



THE NAME BEHIND THE BRAND

PART II

ACQUISITION

As Swix grew, Astra decided to expand its product lines by purchasing Trygve Liljedahl's ski pole factory in Lillehammer, Norway in 1974. Liljedahl was a visionary who had made a major industry of ski pole manufacturing. He was the leader in his field and produced ski poles for both elite and recreational skiers. When Astra took over, Liljedahl was almost 60-years-old and was trying to slow down his hectic lifestyle. Swix was now one of the world's leading ski pole brands.



In 1976, Swix entered a partnership with the textile producer Odlo, who had been the first company to offer ice-skating and cross-country outfits made of nylon. In a few short years, Swix Sport International had built a ski empire that consisted of Swix, Odlo and Liljedahl, and all three were world leaders in each of their fields.

SYNTHETIC SKIS

At the World Championships in Falun in 1974, skis made of synthetic materials had a breakthrough in the sport of cross-country, and with the new skis, glide wax was more in demand. On wooden skis, a full tube of wax was necessary for long cross-country trips. With the new skis, grip-wax necessity declined, as it only needed to be applied down the middle of the synthetic skis in the kick zone.

In 1978, the investor Johan Henrik Andresen purchased Swix from Astra. The Andresen family was and is one of Norway's most solid industrial families: owners of J.L. Tiedemanns Tobaksfabrik. One of Andresen's ancestors, Nicolai Andresen, had even been a ski pioneer a century earlier. Swix could not have found a better-suited owner. In 1986, wax production was moved to the ski pole factory in Lillehammer and all of Swix was, for the first time, brought together in the same building. Swix at this time was also working on a new, revolutionary glide powder.

CERA F

On 11 July 1984 Professor Gambarette of the University of Padova at the chemical factory Rimar submitted a patent application for a white powder with exceptionally good friction-reducing properties. In the winter of 1985, the Italian cross-country team saw the potential of the new powder. The substance offered better glide properties, less icing and better dirt-rejecting properties without diminishing the grip, but because competition rules stipulate that all competitors must have access to the same equipment, the Italians were not able to keep the substance to themselves. Swix was offered exclusivity to further develop the product, as well as on sales and distribution, and even though the product was very expensive, it was a tremendous success.



When the powder, known as Cera F, first came onto the market in the winter of 1987, it captured only a modest share of the alpine market, but ever since, the market share has grown and grown.

With the popularity of the Cera F waxes in the alpine market, Swix became the world's leader in alpine ski wax in the mid-1990s. In alpine, testing is much more time-consuming and risky. Courses must be closed for the testing process and test skiers must approximate the style and speed of elite skiers using identical suits. The margins are miniscule and the differences are difficult to register. But those differences are measurable, and Swix has been in the front of developments in this area. From 1994 to today, as many or more World Cup victories have been achieved skiing on Swix in alpine events than in cross-country events.





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