

2017 SNOW VOLLEYBALL GOES EUROPE WAGRAIN - KLEINARL



Hot-blooded Brazilian fascinated by first face-to-face encounter with snow volleyball

There was something special about this weekend's Snow Volleyball Goes Europe international tournament in Wagrain-Kleinarl not only because it is one of the still rare intercontinental professional snow volleyball competitions, but also because of the distinguished presence of FIVB President Dr. Ary S. Graça F°. This was the first face-to-face encounter with the new winter sport for the hot-blooded Brazilian and he is absolutely fascinated by it.

“Of course, I was very suspicious and cautious to give an opinion about what I would see here, because I am a Brazilian, I am a man of the beach and I am a diver,” said the President. “I don't know how to ski – I did not learn it when I was a kid. So this is a new world for me. I never saw such a beautiful view that I am seeing here. Amazing! Amazing! I love it!”

During the two tournament days, President Graça certainly enjoyed the spectacular views in the Austrian Alps and the great ambience around the center court at the Flying Mozart Mountain Station. He also watched several top-level snow volleyball matches, including the women's and the men's finals on Sunday, spoke to some of the players and inspected their gear. He tried snow volleyball for himself and showed some impressive ball handling skills. Not only that – he even tested out the snow with the rake.

“So this idea of snow volleyball, which I liked at the beginning in theory, now I saw it here in reality. I even played snow volleyball and for sure, I am completely satisfied, I am happy,” said the FIVB President in conclusion. “Now I am quite sure that we must follow that track. I am quite sure snow volleyball will explode as a sport, because it is different and creates opportunities for a lot of countries.”

Doranth & Tille make it all the way to the top

Bene Doranth & Ferdinand Tille triumphed with the men's gold medals at the Snow Volleyball Goes Europe international tournament in Wagrain-Kleinarl. The newly formed German tandem of one experienced and successful snow volleyball player and one absolute rookie on the snow, but a well-known international indoor player, lost only one match in the Austrian Alps and returned through the losers' bracket to claim the title.

The second competition day did not start very well for Doranth & Tille. In the cold Sunday morning they lost their match for a place in the semis to fellow Germans and friends Maximilian von Deichmann & Johannes Kessler after a dramatic tie-breaker - 1-2 (9-11, 11-8, 11-13). In the last round of the losers' bracket Doranth & Tille had to face another German

team - Florian Schweikart & Benjamin Loritz. They won by 2-0 (12-10, 11-8) to get back into medal contention.

The top-seeded Michal Matyja & Piotr Janiak from Poland were their next opponent, in the semifinals. Doranth & Tille took the first set with a solid advantage, but the second was a fierce battle, which ended well into extra time – 2-0 (11-5, 16-14) in favor of the Germans.

The final match was a spectacular display of top-level snow volleyball. The crowd had completely packed the stands around the centre court and was cheering for Austria's home star Florian Schnetzer, last year's winner in Wagrain-Kleinarl, and his German partner Paul Becker. The game was tight in each of the sets before Ferdinand Tille closed it off at 3-1 (11-9, 8-11, 11-8, 11-8) with an off-the-net ace for the last point.

"I may be the more experienced player on the snow, but I want to say thank you to my partner!" Bene Doranth said. "It is quite hard to play for the first time, but he did a really, really good job. It's awesome! We lost a really tough game this morning, but in the end we made it. Even the sun came out for the final, the crowd is amazing, so everything is perfect!"

"Yesterday I said that I am here to have fun and this is how I have fun, because it is fun to win," added Ferdinand Tille. "Applause to our opponents! They played really well. Bene and I play together on the snow for the first time, but we know each other very well, because we played on the same indoor team for two years. Before this tournament I asked him what I have to do. He told me to take soccer shoes and here we are. I am feeling great, but I am also very tired. The snow is really exhausting. Thank god the final was only four sets! I will definitely come here again next year!"

The bronze medal went to Matyja & Janiak who mastered a 3-0 (11-4, 11-8, 11-7) victory over von Deichmann & Kessler in the third place match.

Czech favorites cruise to Wagrain-Kleinarl title without dropping a set

Anna Dostalova & Michaela Knoblochova are on a roll. After winning bronze in Spindleruv Mlyn, silver in Disentis and gold in Kranjska Gora on the 2017 CEV Snow Volleyball European Tour, the Czech girls triumphed with gold once again at the Snow Volleyball Goes Europe international tournament in Wagrain-Kleinarl. On the Austrian snow Dostalova & Knoblochova displayed their superiority and cruised to the title without losing a single set.

On Sunday, the top-seeded pair overcame the cold weather in the Austrian Alps to manage a 2-0 (11-5, 11-8) win against Ireland's Ernesta Gruzdaite & Ivett Simon-Byrne. In the other semifinal, Germany's Tiana Nicolaus & Valeska Kasimir, seeded at #2, shut out the last home team standing, Maike Rieger & Anika Noggler, by 2-0 (11-5, 11-2).

Before it was time for the grand finale, the bronze medal match delivered a spectacular show for the cheering crowd. Gruzdaite & Simon-Byrne fell two sets behind Rieger & Noggler, but persevered to come back for a 3-2 (6-11, 9-11, 11-7, 11-9, 11-2) victory and first medal from the snow.

In the final, Dostalova & Knoblochova continued their domination on the snow of Wagrain-Kleinarl and despite some tough resistance from Nicolaus & Kasimir, mastered a straight-set 3-0 (11-9, 11-6, 11-3) victory to rejoice on the top of the podium again.

“It does not happen often to go through the entire competition without losing any sets, so we are in a perfect mood,” said an elated Michaela Knoblochova after the last rally.

“We are here, in Wagrain-Kleinarl, for the first time and we love it! We love the atmosphere. There are a lot of people watching and the views are very nice,” Anna Dostalova added. “The weather is a bit strange. Yesterday Michaela was sun-bathing in her bikini, and today it was really cold, but this is snow volleyball. The organization was perfect and you could see it on our faces that we enjoyed every rally. We want to thank Chaka2 for that. I like the fact that we did not lose any sets, because it is not easy with the sets being so short – you miss two side-outs and you do not have enough time to catch up. With every competition we pile up experience playing in different conditions and we recommend to the other teams to go to as many tournaments as they can.”

Further information regarding the tour, the registration, kids' activities or press pictures are online on www.snowvolleyball.com or follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) #snowvolleyball!