



## THE NAME BEHIND THE BRAND

In the winter of 1937, Martin Matsbo skied to victory in the 17-kilometer cross-country race at Holmenkollen, Norway. In the audience that day was fellow Swede Borje Gabrielsson, the head of AB Astra, Sweden's largest pharmaceutical company. Though Matsbo's ski conditions that day were smooth and easy, Gabrielsson had experienced rough racing conditions just weeks earlier.



Until that time, ski waxes had been developed mostly by chance out of ingredients like tar, bicycle tires, beeswax, and animal fats, but Gabrielsson felt that a scientifically developed ski wax could be made to suit any ski condition. Though his Norwegian friends laughed at him, Gabrielsson pursued his idea by enlisting the help of Matsbo, whose successful ski career was helped, in part, by his superior wax-making abilities. But, A fire in Matsbo's wax boiler in the autumn of 1942 had left Matsbo without any of his wax recipes or test results and most importantly—without a job.

Together Matsbo and Astra chemists and researchers from the Kungliga Technical College in Stockholm built a successful partnership. Instead of traditional ingredients, Matsbo and Astra turned to synthetic resins and refined petroleum compounds in constructing their wax. In 1945 alone the team had carried out 6,000 tests on over 200 wax mixtures. Though one universal ski wax proved unrealistic, Astra and Matsbo developed a series of smooth waxes and a series of sticky waxes that they categorized by color - green, blue, and red - to make them more easily recognizable.



In 1946, after three years of research and development, the partnership was ready to release their new synthetic waxing system. But, they still had one crucial task—developing a name. To solve that problem, Astra held a name competition and the winner was Svix, which was amended to Swix pre-





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sumably due to associations with Sweden and wax. On November 28, 1946 the name was presented to the public and Swix was officially born.

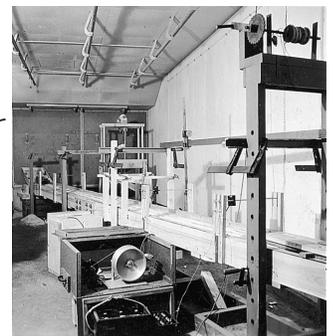
Many professional skiers in Sweden were initially skeptical of the product, but outstanding results by "Swixed" skiers were the best possible advertisement. In the 1948 Olympics, the Swedish ski team won their gold medals skiing on the new Swix wax.

### SWIX IN NORWAY

Due to strict import restrictions in Sweden at that time, Swix could not be exported to Norway. Luckily, Astra had a Norwegian subsidiary, and decided to



establish its own production facility for Swix in Norway. In 1946, Astra purchased a production plant in Lørenskog, Norway. Norway had serious shortages of most goods at that time, and industrial equipment was even more difficult to find. The new Norwegian facility did not even have light switches, let alone any of the necessary production equipment. But, Bjørn



Kristiansen, who was hired to put the factory together, went to every scrap dealer in town to find old boilers and pipe ends. He even straightened rusty nails for reuse. By 1947, the plant Kristiansen built was able to produce 4,000 ski waxes a day with the help of 89 employees, and in the winter of 1948, Swix officially made and sold its products in Norway.

In the post-World War II years, however, Norwegians were not very receptive to Swedish products, and even though Swix was made in Norway by Norwegian workers, the country was initially resistant to its products. The Norwegians disliked that Swedes were trying to knock out respected Norwegian brands, but soon Swix's superior reputation was impossible to ignore. Norwegian elite skiers began using the wax, and its popularity spread to recreational skiers





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across the country.

As the sport of skiing was spreading fast around the world, the number of alpine skiers was growing exponentially decade-by-decade. To keep up with the market, Swix expanded its range of products with wax for ski jumpers and alpine skiers in 1948.



In 1967, in an attempt to spread Swix to more elite cross-country skiers, Swix hired Norway's national cross-country coach, Oddmund Jensen, to test the ski waxes. In 1971, Jensen received a number of wax samples for testing from Martin Matsbo, graded as "interesting," "somewhat interesting" and "very interesting." On a sleety day in Lillehammer, Jensen seized the opportunity to test some of the wax mixtures on the rough conditions.

The skiing was slow, and he had to stop several times to apply the 20-30 waxes he had brought with him. One of the samples labeled "somewhat interesting" glided extremely well. Jensen had never experienced anything like it. He travelled straight home to tell Matsbo about his success. The recipe, known as K-779, was then given the name "Blue Extra," and the wax proved to be one of Swix's most successful waxes ever.

With the newfound popularity of cross-country skiing in Central Europe and North America in the 1970s, demand for equipment and wax increased dramatically. Many young, new markets opened up and people needed to be instructed in basic skiing techniques and waxing skills.

