

For Immediate Release

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## **The North Face® Ski Challenge Presented by Gore-Tex® Makes First Appearance in Slovakia, Confronts Most Difficult Weather Conditions and Finds New Talents.**

**The North Face Ski Challenge presented by Gore-Tex headed east towards Jasna, Slovakia this week end . The event confronted the worst weather conditions of the year in the Low Tatras: heavy rain, gusty winds, heavy snow and virtually no visibility until contest day. Six additional qualified boys and girls will complete the field of young riders in the final in Val Thorens to win a sponsoring contract and get help to become pro riders.**

Europe's premier event for young freeskiers in search of support to become pro riders headed east for the last qualifier of the season. Tailed by mild south Atlantic winds, we drove through Austria looking at the temperatures rise until we reached Bratislava. And when we reached Jasna, rain had replaced snow. Three days later, after having been washed preparing the event, we met twenty riders that had found their way to the biggest ski resort in Slovakia .Their enthusiasm was obvious, in spite of the weather conditions and after a delayed start, the skies cleared enough for the event to start.

### **Visibility...**

The mountain was covered with clouds that reminded Michel Beaudry - our head judge- of his home resort of Whistler. « I cant believe how much it looks like British Columbia here ! Even the weather and humidity remind me of it ». Visibility didn't allow an early start, so riders had time to go up the mountain and try the park. At 11 AM, clouds lifted and allowed jumps to be tested without too many risks. Judges took their posts, riders put their bibs on and the show began.

### **Park, Rails and... Hikes**

The upper part of the park still in the clouds, judges posted themselves on different jumps and communicated by radio to compare their judgements and inform each other on jumps and tricks made by the riders. We managed to take two runs on jumps in spite of the long rotations by chairlift. The lower park of the park equipped with numerous rails, the riders were able to ski twice through it, but had to hike up back to the start to reduce rotations.

### **Limited Freeride**

The freeride was reduced to its simplest expression: the slope was steep, unprepared and extremely slushy... Everything we needed to evaluate the level of the riders on ungroomed terrain. Once again, we noticed that if some riders spend a lot of time in the air, they lacked some basics in freeski and this would probably handicap them in the finals.

JP Baralo , creator of the event talking to Suzana Stromkova, winner of the Queens category and overall tour winner last year: « You are really talented in freestyle but are too limited in freeride to one day throw big jumps in the outback, for instance. Think about that

and spend some time training also in all conditions, and even on the slope on harder snow. You'll gain so much from it and will be able to profit from all the mountain ! »

On the Kings side, winner Richard Jurecka was asked if he could participate to the finals in Val Thorens and openly answered: « I really don't know: my Mom is very angry with me regarding school... I hope !»

### **Time For The Finals March 27-29 !**

The North Face Ski Challenge presented by Gore-Tex is now heading home to Val Thorens, France, in the resort that has welcomed us ever since the first edition in 2006. Check [www.thenorthface.com/skichallenge](http://www.thenorthface.com/skichallenge) to keep in touch with the event's news and the qualified riders !

### About The Competition

The Ski Challenge idea came to life when J.P. Baralo, a former freeski team manager, realized that there was no European outlet to showcase the potential of young, undiscovered freeskiers. Baralo approached The North Face, and together they created a new, unique event in which unknown kids from across Europe could demonstrate their skills and have an opportunity to make a name for themselves. The North Face Ski Challenge Tour is open to all European residents, boys and girls, aged 12-18.