

British Skibike Team Report 2006

So far this year, the British team has enjoyed an increase in numbers so much so that we were the second largest team at the 2006 World Championships held in Grächen, Switzerland from 16th to 20th January! We had representatives from England, Scotland and Wales to add to the internal rivalry too! A big thank you to all those who made the considerable effort to participate and support us.



2006 GB Team



The team congregated at the official GB team hotel in Grächen, the hotel Alpha, after long journeys from all parts of the UK and elsewhere and by all means of transport, with some interesting experiences to boot! Some managed a few days warm up training whilst others arrived just in time for a few quick runs before the real business began.

The Swiss & British National Championships 15th January 2006

The Swiss kindly agreed to us competing in their guest class in their National Championships which consisted of a Giant Slalom in the morning followed by a Super Giant Slalom in the afternoon. The decision was taken to do as the Swiss and count the aggregate times over the 2 races as the official 2006 British National Championships.

We were blessed with a glorious day and beautiful warming sunshine from the summit to the finish all day long.

Race one; the Giant Slalom was a straightforward course and we were all relishing the chance to attack it. We had received our start numbers in function of previous world cup points so the best went first; after all the Swiss competitors of course.

Nic Platt, reigning British Champion in the Elite Men's Class, led the way and he powered down the run in a time of 1:01.69. We all followed in turn but this marker proved beyond us all and Nic won the first run by a clear 2 and a half seconds from his nearest rival. Amongst the seniors (30 years +) the competition was fierce. Denis Osbaldeston won with a very creditable 1:04.39 and Ric Platt and Simon Marsh finished in joint second place just under a second behind.

Race two; the Super Giant Slalom was to be run in the same order as the first race. In the Elite class, a super performance was needed to overhaul the reigning champion, but in the seniors it was all to play for. The tension rose as we approached our start times.

Nic Platt kept his cool and edged the field again, extending his lead over all and reclaiming the Elite title. His brother Tim snatched second place again and Silver overall. Third spot was the race of the Welsh, Harry Dearden prevailing over team mate Nic Jones.



British Elite Winners
 Champion - Nic Platt
 2nd Place - Tim Platt
 3rd Place - Harry Dearden



Welsh Team
 Harry Dearden
 Nic Jones



Scottish Team
 Kenny Campbell
 Darren Walker

In the seniors, a fired up Simon Marsh won the Super Giant by a fraction of a second but was unable to overturn his deficit to Denis whose solid second place performance was enough to secure the Seniors' title. Ric Platt finished third and so claimed the Seniors' Bronze over all.



British Senior Mens Winners
 Champion - Denis Osbaldeston
 2nd Place - Simon Marsh
 3rd Place - Ric Platt

The full results list is attached for all the detail of the British Championships and the World Championships too.

The 2006 Skibob World Championships: 16th to 20th January 2006

The Skibob World Championships consisted of 4 days racing proceeded by a very long day of trial runs at the monster downhill run scheduled for the first morning.

All in all we had 3 practice runs for the Downhill where the idea is to gradually bring your speed up to race speed, learning the course as you go. Our confidence built run by run and during Simon's birthday dinner that evening the bravado was flowing! Our times at the sharp end of the field were very competitive and several racers had a realistic chance of finishing first. To note that now all 11 GB racers were in direct competition as age was no longer a factor.

The race took a long time with large gaps between racers for safety. The course was over 3 kms long and was taking the best part of 3 minutes from top to bottom. We all had plenty of time at the top to contemplate what was ahead. For the majority of the team, this was the first competitive Downhill of their careers.

As it transpired, our first 2 starters, Nic and Tim Platt decimated the rest of the field by a massive 8 seconds, with Tim taking the all-important top spot from his brother. But perhaps the most noteworthy performance was that of the Scot Kenny Campbell, who in his first World Championship race beat 4 racers in the Elite category and that is not to mention beating also the 6 non finishers on this monster course; congratulations!

That evening we had a fresh snowfall that changed the situation a lot. The pistes were hard and icy below a soft 6 inches of fresh snow. This meant sideslipping through the gates to remove the fresh stuff before the race. In addition the conditions at the start gate and warm up area had taken a turn for the worse. There was a foul gale blowing over the ridge and warming up was barely an option! The soft snow all around was a mirage for us, as the track was still hard and icy, razor sharp edges remaining the key to success.



Super G start



Nic, Richard & Tim Platt

Thus we started the Super Giant Slalom. The course was in fact a short one for a Super G and hence the race felt more like a Giant Slalom and the race time reflected that also. Nic Platt won the race again amongst the British contingent by nearly 2 and a half seconds. Second place was again very tight with only 0.06 seconds between Tim Platt and Harry Dearden with the Englishman in front. Another special mention needs to go to Harry, who overcame much apprehension after breaking his leg 2 seasons ago in very similar circumstances.

