, Gut-Behrami won the coveted crystal globe after ending the season at the top of the overall standings. However, she tore her anterior cruciate ligament one year later. Her body had “pulled the emergency cord”, she said. She used this unscheduled hiatus to learn more about herself and work out her life goals. One answer came quickly at the registry office, when she married footballer and erstwhile Swiss international Valon Behrami in summer 2018. In Behrami, who is no stranger to the rigours of professional sport himself, she has finally discovered her soulmate. Since then, Gut-Behrami seems to have found a grounding in both her sporting and personal life.

THEODORA PETER

Bye Berne!

The town of Moutier has decided to leave the canton of Berne and join the canton of Jura. This is the outcome of what was probably one of the most closely supervised votes in Swiss history. Precautions were necessary, because the 28 March vote was framed as the possible last chapter of an at times violent dispute that led to the establishment of the canton of Jura in 1977. After the creation of Jura, Moutier remained a bone of contention between the cantons of Berne and Jura. Now the recent vote may have brought the polemic to a peaceful conclusion. (MUL)

The retirement age for women is now 65

Voluntary old-age and survivors’ insurance (OASI), the Swiss state pension scheme that was introduced in 1948, is in dire financial straits. The Council of States therefore decided in March to raise the female retirement age from 64 to 65 and increase VAT at the same time. However, it rejected a proposal to increase the OASI pension ceiling for retired married couples. Political rumblings over the retirement age and OASI reforms are therefore set to continue. (MUL)

Divorce law clarifications

Marriage should not be reduced to an “insurance or pension vehicle”. In a press release published on 9 March 2021, the Federal Supreme Court (FSC) cemented this view by clarifying important elements of divorce law related to child maintenance payments. The FSC believes that financial autonomy must apply again when a marriage ends. In other words, each spouse must seek to support themselves financially after a divorce, say the judges. Extensive child maintenance payments extending over many years are to remain the exception. (MUL)

Diplomatic bags to help people vote

Many in the “Fifth Switzerland” are unable to vote by post because their voting papers fail to arrive in time. As Federal Councillor Ignazio Cassis announced in edition 2/2021 of “Swiss Review”, the use of diplomatic couriers and Swiss representations will be trialled in the June popular vote. We now know in which three countries the pilot will take place: Australia, Brazil and Thailand. (MUL)

Switzerland’s population is increasing at a slower rate

In the Covid year of 2020, Switzerland recorded a 12 per cent increase in deaths as well as a reduction in the number of births. Immigration was also down. However, the population grew slightly year-on-year by 0.7 per cent to 8,667,700. This is because emigration fell even more sharply than immigration, by 15.6 per cent. (MUL)