

## This year don't miss... the Monoski World Championships

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If you've noticed the price of second-hand one-piece ski suits going up in recent years, blame Mark Beattie – the man responsible for reviving a sport that most people buried along with their shell-suits and removable shoulder-pads.

“We had the idea over a few beers, back in 2006” explains Mark, co-founder of the World Mono-skiing Championships – an annual event held in Val d'Isere at the end of the season. Since then, it's snowballed and nowadays, come the end of April, the only ski-gear to be seen in, in Val d'Isere, is an all-in-one ski-suit, fresh from the eighties.

Showcasing an original C&A ski-jacket, I joined the retro outfit last year and, with the crowd dressed in a kaleidoscope of day-glo 'onesies', complete with big hair and luminous headbands, I was glad I'd brought my mirrored sunglasses with me. Competing isn't compulsory but fancy-dress is, and ten Euros gives you entry to the event, use of a mono-ski for the day and access to the after party.

One of the biggest challenges, it seems, is making your way up the mountain in the first place. With your feet clamped side-by-side in parallel bindings, once you've squeezed a button-lift between your legs, it doesn't come back out in a hurry - misjudge an edge or get caught off-guard in lift-lurch and you'll find yourself flat on your side, getting dragged up the slope with the *poma* still stuck between your thighs: it was in this fashion that most of the competitors made their way to the start line, where they could be seen limbering-up in a series of lunges, overarm stretches and high-knee kicks.

“All the girls love a mono-skier” boomed a voice over the tannoy and, after a few words from 'Miss Monoski 2012', the event was underway. With eighties tunes blaring out, steak-haches sizzling on the barbeque and the crowd cheering “three, two, one, let's mono-ski”, the first competitors shuffled over the start-line and raced down the slope in a blur of banana-yellow and flamingo-pink.

Now in its seventh year, the event has grown from a handful of seasonaires, strutting their stuff in the snow park, to a turnout of over 100. Entry is open to anyone, and with the majority of

competitors having never set boots on a mono-board before, it's more about getting into the spirit of things than completing the course in record time.

Nonetheless, a few sighs and dropped shoulders were exchanged when word went round that two-times World Champion, Simon Twigge of The Tignes Chalet Company, had taken the day-off work and skied over to Val to defend his title.

Fifty-two men and more than twenty women competed in 2012's event, racing each other through the eight-fence slalom for first, second and third place, or hoping to win honoured titles such as 'best wipe-out' and best dressed'.

With each knock-out race, the score-girls crossed another name off the list of competitors, and the winning skiers succeeded to the next round, sashaying through the gates with hip-swings that hadn't been seen since the seventies.

After a full day of waist-wiggling, power-dressing and fence-crashes, spectators and sportspeople gathered in Blue Note Bar for the awards ceremony, where Simon Twigge had his name engraved on the mono-ski cup for the third time and Amanda Pirie took the trophy for the women.

But the real heroes of the day were Dave Aram and Cat Perry-Warnes, who received the 'Spirit of Monoski' award, for embodying the ethos of the eighties 'to the max'. "I've never felt prouder" smiled Cat, stepping up to take the prize, "I'll be back".

#### **Info box:**

The 2013 Championships take place on 17<sup>th</sup> April. To find out more, visit [mountainecho.com](http://mountainecho.com). To enter, visit Blue Note Bar or Planks Clothing in Val d'Isere and sign-up before the race.

YSE chalets (tel: 0842 122 1414; [yeski.co.uk](http://yeski.co.uk)), offer a week's half board starting at £535, departing April 14<sup>th</sup>, with flights from Gatwick to Geneva.

If making your own way there, Snowdrop Transfers (tel: 0033 698 920 369; [snowdroptransfers.com](http://snowdroptransfers.com)) offer good-value transfers to Val d'Isere from several different airports.

