



# MIKE TINDALL

TACKLES NEW CHALLENGES

Interview by Arnie Wilson

It's not every day you get to interview the Queen's grandson-in-law. I've met Prince Charles briefly a couple of times, and Prince Philip too (just the once) but this was a proper interview over lunch – all about Mike Tindall's love of skiing, fulfilled only after he'd stopped playing rugby for England. His Olympic equestrian wife Zara, the Princess Royal's only daughter, is also a keen skier. As is their five-year-old daughter Mia. No doubt it won't be long before her younger sister Lena joins in too.

**It must have been tough to give up skiing in case he got injured. But rugby-star Mike didn't have much choice...**

"Much as I love skiing, I just couldn't risk getting injured on the slopes during my rugby career" he told me. "I loved skiing at school. When I was in my early teens, I was lucky enough to go every year. I've always been a bit crazy and enjoy going fast, whatever the mode of transport!"

"All of a sudden, when I was 18, I had success in rugby and went professional. I was 20 when I first got called into the England squad, and on my 21st birthday I got called up for the World Cup. But I wasn't capped until the Six Nations the following year.

"That skittled any chance of skiing for some years. The Six Nations was always in the winter months, so you could say I had a 14-year sabbatical from 1997 when I turned pro until 2011 when I finished playing for England. I was still playing for Gloucester but, because I didn't have Six Nations games, the occasional free weeks turned up - when you'd been knocked

out a cup competition - for example. So, I took up skiing again in 2012-2013.

"When I started skiing again after a rugby career, I noticed how different the skis were. If you have strength in your legs and good balance, then you can hold it all together. I think if you have that core

*"I loved being back on skis... though at first it was more Bambi-on-ice."*

training background you know your body and if you go off balance you can figure out why.

"I loved getting my ski legs back, though at first it was more Bambi-on-ice. I knew it would become a focus for the family as Zara had skied continuously throughout her life. Mostly, she used to come and watch me playing for England, but she occasionally went off skiing when I couldn't join her. She's definitely a better skier than me technically, but not as reckless.

**Mike, a veteran of the TV saga *The Jump*, is still hoping to improve his off-piste skills. I asked him how he got on in powder.**

"I just need to get a surf-board-sized ski to get better" he said. "I've done some off-piste and I'd like to do more. But I've got to figure it out technically.

"We did the Vallée Blanche from the Italian side not long ago and enjoyed the fantastic scenery, though it was hard work. I did it with two friends, one of whom owns a place at Villars in Switzerland where Zara and I ski regularly. They are both very good off-piste skiers and looked after me.

"I went on my first blood wagon trip last



year", he revealed "I was skiing one of those routes that snakes around, and I decided to cut the corner. What I didn't see was a huge six-foot drop that went past the piste, and then back onto the piste again. I didn't manage to turn in time and ended up in a blood wagon with a dislocated shoulder. So, you see

I was wise not to mix skiing with my rugby career!

*"Skiing ticks all the boxes: mentally, physically and socially."*

**So, what is it about skiing that inspires you?**

"I think it's everything really" he replied. "I enjoy the whole environment that skiing offers: pushing yourself, pushing your body, living on the edge if you can say that? I also enjoy the flow of the holiday. Socially, skiing trips are really great places to go with friends, and bond with them.

"There are challenges too if you want to push yourself every day. Skiing ticks all the boxes: mentally, physically and socially. It's a sport that offers so much to anyone, including families.

"Mia's five, she has already been skiing for two years and absolutely loves it. She's a bit rough and tumble and I wish I could get her to turn more. As long as you don't force your children to ski - if they're tired and they want to stop then you just stop.

"Ideally we ski twice a year, one of which is usually Villars. Everyone has their favourite resorts and everywhere has its own challenges. It's the people you're with that's important. Having fun, that's the beauty of skiing."



Mike has been talking with Ski Solutions and other Alps based organisations about his desire to run a charity ski event building on the success of his charity golf day. Watch this space....