Next day was the Giant Slalom and we all went to bed that evening pondering what kind of weather would await us the next morning, important decisions such as the fastest wax for the next day had to be put on hold. The Giant Slalom, as for the Slalom itself, was scheduled for 2 runs down 2 different courses, which meant an early start for all competitors and team management. We ate breakfast together under almost pitch-black skies and were still unable to guess on the conditions.



Denis Osbaldeston



Nic Jones & Al Platt



Simon Marsh

We rode up the mountain in the cabin lift and strained our eyes for clues of the conditions. We were wasting our time; we were all greeted by a complete white out at the finish line. The forecast was for clear sunny weather to break through but the question was when? With 2 runs to fit in we were hard pressed for time anyway and soon we were warned that the race might be delayed. Soon afterwards, while the majority of us were enjoying a warming hot chocolate, the inevitable happened and the race was cut to a solitary run. For a time, the mountain was very surreal as the sun gradually burnt off the cloud; at the start we were bathing in glorious sunshine while below us, and covering the racecourse was an immensely thick blanket of cloud.

By early afternoon, the sun was winning and the mist and cloud was disappearing fast. The race organisers gave us the go ahead and allowed the field another viewing of the course which did look very different when you could actually see it! We eventually got going and once again it was Nic Platt leading the way over his brother Tim and Simon Marsh in third.

The B Nation's title looked to be sewn up as we headed into the final day of racing but a small group still harboured slim hopes of wresting the honour away from Nic Platt.

That evening, and for the second time in a week, we celebrated another team member birthday at the friendliest restaurant in town with its affable host who we nicknamed Obelix for obvious reasons! Whilst we had everyone together, we made the most of the opportunity to do the prize giving for the British National Championships.



2006 British Skibob Team

The Slalom day did not suffer from the same weather conditions as the day before and we were able to get the 2 runs in. The slalom is the shortest race and hence nearly the whole racecourse was viewable from the grandstands at the finish.

Race 1 had a few gates early on which were placed on sheet ice to really sort the men from the boys. Most of the viewing time was dedicated to studying these gates to find the right line to take in an attempt to minimise their difficulty. They did prove to be troublesome for all competitors and unfortunately one of the German racers crashed in this section and needed airlifting to hospital. Thankfully he returned to join us that evening at the end of championships party.

So, after the delay for the injury, we finally got our turns and set off in brilliant sunshine down the track. The icy sections looked blue in this light! Nic Platt put the final nail into the coffin of the challenge from the rest of us with another solid performance, 2 and a half seconds clear again! Peter Marsh, Tim Platt and Richard Platt all in hot pursuit.

The second Slalom run was set and posed a whole new set of challenges to the competitors. Wide hard turns near the start and a faster, steeper section in the middle that led into along flat section; clearly the race was to be decided here. The second run was won by Tim Platt and our British Champion and now B Nations champion, Nic Platt, was pushed into 5th place amongst us.

The combined times for these 2 runs at the Slalom produced a 1-2-3 of Nic Platt, Peter Marsh and Tim Platt



B Nations winners



Nic Platt



Peter Marsh

Lastly, for the B Nations' title, the combined times were used from the Downhill, Giant Slalom and Slalom. Nic Platt held on to his title and beat his brother Tim by 3 seconds with Peter Marsh taking third. *(Al Platt)*



(Left photo: Harry Dearden, Nic Jones, Tim Platt, Shirley Platt, Nic Platt – Right photo: Richard Hollingsworth, Simon Marsh & Denis Osbaldeston)



The Marsh brothers & Denis Osbaldeston Kenny Campbell awarded Marsh Trophy

World Cup race in Nesselwang, Germany – 10th to 12th March 2006

Nic and Tim Platt faced the tough task of having three separate races in one day in the Bavarian resort of Nesselwang; a Giant Slalom to start, then a Slalom in the afternoon, followed by a floodlight night slalom later that evening. It had snowed the night before, making the giant slalom a treacherous course if you strayed even slightly outside the racing line, but by the afternoon the sun was out and the afternoon slalom avoided the delays of the Giant Slalom earlier that morning. And on this occasion, it was Tim Platt's turn to get one over his twin brother in the Giant Slalom, finishing in 21st place with a time of 1m10:65s, just over two seconds ahead of Nic, who had inexplicably imagined an extra gate!



