

They Do Come Back

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At two minutes past two on 7 February 1975, a young Auckland ski-racer named Helen Klisser suffered a broken back while racing for her country in a downhill event in Switzerland. She was in hospital for 14 weeks at a Swiss paraplegic centre. She was given further treatment on her return to Auckland.

Yesterday, Helen Klisser, now aged 24, re-entered competition for the first time since that accident. Starting 15th, and last, in the first run of the giant slalom of the New Zealand championships on the Turoa field of Mount Ruapehu, she shook everybody, including recent New Zealand representatives, by recording the fastest time. She was not so superior in the second run, the ranking competitor of the tournament, Julia Allison, of Canterbury, beating her fairly decisively.

But Miss Klisser, shouting encouragement to herself as she sped through the last gates to the finish-line, still ended runner-up in the event. It was a remarkable exposition of her courage.

Full of spirit at the start of the first run, 2231 metres up the slopes of Ruapehu, she is also reputed to have the most amusing, and amused, giggle in New Zealand women's skiing.

However she was still a little wary of racing; and because she has not fully recovered from the accident, she will not compete today in the downhill – “It would not be fair to my family.”

The eldest of four children, Miss Klisser is a fourth-year arts student at Auckland University. Given the right sort of luck in her special subjects, English and fine arts, she hopes to complete her degree and, next year, to begin in New York the study of film production.

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