



26 Ski areas    ||    8 regions    ||    2 islands    ||    1 website

Since its inception in 1995, Snowco has been a pioneer on the **World Wide Web** using different technologies to promote and inform New Zealanders about snow sports and the winter conditions. It is still the only website which covers all ski and board areas with in-depth news, reports and information about both skiing and snowboarding in New Zealand.

Historically speaking we introduced a number of firsts throughout the ski areas and on the digital scene. If foresight was ever needed, we were fortunate enough to glimpse what the potential future might hold and as such went about creating a niche existence on the web through the acquisition of available domain names. Among them included – [www.ski.co.nz](http://www.ski.co.nz), [www.winter.co.nz](http://www.winter.co.nz), [www.nzski.com](http://www.nzski.com), [www.snow.co.nz](http://www.snow.co.nz), [www.nzsnowboard.co.nz](http://www.nzsnowboard.co.nz), [www.heli-ski.co.nz](http://www.heli-ski.co.nz), [www.nzsnow.co.nz](http://www.nzsnow.co.nz), [www.ohakune.co.nz](http://www.ohakune.co.nz), [www.skiruapehu.co.nz](http://www.skiruapehu.co.nz), [www.skicam.co.nz](http://www.skicam.co.nz), [www.skiresorts.co.nz](http://www.skiresorts.co.nz), [www.skiwanaka.co.nz](http://www.skiwanaka.co.nz), and various others which we generally gave to the appropriate company over time.

This allowed us to launch a new and vital service of instant snow information accessed when and where needed. Relying on the previous phone and fax reports seemed archaic when a digital service seemed to be the way forward...

- **In 1995** there were 18,957 websites worldwide and Snowco was one of them. There are now over 100 million active websites. The website was hand-coded using Notepad on an IBM 386 computer with 4Mb memory and 256Kb of Ram.
- **In 1996** Snowco was the first to broadcast live snow reports directly from the ski areas to the web. Snowco developed the first web official web presence for most of the ski areas in the country.
- **In 1998** Snowco published The Daily Shred, New Zealand's first video on demand website showing event coverage in the Wanaka area with developer and host Gordon Crabb.
- **In 1999** Snowco were the first in New Zealand to adapt security webcam technology for the use of watching a live view of a remote location. Through 14.4Kb dial-up modems, the camera could take a colour photo every 15 minutes, where communication was possible, and send the photo to the web. Snowco at one time or another has owned and hosted the official webcams on every ski area that now uses this technology.
- Also **in 1999** Snowco developed automatically updated graphics for snow reports to appear on the TV networks. Prime TV, TV3 & CTV all used this technology.

- Snowco has in the past won accolades for its endeavours; TUANNZ deemed it the Sports & Recreation website of the year in 2000 and from 2001 to 2004 Snowco won the Sports & Recreation section of the New Zealand Netguide Web Awards.
- **In 2004** Sam Masters with Andy Sharem, and in 2005 Sam Masters & Nigel McKissock took the Mayhem Tour to the road throughout New Zealand. As well as filming a weekly video show for the web, Sam, Andy and Nigel created three hour specials which broadcast on SkyTV.
- **In 2006**, Snowco achieved a world first when it webcast the New Zealand Burton Open via satellite direct to the web and Vodafone handheld devices. This was also a New Zealand first for adapting satellite broadband provider, Farmside's technology for this use. Snowco has since broadcast live, and prepared same day highlights for the Burton Open, NZ Freeski Open and the Pinnacles Extreme and numerous other snow sports events for both the web and TV. Also in 2006 nzXsports.com launched snowco.mobi and Surfco.mobi, the Snowco and Surfco websites configured for smart handheld devices.
- **In 2007** in conjunction with MetOcean, Snowco developed New Zealand's first ski and board area specific weather and snow forecasts.
- **In 2008** Snowco created a studio based weekly snow update using green screen technology with host Lucy Clinton-Baker.
- **In 2009** Snowco made an important redesign of the operating software from the ground up saw a change to the open source Django publishing software. This enabled pro-riders to Blog on the site with the introduction of the Snowco Pro-Filers section. Also in 2009 Snowco introduced audio report technology, whereby Ski areas could ring an 0800 number, leave a voice message report that would automatically update and display on the web.
- **In 2010** nzxsports.com developed, using the open source Django software event management software that enables and event organiser to populate their website with photos, video, media content and event results using simple online editing tools. This software can also utilize live streaming of their event and third party live scoring software. This software runs in conjunction with the re-launched of New Zealand's most complete snow sports events calendar viewable on Snowco.

All these innovations have been designed for ONE purpose...

To provide the latest and most accurate snow reports and information provided in real time. Of course, we are merely independent and as such don't control what gets written and said by the mountains. This information we leave to them, tongue in cheek of course. Cameras have been the 'pictures that spoke a thousand words' and as such many mountains were initially reluctant to allow us the ability to install cameras.

Our ongoing battle to broadcast what conditions are really like has been uphill and challenging, but rewarding. The close proximity to competing fields in the South Island has meant we were able to convince competitors to introduce new camera technology and create a constant competitive environment for snow reporting. However, the North Island is a different kettle completely.

Snowco is a pioneer in its field, no doubt. The staff is dedicated to bringing the most innovative and cutting edge forms of media to show their love of the New Zealand mountains and snow. With recent additions like dedicated mobile sites specifically designed for mobile phones and its foray into Facebook and Twitters social media scene, Snowco intends to remain at the cutting edge in the type of content, and the way it delivers it for some time to come.

Founded by ex NZ Olympic downhill speed skier David Scott and invested in heavily by Wellington Investment firm Infratil, the last 15 years has seen a cornering of the market and supply of snow reports to some of the biggest publishers in NZ including the MetService, MSN, Yahoo, Fairfax Media and APN. Snowco has one aim, to continuously move forward in a digital age of real time and accurate information accessed anywhere, anytime by anyone.

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