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Dunked

The Zurich guild "Riesbach" won the 8th "Schifferstechen" ("Boat Joust") from a field of 25 teams. This contest dates from mediaeval times and is a mix of clowning and sport, involving two opponents clad in knightly attire. Standing on a fixed platform in a long wooden rowboat steered by means of poles and rudders, they attempt to knock each other into the River Limmat with the aid of a four meter long padded lance. The winner is the one left standing. The contest is a duel on water which athletic heavyweights have a good chance of winning. The "Schifferstechen" was first introduced in Zurich in 1576 but in later years the tradition lapsed. In 1979 a guild called "zur Schiffeuten" revived the custom and has organised it every three years since.

SNIPPETS

OLYMPIC FEVER: After Graubünden and Montreux, Berne has also submitted its candidature for the 2010 Winter Olympics. The concept envisages distributed venues throughout Switzerland.

BEER SOLD OFF: Feldschlösschen, the largest brewery in Switzerland, is selling its core business, the beverages division. This reduces the company to a real-estate business.

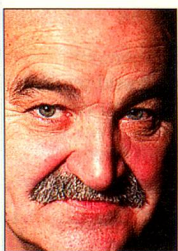
TAMEDIA EVEN MIGHTIER: The media group and publisher of the "Tages-Anzeiger" has swallowed up the "Finanz und Wirtschaft" publishing house and eponymous newspaper retroactively to 1 January 2000.

IDEAL PARTNER FOUND: Switzerland's UBS bank, now listed on the New York stock exchange, has acquired the US investment institute PaineWebber for US\$ 10.8 billion. According to UBS CEO Marcel Ospel this is a match "made in heaven".

BUILDING BOOM: Every second one square meter of Switzerland is built on. The total built-up area amounts to

PEOPLE

Federal Councillor Kaspar Villiger has appointed the city of Zurich's Head of Social Welfare, **Walter Schmid**, as Project Leader of the Solidarity Fund. Formerly in charge of the Swiss Refugee Aid Agency (now headed by **Alberto Achermann**), Schmid is Honorary President of the Swiss Conference for Social Aid and Vice President of the Federal Commission for Foreigners.



Werner Lüdi has died at the age of 64 from a heart attack. The saxophonist from Malans/GR was regarded as a creative genius and a pioneer of European free jazz.

Folklore actor **Paul Bühlmann** is dead. Among other things he performed in Dür-

renmatt's plays "Besuch der alten Dame" and "Romulus der Grosse", in the "Niederdorf Opera", in Kurt Früh's film "Bäckerei Zürrer" and in Xavier Koller's film "Das gefrorene Herz".




Frank Dukas, proprietor of the Zurich Press Agency, has died at the age of 73. His agency represented major foreign photographic agencies in Switzerland. It was set up by Dukas' mother Lotte in 1939 as a text agency dedicated to opposing the Nazi regime.

Vaud conductor **Pierre Colombo** died in Geneva at the age of 86. As well as conducting the Orchestre de la Suisse romande and the Orchestre de Chambre de Lausanne, he also conducted the Berlin Philharmonic, the Vienna Symphony Orchestra and the Salzburg Mozarteum.

Helen Bucher Voegeli, Chairwoman of the Board and co-owner of the family firm Bucher AG Motorex of Langenthal, died at the age of 47 from cancer. In 1999 Voegeli was regarded as the most innovative entrepreneur in Switzerland.

Åke Senning, former surgeon and clinic director at the University Hospital of Zurich, has died at the age of 75. Born in Sweden, he is regarded as the inventor of the pacemaker and was a pioneer of heart transplantation.

Shortly before the start of the Locarno Film Festival which he was to preside over for the first time, the Liberal Democrat governor of Ticino **Giuseppe Buffi** died at the age of 62. He played a key role in establishing the first university in Italian-speaking Switzerland. 



2,803,048,000 m², according to the Federal Office for Zoning Development home page www.admin.ch/brp/deutsch/index.html).


