

Ups and downs on the Swiss Ice Hockey scene

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Forthcoming Events

The best Fondue in town will be served at the Wellington Swiss Club,

13th June, from 7 pm....onwards.

Please ring Ruth Messmer on 388 62 49, or Monika Sörensen on 478 56 49 before 9th June for your booking and let them know whether you can bring your own caquelon, rechaud and forks.

Members \$ 13.- per person, non-members \$ 15.- per person; children pay \$ 1.- per year. BYO drinks !

AGM - Report

The Annual General Meeting was well attended, and all went well.

The outgoing committee has done a great job over the past year and years - thank you Maya Beddie Geiser for a creative presidency, Michelle Köppel Schneider for an efficient, business-like approach to the running of the Swiss Club, Denise Nassenstein, Elisabeth Hynes, Christine Hughes, Peter Fischer for their great support - and for the delicious meals all year round ! We hope the Swiss Club can count on your great expertise also in the future.

A new committee was speedily elected. Well, it sounds newer than it actually is; you'll probably know most of the new committee members:

President; Roland Schütz

Vice President; Monika Sörensen

Treasurer; Ruth Messmer

Secretary; Trudi Brühlmann

Committee Members; Christine Alderdice, Edith Burla, Marianne Walti,

The AGM closed at 9 pm - which left plenty of time for a rich supper (or was it a late dinner?) and a game of Jassen. If some came home only in the early hours of the morning, it wasn't the AGM's fault !

By the way: In its first meeting the committee elected Monika Sörensen as Vice-President. And soon there will be news about this year's program; watch out !

TB.

Ups and downs on the Swiss Ice Hockey Scene

Over the past 50 odd years, Swiss Ice Hockey has had a veritable rollercoaster ride. From a Bronze Medal at the 1948 Winter Olympics at St.Moritz and a European Champion Title the following year, the standard attained deteriorated rapidly to a point where the national team was getting hammered by Cricket scores. The once famous Cattinis, Torianis and Polteras were long past their use by date. With the introduction of A - B and C Divisions on the world scene, the Swiss team soon found itself right down on the bottom rung, and for a number of years hovered between B and C.

Too good for C but not good enough for B. Part of the problem was a distinct lack of application by members of the national team and a lack of stable training facilities, namely, artificial ice rinks. In order to strengthen the Clubs, foreign players, particularly Canadians were imported, which gradually led to the professional game. In time these led to a reasonably colourful Club competition, but left the national side very short of the stamina required at the top. Since the collapse of Communism the situation has leveled out very markedly. Just like in Soccer, top players are offered lucrative contracts all over the world. Russians play in Switzerland and Swiss play in the NHL (national Hockey league). This year's world championship is played in Switzerland. At the time of writing, the Swiss team has enjoyed a rather mixed but at the same time successful start, having won two and lost two, beating notables like the Russians, by 4 : 2. Their demise finally came in two game semi-finals against Sweden, losing 7 : 2 !!!!

At club level, the national A + B leagues format has taken on an almost frantic character. For some years now the competition begins in late September and continues after a Xmas and New Year break until late February - early March. During that time two home and away rounds are played, giving a 44 match qualifying competition. This requires two games per week being played, with a third one thrown in every so often for good measure. Tuesday - and Saturday evenings are the regular playing days. That odd extra one is slotted in on Sunday afternoon. The top eight teams then get into the business end of the championship by way of a best of three, quarter- and semi final, culminating in a best of five final. The higher placed team in the qualifying round getting first home advantage. The bottom 4 teams play a home and away round to find which two play in the promotion/relegation stakes. This year, with the A-league being reduced by one, the fight was between those last two, and the B-league champion, which happened to be the Langnau's "Tiger" team. A team from a Club,

the Media very much looks upon as a "tradition team", while the two A-league contenders came from La Chaux de Fonds and Herisau. With just a home and away round being played, the winning formula was to win at least one away Game plus of course both home encounters. The outcome went right down to the wire. Langnau's Ilfis Stadion (capacity 6,500, where I've seen many a tight royal battle), was not only filled to the gunwales, the nearby Markthalle, with hastily installed T.Vs, was crammed full as well. At the end of regular time (3 periods of 20 minutes effective playing time) the score stood at 2:2. - Langnau only needed a tie, but the rules in Ice Hockey are such that in the case of a draw after regular time, overtime of five minutes each way is played or until such time as the first goal is scored. Well, Langnau was lucky !!!

At the top end, the S.C. Zug is the new and very proud, Swiss Champion, having beaten Davos by 3 games to two. In other words, this outcome too, went right down to the wire. Last year's champion, the S.C. Bern, was eliminated in the Quarter finals. Without a doubt, the standard of play as well as players stamina and professionalism have improved quite markedly. Needless to say that this high profile game is only possible by attracting the right exponent as well as the best coaches, which in turn means big transfers and even bigger salaries, putting many Clubs under enormous financial pressures. This has prompted the National Administration Committee to demand Budget prove, that Clubs are financially viable before issuing a competition license. A few years ago, the once famous Arosa Club decided that the struggle was too great and voluntarily demoted itself down into the 2nd Amateur League.

