

snow



Behind the scenes at the Nikita Chickita



Having natural curiosity isn't always a helpful trait, but it served us well when we went undercover at Europe's Nikita Chickita, as we got hella juicy details from drunk speakers and confused judges to, er, marmots

Backpacks and jackets are spread over the floor. There are a couple of snowboards. And helmets. And huge paper bags filled to the brim with Nikita stuff. Excited girls are scurrying around in the middle of it all. The race office of the Nikita Chickita in Serfaus is humming like a beehive. But although it looks quite messy, there's a system behind the chaos, somewhere...

With five years of experience already chalked up the Nikita event organisers are a well-oiled team who know all the tricks for a smooth event, such as taking Polaroid pictures of all the girls in full gear, which comes in damn handy when the speaker forgets to announce the riders' names on the mountain because he's too hungover from the welcome dinner the previous night. "The most stressful part is probably waiting on the number of girls who

turn up and managing their expectations," says Michelle, PR Manager for Nikita. But they show up in greater and greater numbers each year wanting to be judged by Nikita team riders Julia Baumgartner, Sabrina Kusar, Maude Richon and Ana Rumiha.

The judging can't be an easy thing to do at all. Not only do the four Nikita riders have their own sense of style, they also have different



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expectations of what should be the level at an amateur contest like this. While Julia encourages the competitors with enthusiastic shout outs, turning a blind eye if 5s or 7s aren't stucked perfectly clean, newcomer Ana, who only won this contest and with it her sponsorship last year, is playing the nasty judge with a merciless assignment of her points. This obviously raises some discussion amongst the judges, which is promptly silenced when one of the girls slightly misjudges her jump and almost flies into the table.

The hardest part of their work is still waiting for them anyway. Even though the top spots are relatively obvious, the level of the rest of the field is almost indistinguishable and all four moan about this part of the job. It's not made any easier by the fact that although they agreed on a system on how to give out the points in advance, they of course did it all differently. And so Julia's balcony, where they meet before dinner to figure the final ranking out, soon drowns in charts and notepaper. In the end confusion gets everyone and the third, fourth and fifth places get swapped again and

again before they're all happy with it. Getting through the tough part does however lead them into the sweetest part of the evening where they get to party with all the girls. Something all the Nikita lot are simply great at. They made their marketing boss dress up as a marmot and walk through the crowd with a bucket of vodka followed by one with water and also hired a masked masseur. Whatever it takes to get the party started right. Good times, see you next year.

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