

RAICHLE SKI BOOTS

In 1968 the Company introduced the *Raichle Fiber Jet* (aka Red Hot also available in Black or Blue), the first boot to break the color barrier and the one with a laced inner boot which you could use to walk around or to drive a car and the outer boot with a clam shell design that hinged down the middle of the sole (a pity there is none available today).

For the 50 year anniversary, they launched the famous **Down Hill** and the steel reinforced **Jaguar de luxe**, both with double strings in front and one in the back. In the 1980-81 ski seasons, they introduced the **Flexon 5**, a 3-piece boot, an improved three-piece design developed by Sven Coomer. He had worked on space suits for the moon and commercialized by ex-ski racer Erik Giese of Aspen's Comfort Products. With its floating tongue, the boot could flex at the ankle without bulging or distorting. One of the first pro ski and freestyle skier to compete in the boot was America's Billy Shaw on a prototype in 1979 and hot dog freestyle skier Peter Ouellette. The boots quickly became one of the top boots of choice by Olympic racers and freestylers. Bill Johnston won a gold medal at the Olympic downhill Sarajevo (1984), Nelson Carmichael was a two-time World Cup Grand Prix Mogul champion and won a bronze medal at the Olympics of Albertville (1992).

Boot designer Sven Coomer later improved Henke's design with a corrugated tongue, commercialized by Comfort Products, an Aspen, Company owned by the ex-ski racer Erik Giese. Giese licensed Coomer's concept to the Swiss Company Raichle-Molitor (Raichle took over Molitor in 1977) who introduced it in 1979 as the **Flexon**, which became very popular among downhill racers and mogul skiers. The design closely resembles a conventional front-entry design, with separate foot and leg sections riveted at the ankle. However, the overlapping flaps of these designs are cut away, leaving a slot-like opening running down the front of the leg and over the foot. A separate plastic tongue is positioned over this opening on the front of the boot, and buckled down to close it. The open cuff (the "throat") makes the boots easy to get on and off, and the shaping of the tongue allows complete control over the forward flex. A single shell can be used with different tongues to provide any needed flex pattern from racing-stiff to freestyle-soft.

In 1983, Raichle built a new factory, again in Kreuzlingen. Their president, who owned the Company, sold it to Peter Werhan (a grandson of Konrad Adenauer, chancellor of Germany). Sales grew worldwide due to podiums of Olympic and World Cup race as well as freestyle competitions and as Raichle held strong patents. After Werhan died, the business went down. In 1996, the Company was purchased by Swiss banker Dr. Grosnick who bought companies in distress such as Kneissl skis. He named it Austrian Kneissl and renamed it in 1998 to Kneissel & Friends. Their marketing strategy was Kneissl for skiing and ski boots, Raichle for climbing and hiking shoes, and the new brand DeeLuxe for snowboard boots. The strategy resulted however in sales decreases and as a consequence the Company was sold in 2003 Mammut Sports Group (www.mammut.ch). Latter was founded by Swiss Kaspar Tanner in 1862 for ropes, now worldwide known for mountaineering, outdoor pursuits and snow sports products.

Raichle History Throughout the Years

1909 - Louis Raichle establishes company in Kreuzlingen, Switzerland, making footwear and slippers

1912 - Adds military boots to the range

1924 - Includes ski and hiking boots in the line

1958 - Begins specialising in ski, mountain and hiking boots

1964 - Winter Olympics in Innsbruck, Austria, mark transition to buckle ski boots.
- Raichle promote their buckle boot with world's first coloured advert for ski boots

1968 - Introduces their first plastic ski boot as a clamshell fibreglass outer, over a lace-up leather inner known as the Fiber Jet (aka Red Hot)
- Boot is recorded for innovation by Museum of Modern Art (MOMA) in New York

1969 - American subsidiary of Raichle Molitor, United States Inc., is founded

1978 - Eric Giese, ex-spacesuit engineer, based in Aspen USA designs a new type of ski boot
- Shows his prototype boot to Raichle Molitor, who sends him to Switzerland to meet the Raichle president

1980 - Introduce the Giese inspired Flexon 5, the first "three piece" style ski boot

1983 - Production and administration building rebuilt and surrounded by fruit trees, in Kreuzlingen, Switzerland
- Two manufacturing facilities combined into one
- Brand celebrates 75 years since founding
- Company sold to Peter Werhan

1984 - Bill Johnson win Downhill Gold at Sarajevo Winter Olympics wearing Flexon Comp boots & Maria Walliser a Silver

1986 - Development of the corrugated Flex Tongue provides pressure-free, progressive power transmission from leg to ski.

1991 - Acquires the Austrian ski, boot and binding company Dynafit Sports GmbH (founded in 1950).

1996 - Moves Dynafit to to Switzerland
- Business on the verge of bankruptcy and sold to Austrian ski brand, Kneissl & Friends

1999 - Company re-branded as Kneissl-Raichle

2001 - Kneissl & Friends sold to Roces

2003 - Swiss outdoor company Mammut acquires Raichle
- Raichle sales, logistics and procurement managed from Mammut Sports Group AG headquarters in Seon, Aargau, Switzerland
- Product development and design out of Frauenfeld.