

A brilliant skier and multitalented family man

Michael Walchofer trained as a bank manager and certainly would have taken Wall Street by storm had it not been too far away from his home in Altenmarkt-Zauchensee. He preferred to be in his natural surroundings and he was in his element with the snow. Everything worked out well. He had an air of mischief and he was cool whether he won or lost.

Michael was born on a farm called »Kuchelberg« and it was by this name that he was known in the village. At the age of six Michael entered his first ski race. His father Rupert was the first to recognize his son's talent and he approached the trainer of the local ski club, Joe Hessenberger, to train his son. His father, his mother, Maria, and his trainer were the most important people at the beginning of his career.

Michael was born under the sign of Taurus in 1975. He had five older siblings. In the year 2000 he married Barbara, who was from the village of Birgitz in the Tyrol. They have three children, Hannah and twin boys Patrick and Mathias.

Michael is a dominant figure in every respect. He is 1.92 metres tall and weighs 100 kilos so aerodynamically he didn't have the best shape to be successful, but his determination proved all of his critics wrong. Even at sixteen years of age he was the Austrian champion for Downhill racing, the Giant Slalom as well as the Combination. He first realised his goal in the Slalom of the World Cup. However, the changes of ski length and design to carving skis did not suit his physique and so he found a way forward by changing his emphasis to Downhill skiing.

He trained with the fitness guru Heini Bergmuller from the Olympic Centre in Obertauern. Andi Evers who always believed in the speed qualities of Michael concentrated on further improving his speed technique.

In January 2003 in Kitzbuhel, Michael won his first World Cup in the Combination and he went as a Hahnenkamm winner to the World Championships in St. Moritz. He started as an outsider with No. 31 in the Downhill Race and without any previous wins he took the Gold Medal. The following season in Lake Louise, Canada, he won his first Downhill Race.

When Stephan Eberharter retired in 2004, Michael immediately took the throne. However, the following year Michael was unable to defend his World Championship Title in Bormio due to a smashed ski after a collision with a rock. Even so, he gained a Bronze Medal in the Downhill, Silver in the Super G and Silver in the Team event. In Lenzerheide, Switzerland, Michael won the Crystal Ball for the World Cup Downhill having gained three 1st, a 2nd and four 3rd places.

The following winter in Are, Sweden, he retained the Crystal Ball by narrowly defeating his friend Fritz Strobl. However, the Frenchman Antoine Deneriaz was on top form that year and gained the Gold Medal in the Sestriere Olympics forcing Michael into 2nd place for the Silver Medal.

Michael's total of two small Crystal Balls, a Silver Olympic Medal, four World Cups, nine World Cup victories, including one Super G and one Super-Combi, gave Michael more self-confidence in his abilities, but he still strives for success.

His family, his hotel Zentral in Zauchensee together with one of the best and most faithful fan clubs one has ever known makes him appreciate his talents as a superb Downhill skier as well as a very good allrounder – which he is about to prove in the upcoming seasons.