

TRACK TALK WITH MEAGHAN SIMISTER

Career Goals:

My goals for my career in luge are to qualify for the Olympics next year, and continue reach the top-ten on the World Cup Circuit, eventually working towards the top-five and beyond. I also work towards a new personal best time each time I return to a track.



Career ambitions outside of luge?

I am currently a part-time student at U of C, studying Political Science. I'm still deciding to branch out either to a career in law, journalism or urban planning.

When not sliding I am likely?

Hanging out with my boyfriend Grant Albrecht, who is a doubles luge slider and two-time Olympian. I also love watching hockey, as well as playing tennis, going hiking and canoeing in the summer months, and traveling to new places in the off-season. This year, I'm going to Mexico, and last year I drove down to the Grand Canyon and Las Vegas.

When finished with my luge career, I want to?

Continue my education to finish my degree in Political Science. I'm not quite certain what will come next. I would also like to travel more and learn French.

Favourite Luge Track?

Oberhof, Germany. I like the rhythm of the track, the curves are tighter and it is very technical. The track in Oberhof is quite short as well, so it favours a stronger start. I also really enjoy Igls, Austria. The track is not particularly fast or technical, but I have a lot of fun sliding there.

Favourite Competition Venue: Whistler, British Columbia. It is a wonderful place to compete, the scenery is beautiful, and the crowds at this year's World Cup were the best. The town is also great for shopping and dining. It has almost become like a second home for our team over the past year. Preparing for the Olympics in Whistler is very exciting, and the atmosphere at the venue is great!

Favourite Vacation Spot?

Costa Rica for the beaches, Las Vegas for the shopping, and Florence, Italy for the history.

Favourite Book?

I enjoy mostly non-fiction biographies, or historical fiction. "The Da Vinci Code" by Dan Brown, "Dispatches from the Edge" by Anderson Cooper, and the "Women of Windsor" by Catherine Whitney are some of my favorites.

Favourite Movie?

Arlington Road, Ever After, also pretty much anything with Ben Stiller.

Favourite Olympic/Paralympic Moment?

The men and women Canadian Hockey team's wins over the United States in Salt Lake City. I remember watching the games and having so much pride for our country.

Inspiration?

When I was nine years old I watched American gymnast Keri Strug capture gold for her team and her country at the 1996 Olympics in Atlanta. She was the last competitor, and it was all up to her to compete for her team on the vault. In the end, she performed a near-perfect vault, landing one foot due to her broken ankle to win her team the gold. She was joyfully carried off by her coach Bela Keroli, and surrounded by all her teammates. I still get tears in my eyes after watching that, and it was definitely the moment that sparked the Olympic dream in me.

Before a race, I will listen to what song?

My warm-up mix on my iPod this season included upbeat songs like "Live Your Life" by Rihanna and T.I., "Leaving" by Jesse Mcartney, and "Whatever You Like" by T.I.

Favourite Muscian?

It varies from new stuff like Kanye West and Beyonce, but I also love classics like the Beatles, Van Morrison and Elton John.

One year out from the Games my thought on 2010 is?

I hope all goes well training this summer and sliding this fall so I can reach my potential in 2010. The preparation in the coming year will be key, both physically and mentally. I think the venues are great, the spirit is high, and I am taking the appropriate steps to compete to the best of my ability. I hope I can compete at the Games, it will be the ultimate celebration of my hard work and dedication.

If I could rule the world for a day I would? I cannot answer that question, there are so many things I would try to take care of, but one day would leave too little time!

CANADIAN LUGE ATHLETES CROWNED AT ALL LEVELS

Canada's top luge athletes capped off their final competitive season before the 2010 Olympic year by holding the national championships at the Whistler Sliding Centre.

Sam Edney, Alex Gough and the Moffat brothers all captured national titles in their respective disciplines (men's and women's singles and doubles) at the 2010 Olympic venue in Whistler, B.C. earlier this month.

Edney, who was the top Canadian at the World Cup in Whistler in February, knocked off teammate, Jeff Christie to win his first national title with a two run time of 1:35.366.