CYBER CANTON: The two half-cantons of Appenzell have been going their separate ways for 400 years, until they discovered the World Wide Web. Now Catholic Innerrhoden and Protestant Ausserrhoden have created a joint presentation on: www.appenzellerland.ch

CYBER CITY: Fancy a stroll through distant cities without setting foot outside your own door? The Internet makes it possible. Lucerne is the first Swiss city to publish a three-dimensional model of itself on the World Wide Web. The address is: www.lucerne-by-byte.ch

LACK OF HYGIENE: Expensive restaurants, poor toilets and lousy playgrounds – these are the conclusions of a Europe-wide survey of motorway service stations. One in three of the 74 European sites fails to meet the minimum requirements. The Swiss service stations at Lucerne-Neukirch West and St. Gottard South in Airolo on the A2 were ranked “Good”. La Gruyère on the A12 and St. Margrethen North on the A1 were deemed “Adequate”.

RAILWAY DOWNSIZING: The SBB aims to use fewer staff to service 20,000 locomotives and coaches and is planning to shed 1070 jobs by 2005. This means the loss of every fourth vehicle maintenance job. The goal is to save one fifth of the CHF 600 million in wage costs.

“ZÜRI BRÄNNT, BÄRN BRÖNNT”: 20 years have passed since the violent Swiss youth riots of the 1980s. The “Movement of the disaffected” foundered on the rocks of opposition from public authorities and their own aspirations. Nevertheless, many Swiss media commemorated the rebellion of 1980–1982.


AGENT SENTENCED: Guilty on all counts, twelve months suspended sentence and a 5-year ban on entering the country. This was the sentence passed by the Federal Criminal Court of Justice on an Israeli Mossad agent who was caught installing eavesdropping equipment in an apartment-block in Berne. 

Wintery Summer

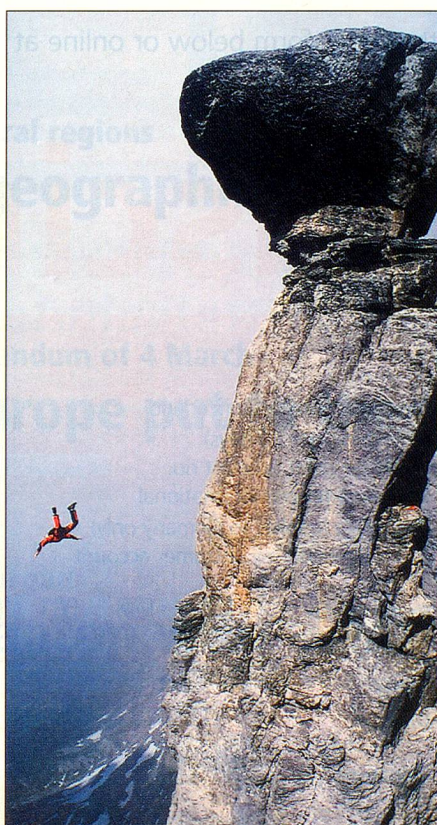



In mid-July many regions of Switzerland were subjected to torrential rain, and new snow fell in the mountains. Roads had to be temporarily blocked and passes closed. Chains were obligatory on the Flüela, Julier and Splügen passes. The last time Winter showed its face in July was in 1993 and 1980. In August heavy rain caused landslides and floods. In Grindelwald two American hikers and their native guide were

swept by a mudslide into a stream and killed.

By contrast, Switzerland experienced the warmest first six months of the year since measurements began in 1864. On average it was three degrees warmer and rained less than usual. The so-called “Schafkalte” cold spell, customarily expected in June, failed to materialise. 

Leap from the North Face



Swiss daredevil Ueli Gegendach made a dramatic leap from the 3970-meter high Champignon, a bizarre rockface in the Eiger North Face. Thanks to his parachute he landed safely in a field at the foot of the Eiger. 

Point of View

“The Swiss have done their utmost to keep their allegedly perfect world alive.”

Claudia Honegger, Sociology Professor at the University of Berne

Texts: Alice Baumann/Photos: Keystone