**Competitive sports performance, appreciation and friendship - Virtus World Skiing Championships 2022**

**From March 11 to 17, 2023, the skiing world championships for people with mental disabilities will take place in Seefeld in Tyrol.**

**With athletes from at least 13 nations, from Australia, Japan and Estonia to France, Poland and Italy, the international competition in mentally handicapped sports is highly motivated to compete at the Virtus Ski World Championships, which will be held on Austrian soil for the first time in mid-March. Four Nordic and four Alpine disciplines are on the packed programme, the top-class mentors are confirmed and the Seefeld region presents itself world championship-tested.**

For the first time since the first World Championships 13 years ago, the Virtus Ski World Championships will be held in Austria in 2023. Seefeld in Tyrol will be home to winter sports athletes from the Nordic and Alpine disciplines for a week.

The Local Organising Committee (LOC), led by Seefeld's former mayor Werner Frießer and ÖBSV-KGM chairman René Schönberger, as well as the Secretary General of the Virtus World Championships Paula Grameiser-Scherl, confirms more than 100 athletes from all over the world and is proud that, in addition to Austria, some of the strongest Alpine and Nordic nations have already announced their participation and will thus ensure races at the highest sporting level.

Four Nordic and four Alpine disciplines are on the programme at the Virtus World Championships, which will take place from 11 to 17 March both at Rosshütte (Alpine) and Gschwandtkopf (team competition) and in the Seefeld Sports Arena (Nordic). The LOC of the FIS Nordic World Ski Championships 2019 in Seefeld is significantly involved in the organisation and implementation of the World Championships. This guarantees that the competitions will be unforgettable and successful for the participants.

In addition to the guiding principle 'A celebration of friendship', the Virtus World Championships add sporting performance as a motivating factor. Besides fun and enjoyment, the sporting results are also in the foreground here and so the times and placings of the participants are clearly reflected in the medal table. The fact that ambition will play a decisive and motivating role is clearly an advantage for the squad team of the Austrian mentally disabled sports.

The alpine snow training already started last weekend with the first glacier course on the Kitzsteinhorn and is getting a further boost thanks to the active support of Virtus World Cup mentors Marlies and Benjamin Raich, who together have won five World Cup golds in the course of their successful careers. In numerous training courses, the 10-member squad is getting ready for the first World Championships on home soil.

As mentors for the Nordic Group, Olympic champions Mario Stecher and David Kreiner are campaigning for a more conscious approach to mental disability in sport.

On 08 December 2022, the official kick-off of the Virtus Ski World Championships will take place with World Championships Ambassador Julian Hadschieff in the presence of the Austrian national team, the mentors and guests of honour in Seefeld.

**Program Virtus World Skiing Championships 2023**

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| --- | --- | --- |
| 12.03.2023 | 10 am | Training |
|  | 6 pm | Opening ceremony in the music pavillon |
| 13.03.2023 | 9.45 am | 1st run RTL |
|  | afterwards | 2nd run RTL |
|  | 6 pm | Award ceremony in the music pavillon |
| 14.03.2023 | 9.45 am | Super-G |
|  | 6 pm | Award ceremony in the music pavillon |
| 15.03.2023 | 9.45 am | 1st run SL |
|  | afterwards | 2nd run  SL |
|  | 6 pm | Hut evening with award ceremony at the Rosshütte mountain station |
| 16.03.2023 | 10 am | Team event |
|  | 1 pm | Award ceremony and closing ceremony in the music pavillon |

**Alpine:**The Alpine competitions will take place at Rosshütte and Gschwandtkopf**.**

**Nordic:**The Nordic competitions will take place in the Seefeld Sports Arena**.**

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| --- | --- | --- |
| 12.03.2023 | 10 am | Training |
|  | 6 pm | Opening ceremony in the music pavillon |
| 13.03.2023 | 10.00 am | 5 km women & 10 km men |
|  | 6 pm | Award ceremony in the music pavillon |
| 14.03.2023 | 10.00 am | Sprint |
|  | 6 pm | Award ceremony in the music pavillon |
| 15.03.2023 | 10.00 am | 10 km women & 15 km men |
|  | 6 pm | Hut evening with award ceremony at the Rosshütte mountain station |
| 16.03.2023 | 10 am | Relay 3 x 2.5 km |
|  | 1 pm | Award ceremony and closing ceremony in the music pavillon |

The arrival and departure of the delegations will take place on 11 and 17 March 2023.

After each race there will be a flower ceremony in the finish area.

Programme subject to change!

