

Double trouble continued

By Neil English, Mail on Sunday

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In Courmayeur, Annabel Croft was due to compete against scores of teams from the City of London's most prominent financial institutions who take part in a giant slalom in the Italian resort each year.

Sadly, she fell during race training, tried to break her fall with her hand and fractured her wrist.

Annabel, 36, took her role as guest celebrity very seriously, attending a race clinic the day before the contest to get a few tips on skiing through gates from former British ski champion Konrad Bartelski.

That night at a pre-race day dinner, Annabel described how she fell: 'I must admit I'm not the world's best skier and I like the comfort of picking where and when I make a turn.

'So suddenly having to turn where race gates are was quite a challenge. I lost control, went down - and here I am in plaster feeling stupid. I feel such a wimp as I wanted to have a go at those City boys.

'All through my tennis career I was lucky and avoided injury - I can't believe this has happened.'

The mother of three young children, Annabel was out with husband Mel, a former America's Cup sailor, to support the race day which was blessed with good snow and wonderful blue skies.

Tommy Moe, the 1994 men's downhill Olympic gold medallist, travelled from his home in Jackson Hole, Wyoming, to set a course time for everyone to chase, although few came close to his blistering speed.

With recent heavy stock market losses and slashed bonuses, tensions were high and competition was fierce among the City teams.

But at a gala dinner after the event, where key sponsors were Swiss International Airlines, Veuve Clicquot and Fat Face clothing, so many prizes and medals were awarded that everyone seemed a winner. I was pleased to pick up a medal for Fastest Journalist after shaking off stern competition.

Next year Jacques will be back racing in Villars - and I hope Annabel's painful experience will not deter her from trying again too.

Travel facts

The only catered chalet in **Villars**, Chalet Les Martins (tel: 0041 244952854), is run by English chef Lucinda Martin and her ski instructor husband Olivier and enjoys a superb location near ski lifts, piste and town centre.

For value and comfort, I recommend the three-star Bouton d'Or in **Courmayeur**, run by charming husband-and-wife team Andrea and Patrizia Casale (www.hotelboutondor.com tel: 0039 0165 846729).

For more information on holidays in Villars and Courmayeur, contact Momentum Ski (tel: 020 7371 9111).