Alex Gough, who had a breakthrough year and a historic fourth-place finish at the World Championships in Lake Placid, N.Y., won the women's title with a time of 1:38.959, while the Moffat brothers of Chris and Mike had their sled in fine form as they captured their fourth consecutive Canadian Championship title in the men's doubles category. The sibling duo slid to a combined time of 1:37.989.

The senior championships also included a fun Masters category where Tyler Seitz, the only Canadian male to win a World Cup medal, showed his local knowledge on the Whistler track to claim the 2009 Masters title.

Earlier in the winter Canada's best junior and youth athletes hit the track in Calgary for their national championships.

Tristan Walker continues to show promise for the future of the sport internationally. Walker won the junior men's singles championships with a two-run time of 94.702, and also teamed up Justin Smith to take the doubles victory at 1:31.902. Elena Corrigall solidified the junior women's Canadian Championship with a winning time of 1:38.789.

Davy Ackerman won the youth boys division at 1:32.642, while Dayna Clay won the youth girls category with a time of 1:31.904.

FOR SALE: CANADIAN LUGE ATHLETES



With less than a year remaining until the opening of the 2010 Olympic Winter Games, Canada's high-performance luge athletes are officially FOR SALE.

Carrying a price tag of up to \$300,000 per year for the team, the nation's top senior and junior luge athletes are hoping a national FOR SALE campaign will spark interest within corporate Canada to join their journey to the international podium.

"The Canadian Luge Team remains one of the only sports in the winter lineup without a title sponsor, and we would love to have corporate Canada join our team for this exciting drive to the podium," said Tim Farstad, executive director, Canadian Luge Association. "We are not looking for millions or freebies, but would like to establish a close relationship with a company that can help give us the final nudge onto the podium, and ensure the success of our sport beyond 2010."

While officially on the open-market, Canada's luge athletes were FOR SALE sign decals on their helmets during the final two World Cup competitions of the season in Calgary and Whistler, B.C. in hopes of being scooped up.

"We recognize this is a tough economic time for all Canadians, and nobody knows this better than the Canadian luge program," said Farstad. "Our teams of senior and junior athletes have been finding a way to achieve excellence in our sport under tight financial constraints over the last two decades, but the time has come where we need a little more support to help us reach our goals."

Thanks to the generous financial support by Own the Podium and its corporate partners who have been the financial lifeline of the national program, Canadian luge athletes have edged their way up the world standings and are now knocking on the door of the international podium at all levels.

"Up until a few years ago, our entire luge team could not afford to carry so much as a first-aid kit with us on the World Cup," said Regan Lauscher, who won a silver medal in 2005, the best-ever Canadian performance on the World Cup. "Own the Podium funding has helped us recruit a world-leading coaching staff, and provided access to resources that have clearly helped significantly boost our performance. This support is proof that money turns into medals."

As a result, Canadian luge athletes have a handful of World Cup and Junior World Cup podium finishes under their belts, and each one of the World Cup team members have also slid their way into the top-10 on the international standings. In a sport that is won or lost in blinks of an eye, getting into that elusive top-10 is the crack in the door to drive for the podium.

Lauscher and her World Cup teammates launched the FOR SALE campaign on top of a community toboggan hill in Calgary on Tuesday to showcase the grassroots of the sport in Canada. Clad in national team Karbon snowsuits, and their newly-decaled competitive helmets, the team enjoyed a couple of recreational runs down the hill on magic carpets with school children who represent the future of the sport.

"Many believe luge is obscure in Canada, but I believe more Canadians actually participate in the grassroots of our sport than hockey or skiing," said Lauscher during the media conference, who was first introduced to natural luge on a tobogganing hill in her hometown of Red Deer, Alta. "It is community hills like this where millions of Canadians enjoy our sport on all kinds of sleds each winter and it is on these hills that spark the Olympic dream in our youth."

For more information on how to join the Canadian Luge Team, please contact Tim Farstad by e-mail at tfarstad@luge.ca.

The Whistler Sliding Centre wraps up World Cup events. Sliding sport events charm sold-out crowds, yield track records and produce top speeds

After four fantastic weeks of sliding action (including two World Cups and an International Training Week), The Whistler Sliding Centre wrapped up its World Cup hosting duties with the men's luge finals in the FIL Luge World Cup.