Tim Platt



Nic Platt

Nic however gained revenge in the Slalom by beating Tim by just under three seconds, with a time of 1m02:28s in 21st place. The course was flat in the middle so the racers had to make sure they kept their speed from the top section and carried it into the latter stages of the race. Any mistake on the top would be multiplied greatly by the finish.

The pair then had the long wait until nightfall for the floodlights to be switched on and then had to get themselves back into race mode, faced with the worsening conditions. Snow had begun to fall horizontally with the wind and visibility was poor. The race started at 8pm and despite the weather, it was still an exciting race with Tim finishing in 23rd place, just under two seconds behind Nic, who finished with a time of 1m04:21s in 22nd place overall. Our thanks go out to our solitary fan who stayed cheering until the end despite the cold, when she could have been in the bar keeping warm!



The Night Slalom!

World Cup Final race in Westendorf, Austria – 16th to 18th March 06

Denis Osbaldeston then joined Nic and Tim Platt in the Tyrolean village of Westendorf, just down the road from Kitzbuhel. Just two days racing stood in the way of the Platt brothers before they could unwind in the traditional end of season party and a suitably excitably chaotic atmosphere prevailed amongst the teams throughout the weekend. Friday's racing saw two runs at the Giant Slalom on the Zieplhang course, the same course that the FIS had used earlier in the season in January on their World Cup circuit. Nic Platt finished the two runs in a consistently high standard with a combined time of 2m07:31s ahead of Tim Platt and then Denis Osbaldeston. Tim Platt managed to knock nearly six seconds of his dismal first run, and Denis, using the weekend's racing partly as training for the Senior World Championships the following weekend, also finished quicker in the second run.

The final day's racing saw a qualifying session in morning for a parallel slalom, complete with a jump half the way down the slalom course, which would progress into an elimination competition in the afternoon. The music had the crowd going and the party had started already by the time the semi-finals had arrived. Denis crashed in qualification and then recovered to finish but was controversially disqualified when he was judged to have missed the gate where he fell. The Platts missed out on qualification for the main knock out competition but were seeded as the top two finishers in to the B Nations finals, each against a Turkish racer.



Nic Platt



Nic, Denis & Tim



Tim Platt

Both won their semi-finals comfortably, on both the red and blue courses, but were sadly denied the opportunity to battle it out head-to-head for first place, where instead

a combined time was taken. Nic Platt finished the season on a high, winning the B Nations with a combined time of 0m52:36s, with Tim Platt close behind in 2nd Place with 0m55:05s. Both were called to the stage in the closing ceremony and walked away with some well earned prize money to spend in the bar that night, to cap of another successful season!

(Tim Platt)

Senior World Championships 2006: Lungotz, Austria 23rd - 25th Mar

Due to heavy and continuous snowfall the championships were cancelled in Bischofsmais and re-scheduled for Lungotz (the only exercise we got in Bischofsmais was digging the car out of a five feet deep snowdrift!!). I'd been given a list of fifteen racers in my class whilst in Westendorf the previous weekend and was dismayed to see that three top racers from thirty years ago when I first started racing in the Elite class had moved up into my class, including Albert Risi, a former world elite champion. I'd like to say that this news affected my performance against the Platt boys in Westendorf but I'd be lying – they were just too good!!

Looking at the race entrants in my class I recognized most of the names and thought I'd be lucky to finish in the top ten in any of the three races so the pressure was off!!

The Super G was fast but fair on a course with plenty of snow. I was drawn 95, of the 120 racers at the championships, but first in my group which had never happened before. I had a good run surprising myself by finishing ninth and beating some racers who had beaten me regularly in the past!

Day two saw the G.S. on the same course but by the time I got to go at nr.101 it was in a mess. I got into the hole at the first gate going as fast as I could and was spat out by the course just in time to cross the finishing line in what I thought was quite a respectable time and more amazingly in sixth position! I was brought down to earth by Karl Mayerhofer the world champion who told me that he'd missed a gate and had to climb back to it – he still beat me!!

At the team captains meeting that evening we were told that the weather forecast was bad and asked to meet at the bottom of the course at 8 am to decide what to do. We duly arrived in torrential rain to be told that there would be only one slalom race which was just as well as I have never raced in such terrible conditions. The course was in such a state after 70 racers had gone that we were asked if the last twelve gates could be re-positioned as the course had deteriorated so much. We wouldn't be allowed to view the amended course so at this point I decided that self preservation was in order and that I would take it easy in order to secure my sixth place. When I raced I couldn't see properly because of the rain but I swear that one of the gates had a hole at least 20 inches deep which couldn't be avoided. By the time I reached the bottom I had bruised ears from my knees battering them - but hey! Mayerhofer fell over so I finished fifth overall. Some result!!

(Denis Osbaldeston)

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(see official results attached)