

# Start of World Cup ski season falls victim to 'heavy snowfall'

November 12 2023

---



The Zermatt-Cervinia track between Switzerland and Italy has been hit by strong winds and heavy snowfall.

Strong winds and "heavy snowfall" on Saturday caused the delayed opening round of the men's World Cup skiing season to be cancelled at

the controversial cross-border venue of Zermatt-Cervinia.

International Ski Federation officials said the decision was taken "to guarantee everyone's safety" at the course which straddles the Swiss-Italian frontier.

"Due to the [heavy snowfall](#) from last night and this morning, together with the [strong winds](#), (we) have decided to cancel today's downhill race," organizers said a statement.

There was no indication whether Sunday's scheduled second race would take place.

If the race does get the go-ahead, it will mark the start of the 2023/24 season after the traditional curtain-raiser, planned for Soelden in Austria at the end of October, was cancelled due to [high winds](#).

The Zermatt-Cervinia event, which will be the first cross-border [race](#) in the history of the World Cup, starting in Switzerland and finishing in Italy, had already been overshadowed by environmental issues.

Olympic downhill runner-up Johan Clarey denounced work on the site as "nonsense" with "huge helicopter resources and human resources to fill in the crevasses and make the track acceptable".

"The conditions on the glaciers are getting worse every year," said the 42-year-old, who retired in May.

Swiss newspaper '20 minutes' reignited the controversy in October with its pictures of diggers carving up the Theodule glacier to prepare the Gran Becca course.

Urs Lehmann, president of the Swiss Ski Association, said the articles

were "deliberately biased... at a time when [climate change](#) and sustainability have become central issues".

"Nobody would have skied on a glacier for decades," without bulldozers to make them safe, he added.

But Zermatt-Cervinia is a further illustration of the artificialisation of the mountains to host sporting events, even though the effects of global warming are spectacular.

At the 2022 Olympic Games in Beijing, snow machines were needed to provide a suitable surface on otherwise dry slopes.

Helicopters and snow trucks were used in 2017 to prepare the legendary Austrian downhill at Kitzbuehel.

Two women's downhill races are also scheduled for Zermatt-Cervinia next weekend. The events were cancelled last year because of lack of snow.

© 2023 AFP

Citation: Start of World Cup ski season falls victim to 'heavy snowfall' (2023, November 12) retrieved 28 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2023-11-world-cup-season-falls-victim.html>

<p>This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.</p>
--