Using the World Cups to test its operational readiness before the Games, the Vancouver Organizing Committee for the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games (VANOC) will now take key learning provided by the sliding sport events to produce a world-class experience for spectators and athletes in 2010.

Sold-out crowds, high-performance athletes and the three fastest sports on ice resulted in the venue being a hit for everyone involved. With over 2,818 runs taking place over the past four weeks, The Whistler Sliding Centre retained its reputation as a technically demanding fast track in the eyes of the International Sport Federations.

"My technical delegate told me this week that the Games could start tomorrow and the track would be ready," said Josef Fendt, president, Fédération Internationale de Luge de Course (FIL). "I appreciate the whole Whistler Sliding Centre."

"This is a very unique track in the world because of the speed, and we are so happy to have it," said Walter Plaikner, chairman of the Sport Technical Commission for the FIL, and head coach for the Italian national luge team. "It is the first time that we've had athletes reaching speeds up to 144 kilometres per hour in training. With proper race preparation we should be up to 150 kilometres per hour, which is about as fast as we can go in our sport."

"This is a great track that will challenge all the skills of the modern sliding athletes. It is fast, technical, demanding and interesting," said Robert Storey, president, the Fédération Internationale de Bobsleigh et de Tobogganing (FIBT). "The Whistler Sliding Centre is an example of the new tracks of the future, as well as a great sporting legacy." "I'd like to thank the over 460 individuals who gave so much of their time and effort to make the past four weeks of sliding, competition and overall event operations a success," said Craig Lehto, director, The Whistler Sliding Centre. "One of our goals was to learn a lot, and we have. Our confidence is extremely high in the team and we are ready to face the challenge of staging the Games."

Sliding statistics from the bobsleigh, skeleton and luge sport events include:

Fastest Times (Track Records)

- Four-man bobsleigh - 50.97 (LAT) 1 Janis Minins
- Two-man bobsleigh - 51.95 (SUI) 2 Beat Hefti
- Women's bobsleigh - 53.57 (USA) 1 Shauna Rohbock
- Men's skeleton - 53.67 (CAN) Jeff Pain
- Women's skeleton - 54.81 (CAN) Mellisa Hollingsworth
- Men's luge - 46.808 (GER) Felix Loch
- Doubles luge - 48.608 (GER) Patric Leitner/Alexander Resch
- Women's luge - 48.992 (GER) Natalie Geisenberger

Top Speeds

- Bobsleigh 153.03 km/h - (LAT) 1 (four-man)
- Skeleton 140.82 km/h - (CAN) Jon Montgomery
- Doubles luge - 144.05 km/h - (GER) Andre Florschutz/Torsten Wustlich
- Women's luge - 144.40 km/h - (GER) Anke Wischniewski
- 153.937 km/h - (GER) Felix Loch

Number of Sleds, Athletes and Countries Per Event:

- Four-man bobsleigh - 23 sleds, 92 athletes, 13 countries
- Two-man bobsleigh - 27 sleds, 54 athletes, 15 countries
- Women's bobsleigh - 20 sleds, 40 athletes, 10 countries
- Men's skeleton - 28 sleds, 28 athletes, 14 countries
- Women's skeleton - 21 sleds, 21 athletes, 10 countries
- Men's luge - 67 sleds, 67 athletes, 23 countries
- Doubles luge - 13 sleds, 26 athletes, 12 countries
- Women's luge - 42 sleds, 42 athletes, 20 countries

Attendance for FIBT Bobsleigh and Skeleton World Cup

- 3,000 spectators each day (Thursday, Friday, Saturday)

Attendance for FIL Luge World Cup

- 3,000 spectators each day (Friday, Saturday)

The track will continue to operate through to March 22, 2009 with Canadian national team training camps.