At the end of the last season, the S.C.



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Luzern, in spite of having retained its B-League status, went into voluntary liquidation. The situation for the very high profile S.C. Bern, the Capital's status symbol as far as the sporting scene is concerned, finds itself in dire financial straits. At the time of writing, the latest news have not yet come to hand, but if the Club can not raise at least Sfr.1.5 million in Cash, by the middle of May, it will not be issued with the all encompassing competition license for the next season! The players, presently still under contract, will then be able to seek transfers and sign-on with another employer. Today, tradition counts for naught. In a highly emotive totally Media controlled sporting world, money, and only money rules the roost!!

Heinz Leuenberger

The latest Ice Hockey news from Switzerland are that the A - Worldchampionship has been concluded in Switzerland (Hallenstadion) and that Switzerland, by losing against Czech Republic has finished on 4th place, missing out on the bronze medal. Sweden has become the World Champion for the 7th time running.

Editor-Helvetia.

New Asylum procedures in Switzerland,

The Government is pressing ahead with efforts to tighten asylum procedures. Since January this year the number of asylum seekers has risen sharply and the Cabinet has now called on Parliament to pass emergency legislation in an effort to stem the tide. The new measures would mean that people who enter Switzerland illegally, or who can't produce valid identity papers may not be allowed to apply for asylum. This means a person who has entered Switzerland illegally would have to provide evidence of their persecution themselves. This is a reversal of the "burden of proof", which will be difficult to enforce. The Bern based newspaper "Der Bund" thinks that it would have a psychological effect, as the threatening of sanctions has in the past once before led to a sharp rise in the arrivals with identity papers. The measures should also have a psychological effect in Switzerland itself, as the Government is under pressure from conservative Parties to deploy the army on the borders, but by presenting these measures it can turn round and say "the army is the last resort"!!

Believe it or not.....

From next year there will be fines for Swiss trains running late. A senior official at the Swiss federal railway SBB told the Sonntags-Zeitung newspaper that the measure was aimed at forcing trains to be on time. He said fines would also be imposed on construction companies working on the rail network who delayed trains. The federal institute of technology in Zürich is developing the new fine-system. Last year over 20 % of trains were over a minute late...!

LANGUAGE SCHOOLS - SWISS PROMOTION FOR STUDIES IN NEW ZEALAND AND AUSTRALIA

Using its motto, "travel educates", an innovative travel agency in Fislisbach, Switzerland, has recently opened a new department in its own travel house, creating four new jobs. This department has been entirely designated to consulting clients interested in language schools in New Zealand and Australia, under the expert management of Carmen Böckli. Included is an information service containing a library with guide books, maps, and video information. The new language school brochure, "English Downunder", features 14 language schools situated throughout Australia and New Zealand. It contains extensive advice for the sound preparation of language school studies in these countries, including courses for the over 50s and teachers. Regular seminars are held in the Oceania Travel House in Switzerland, where participants can gain much useful information about how to plan a successful stay. More details are available from the Oceania Reisehaus. (This information could be helpful for any friends or relations in Switzerland. See advertisement in this edition for all contact details.)

Certificates and Diplomas

The most important certificates and diplomas in English are:

FCE - Cambridge First Cert. (comprehensive written/oral knowledge).

CAE - Cert. in Advanced English (higher qualification for business focus on practical/communicative skill)

CPE - Cert. in Proficiency in English (high level comprehensive knowledge as University admission test).

CEIBT - Cambridge Cert. in English for International Business and Trade (efficient, correct English use for business and trade).

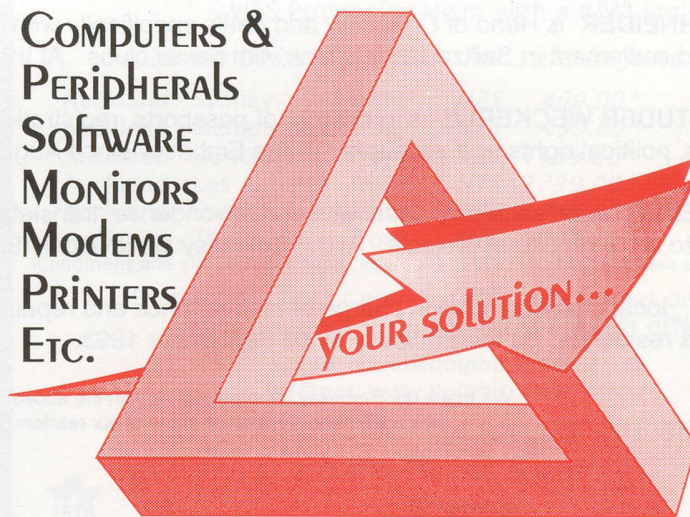
LCCI - London Chamber of Commerce and Industry (focus on business and trade)

TOEFL - North American test for admission in US and Canadian Universities.

ELTS - English Language Testing System (equal to Australian TOEFL).

TOEIC - Test of English for International Communication - knowledge required by international companies.

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