

PRESS NEWS

Allgäu ski jump architect Hans-Martin Renn provides ski jumpers and flyers with a safe experience

The architect from Fischen in the Allgäu has been planning ski jumps and ski flying hills with his team since 2003 - and not just in the Allgäu. His work creates the basic conditions for sporting events on the jumps.

An architectural office in Fischen: models of ski jumps, ski flying hills and even jump judges' towers are on display. Hans-Martin Renn (54) heads up this team of architects. He points to a model of the ski jumping hills in Oberstdorf and says: "During the opening ceremony to mark the first jump of the Four Hills Tournament, we managed to get former RTL presenter Günther Jauch to say: 'this is the coolest ski jumping arena.' This was mainly because of the 'fantastic cauldron', as Jauch called the run-out, or arena, at the time. It's so much better than the old one." Jauch's statement still fills Renn with pride today: "Alongside my team, I managed to make the necessary renovation of the ski jumping hills in Oberstdorf attractive not only for the athletes, but also for spectators and press representatives."

Günther Jauch: "the coolest ski jumping arena"

The first renovation of the large ski jumping hill took place in 2003. At the time, it was the team's very first ski jumping hill project. The architectural office was still located in Sonthofen back then. Circumstances at the time allowed them to enter the planning process that was already under way. They were awarded the contract and took the brave decision to accept it. Within three months, they had completely redesigned the large-scale project: the layout of the stadium, in particular, changed from the ground up. "If this project had gone pear-shaped, they would have made mincemeat out of us," Renn recalls. "The renovation was a wonderful project, and our team went above and beyond. Both we and the clients were under considerable time pressure. Decisions basically had to be made quickly. That's exactly why I enjoy projects like this, with fixed events such as the Four Hills Tournament depending on them," says Renn. "This large-scale project was the turning point for our architectural office, because after this contract we put out feelers for other sports facility renovations. Now planning ski jumps makes up 65 to 70 percent of our order volume," says the 54-year-old. "We are a small architectural office from the Allgäu. Nevertheless, when it comes to ski jumps, we are the office that has the most renovation and new-build projects to our credit," he says.

Planning a ski jumping hill is always a big challenge. "You want to provide the athletes with a good piece of kit that is suitable for most of them. So we asked the professionals, coaches and the operating companies. That was hard work because we were given plenty of personal theories, but hardly any tangible analysis. The least helpful statement came from a top Austrian ski jumper. When asked what makes a good hill, he said: 'If I win on it, it's good; if I don't, it sucks'", Renn says with a laugh.

Greater safety through sophisticated ski jump planning

Renn's team of architects rose to the challenge in the Audi Arena. "The athletes are taking to this hill well. By athletes, I don't just mean the professionals, but also the youngsters. This hill

introduces young athletes to long jumps without much fear, because the take-off platform on the normal hill, for example, is only 2.2 metres high. The jump is therefore easy to master for almost every experienced jumper. So we've done a great job in terms of safety for the athletes," says Renn.

The tunnel under the smaller jumps in the Audi Arena is another example of how the team is striving for more safety - for everyone involved. The tunnel runs under the smaller hills: "HS 60", "HS 40" and "HS 20". This is where young skiers are particularly active. In the past, the ski jumpers could only reach these hills by crossing the run-out, or arena, on foot. The tunnel has substantially reduced the danger of collisions since the renovation in 2005.

Hans-Martin Renn has also been chairman of the sub-committee for ski jumping hills at the FIS International Ski Federation since 2013. This gives him excellent insight into the development of the sport. For example, jumpers and flyers need ever shorter run-ups because the skis, suits and also the athletes' physical fitness are improving all the time. That has to be taken into account when redesigning. "In concrete terms, this means that there must be enough starting positions leading down the hill. I get very nervous at ski jumping or ski flying events when, for example, the start is from level two. This means that the positions could slowly run out. My FIS sub-committee has to avert this worst-case scenario at an early stage. In such a case, we change the standards so that everyone is satisfied in the end," he says.

Renovation of the Heini Klopfer Ski Jump

Hans-Martin Renn is particularly proud of the modernisation of the Heini Klopfer Ski Jump in Oberstdorf. "There are only five ski flying hills in the whole world. So it is something very special to be involved in such a project. On top of that, it's a ski flying hill in my home region. I have never been so excited before a first jump after a renovation as I was at the ski flying hill in Oberstdorf. I really had butterflies in my stomach before Karl Geiger flew and even during the jump," he recalls. "The project was also particularly exciting because we were under a lot of pressure in terms of time, the weather often didn't play along that year and we were very experimental in our planning," Renn says.

Has he tried ski jumping or ski flying? Or does he want to try it out? "A resounding no," the architect answers, and concludes with a laugh: "I'm no 'Eddie the Eagle' and at the age of 54 it doesn't 'tickle' me any more either."

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