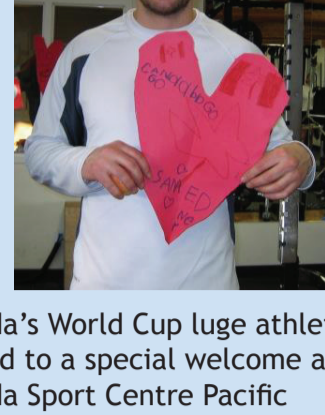
QUOTE OF THE MONTH



"I am absolutely thrilled. I had two of my best runs of the week. I just told myself at the beginning of the day - this is sport, have fun and put it down and I did."

...Alex Gough following her historic fourth-place performance at the World Championships

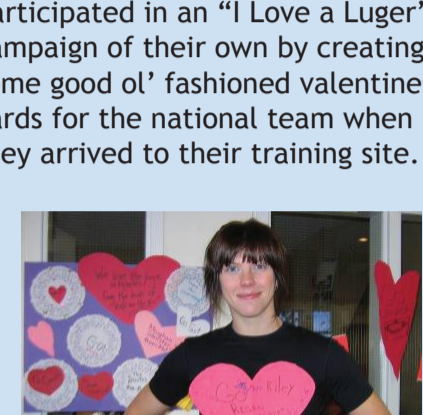
B.C. School Kids Give Luge Team Special Welcome to Whistler



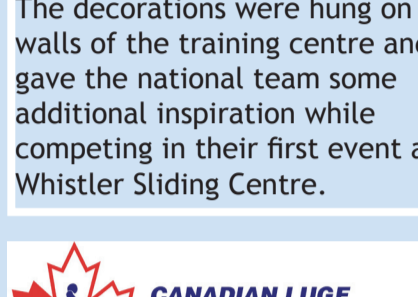
Canada's World Cup luge athletes arrived to a special welcome at the Canada Sport Centre Pacific Performance Centre in February for the World Cup.



A group of kids in the afterschool program "Kids on the Go" participated in an "I Love a Luger" campaign of their own by creating some good ol' fashioned valentines cards for the national team when they arrived to their training site.



The decorations were hung on the walls of the training centre and gave the national team some additional inspiration while competing in their first event at the Whistler Sliding Centre.



TURN THE DIAL TO TSN FOR WORLD CUP COVERAGE

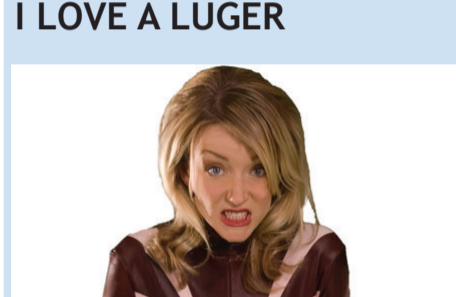


Tune in to watch a highlight show of the I Love Luge World Cup in Calgary. TSN is scheduled the following electronic coverage of race action:

TSN Broadcast Schedule: (All Times EST)

March 15	12 a.m.
March 17	3 p.m.
March 20	4 a.m.

I LOVE A LUGER



Unfolding over the next 12 months, inSeries Media launched a new comedy webseries that raises funds for the Canadian Luge Team.

The new comedy web series "I Love a Luger," which can be viewed at www.ilovealuger.com on the Internet, will help engage all Canadians in the journey to 2010.

"I Love a Luger" follows the comedic adventures of Nikki, a staunch advocate for the luge cause. Obsessed with a foreign luge athlete, Nikki is convinced she is marrying him in Whistler next year. Nikki will stop at nothing when it comes to love and her luger - from learning the twists and turns of an elite luger's life, to sabotaging the Canadian Luge Team. Nikki's obsessive quest will climax in a special six-part luge-venture filmed on location in Whistler.

The Canadian team will make occasional appearances throughout the world-unique series, which includes Nikki's personal video logs, original luge tunes, riveting luge updates in "Check My Action", downloadable ring tones, calendars, tunes, interactive games and contests to test your luge skills. In the section "Luge with Me", Nikki invites viewers to get their 'luge mojo on' by submitting photos and vids. Become a member of the site today - join the luges, we are all winners!

"I Love a Luger" is also a web-based campaign that gives back. Nikki's Sponsor a Luger campaign will invite viewers to do just that - send a buck or two in support of your favourite luger. Different donation levels come with special on-site recognition. Be sure to follow Nikki's luge-ventures!