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A different aspect of Swiss Expo2002

This sporting Expo

Frisbee golf will be among the Expo attractions. Visitors to Switzerland's national exhibition are being promised some sporting action of an unconventional kind this summer.

The ExpoGames are likely to be a major highlight for sports fans, players and even those who don't normally get involved in any kind of sporting activity.

The Games will see thousands of amateur sportsmen and women from across Switzerland competing in events organised by more than 60 of the country's sports associations.

Beyond the mainstream

And if mainstream sports such as football and tennis don't appeal to you, how about juggling, cherry-stone spitting, competitive dancing or frisbee golf – all of which will be seeking a wider audience at Expo.

A spot of skiing in August will also be possible during the ExpoGames winter sports week, with snowboarders, bobsledders and tobogganists also battling it out on specially prepared artificial snow.

Strictly hard-core

Hard-core athletes will be seeking their masochistic thrills at the Expo Gigathlon event, which invites participants on a seven-day, 1,494-kilometre tour of Switzerland made up of running, cycling, swimming and inline skating. The Gigathlon and the ExpoGames don't get underway until July, but sports fans can still seek out a couple of exhibits to whet their appetites in the meantime.

Motion picture

The "Circuit" cinema in Yverdon uses a 360 degree screen to portray the thoughts and feelings of top athletes before, during and after major events. In keeping with the interactive nature of sport, visitors to the cinema are invited to pedal stationary bicycles to the rhythm of the accompanying music.

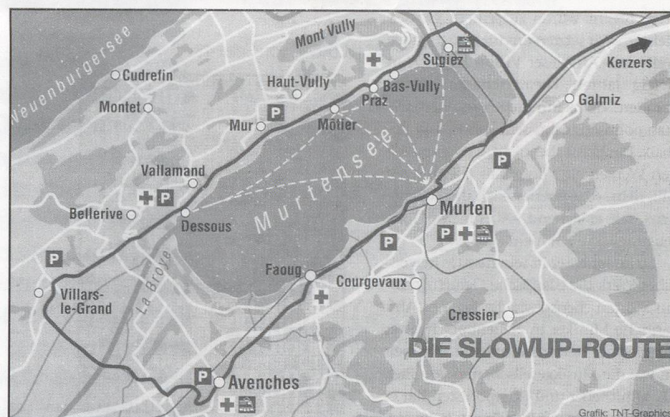
"We started brainstorming for this exhibit more than a year ago," recalled "Circuit" musical director Corry Knobel during the Yverdon media preview, "and I'm very, very happy that we've now been able to realise the plans we had back then. We began by conducting interviews with the athletes – just putting a tape recorder on the table and talking to each of them for an hour or more. Many of the final images and ideas that you can see at "Circuit" came out of those initial conversations."

Sport and politics

Over at the Expo site in Biel, an even more unusual exhibit employs sport as a motif for examining the complexities of politics. Headphone clad visitors to the "Nouvelle DestiNation" wearing headphones are posed with questions about political problems and gamesmanship while walking through a landscape of goalposts, tennis nets, basketball hoops and other sporting paraphernalia.

"The basic idea seemed simple to me," exhibit designer Charles Lombard explained to swissinfo, "but it wasn't so evident to other people. I saw how in sport, you have rules, goals, rivalries and alliances and it occurred to me that the same was true with politics." Lombard concedes that the political process is usually a good deal more complicated than your average football match, but insists that the sporting metaphor can still serve a purpose. "It's the very simplicity of sport that I think the political world should look to emulate," Lombard reckons. "Swiss politics in particular is so complicated with its referenda and the distinctions between federal, cantonal and communal politics. And how many people have actually read the new Swiss constitution? One message of "Nouvelle DestiNation" is that we should perhaps cherish the simple things."

Sport as political metaphor, sport as an insight into the human psyche and sport just for sport's sake – may the games begin!
by Mark Ledsom/swissinfo/13.5.02



'Slowup around the lake of Murten'

Sunday June 9 will be a day to remember for the Swiss visitors to EXPO-2002. People of a 'sporty inclination' are invited to circumvent the lake of Murten by their own muscle power either by walking, skating or biking. The Swiss created the special name of 'Slowup-Plausch' for this event and they recently called for a 'trial-run' to gauge people's interest. With 60,000 participants the organisers were pleasantly surprised.

On Saturday June 8 there will be a 'roller-parade' in Neuenburg along the lake of Neuenburg, with inline-skates, kickboards and scooters ('Trottinetts' as the Swiss call them). Let's hope the weather is fine for the weekend! Ed.