**Statements**

*"The World Championships will certainly be a highlight for the Austrian team - and they can also hope for one or two medals - after all, the ÖBSV mentally disabled ski team has been one of the most successful in recent years.*

*With the tried and tested FIS Nordic World Ski Championships 2019 organizing committee at the forefront, the implementation is on a highly professional footing, and we are convinced that we will be able to prepare an unforgettable sporting festival for the participating nations.*

*I look forward to successful World Championships and a celebration of friendship."*

**Brigitte Jank, President ÖBSV**

*“We are honored to be the first Austrian venue to host the Virtus World Skiing Championships. For decades Seefeld has been one of the TOP destinations for winter sports. Due to the knowhow gained through major events such as the Nordic World Ski Championships 2019 and the annual Nordic Combined Triple, we are also looking forward to ensuring an unforgettable event for intellectually impaired people at the World Championships. Both the Alpine and Nordic venues will present themselves to the athletes in their usual excellent manner. Our team is already looking forward to welcome athletes from all over the world in Seefeld in Tyrol.”*

**Werner Frießer, LOC Chief**

*"As Chairman of the Competence Committee for mental disability Sports (KGM), it is an honor for me to now also be able to play a leading role in the planning and implementation of the first Virtus World Skiing Championships (Alpine and Nordic) in Austria. There is a lot to do, but the work gives me great pleasure! You come into contact with interesting personalities, for example, I was able to talk on the phone with Benjamin Raich, who is one of our sponsors in the alpine skiing area!*

*Last winter was perfect for our team athletes. We had the best training and competition conditions. They were also hard at work training in the summer!*

*I am looking forward to successful and accident-free World Skiing Championships in Seefeld in March 2023!"*

**René Schönberger, ÖBSV-KGM Chairman**

*"As the Skiing Officer of the Competence Committee for Mentally Disabled Sports (KGM) and a native of Seefeld, I am particularly proud to be able to organize the first Virtus World Skiing Championships in Seefeld as Secretary General. My aim is to bring the best skiers in the world, in alpine as well as in Nordic, to Seefeld. This ski world championship will be the event of 2023 for the local mental disability sports. Together with my team I will organize and carry out this event in the best possible way. Thanks go out at this point already to all the volunteers!"*

**Paula Grameiser-Scherl, Secretary General Virtus World Championships**

**Virtus - Virtus.sport**

Virtus is the global organization that manages, represents, organizes and promotes professional sports for athletes with mental disabilities.

Virtus World Intellectual Impairment Sport, "Virtus" is the brand name for the international federation for athletes with intellectual impairment and is a founding member of the International Paralympic Committee.

Founded in 1986, Virtus (until 2019: INAS) has grown from 14 members to an organization with more than 500,000 athletes from more than 90 nations from Europe, Africa, Asia, North, Central and South America and Oceania.

In 2020, the Virtus sports program included 15 recurring summer and winter sports competitions in which more than 7000 athletes participated annually at an international level.

Virtus aims to promote inclusion in sports to the point where athletes with intellectual disabilities can train and compete at a professional, international level by 2030.

**Austrian Sports Association for Persons with Disability (ÖBSV) - Obsv.at**

Our mission: Whatever disability you have, whether you are a beginner or a professional, old or young - the ÖBSV helps you to find your sport and your club. Because sports and exercise make you more mobile and keep you fit and healthy.

Our sports offer: mass sports are the top priority of the ÖBSV. Through a lot of grassroots work under the professional guidance of our trainers, we can offer our 6,000 members the very best support. The ÖBSV organizes over 150 events every year: Championships, sports weeks and training courses. If you want to make the step from amateur to top athlete, we are the right place for you. Every year we send about 25 athletes to European or World Championships, organize the preparations and also the financing.

**Seefeld - Tirols Hochplateau - Seefeld.com**

With its impressive natural backdrop between the Wetterstein Mountains and the Karwendel, and its varied range of leisure activities, the Region Seefeld is an inspiring vacation paradise in the middle of the Tyrolean Alps. The year-round destination, which includes five villages –Seefeld, Leutasch, Mösern-Buchen, Reith and Scharnitz – welcomes guests with still-living traditions and an authentic Tyrolean warmth that can be felt in every encounter. It’s energizing not only due to the hospitality and numerous available activities, but also because of the extended sunshine hours it receives by virtue of its special location on a high plateau open to the south, 1,200 meters above sea level. This makes a stay at this destination an all-round relaxing and activating experience.

**Participating federations**

Sport Inclusion Australia | Australia

Fapa Bulgaria | Bulgaria

Czech Association for Athletes with Intellectual Impairment | Check Republic

Estonian Mental Handicap People Sport | Estonia

Finnish Paralympic Committee | Finland

Fédération Française du Sport Adapté | France

FISDIR | Italy

Japan Para-Ski Federation | Japan

ZSS Sprawni-Razem | Poland

Swedish Parasport Federation | Sweden

Federación Española de Deportes para Personas con Discapacidad Intelectual | Spain

TOSSFED - Turkish Special Athletes Sports Federation | Turkey

Athletes Without Limits, US Ski-Team | USA

Österreichischer Behindertensportverband | Austria

**Organizer**

Organizing association: ÖBSV

Organizing club (LOC): Ski-Club Seefeld

**Official channels**

www.virtus2023seefeld.com

IG: @virtus.seefeld2023 @mentalpin\_kgm

FB: obsv.at