

THE STORIES

NORTH AMERICA



AUSTRIAN ALPINE SKIING TRIO GETS THE JOB DONE

Team Mexico & Team Austria

When it comes to the ski slopes, there are a few countries that know how to get it done. On that short list: Austria.

In an interview jointly conducted by the Global Youth Summit participants from Mexico and Austria, three Special Olympics Austria athletes talked about their experience as members of the country's large Alpine skiing team.

Midway through the week of competition, all three interviewees had not one, not two but three medals around their necks.

Franz Horvath, Rudolf Grabner and Gabriele Hadayer, all of them competing in Alpine skiing in 10M gliding, had an assortment of gold, silver and bronze medals.

For all three athletes, this is their first time in Japan, and although tired, they are very excited to be part of the 2005 Special Olympics World Winter Games. They are growing accustomed to the food and are enjoying the great weather in Nagano this past week.

Perhaps more surprising about their accomplishments is that this is their first experience at the World Winter Games. They have medaled at home in a number of different sports, but this is their first successful try on skis.

All three athletes have been involved in Special Olympics for several years, both of them living independently in a community. While they do not have family, they do carry on a very active and busy social life.

"I hope that my girlfriend gives me a kiss because of this medal," Horvath said.

As the week progresses, all three are looking forward to winning more medals and more competition.

All three echoed the same thoughts offered by Grabner at interview's close: "This is super good, because it has changed our lives, because sport is good for fitness, especially while competing with friends."



OLIMPIADAS ESPECIALES NO ES PARA COMPETIR, ES PARA DIVERTIRSE

By: Denise Moncibais, athlete & Christina Due, partner

El equipo mexicano de la cumber goblal "so get into it" empenzo sus actividades como reporteros el dia de hgoy. Visitando asi tres centros de competencia en la ciudad de Nagano. Pero fue en el primer lugar que tubimos la experiencia de conocer a un familiar de una atleta especial. La señora Julia Petecki, ella es de Estados Unidos, viene acmpañando a su hija Tekla Peteki, y con la entrenadora Jayne Marshall. Para nosotros fue conmovedor entender como ella se involucro en olimpiadas especiales despues de que su segunda hija tubiera discapacidad intelectual. "Yo ya sabia de olimpiadas, pero no pertenececi hasta que tuve a Tekla". Su familia de houston se ha involucrado al maximo, ahora su hija es mas sociable y estos eventos le han servido para tener compañerismo. Tekla esta en estos juegos mundiales compitiendo en patinaje artistico, pero en su ciudad tambien practica muchos otros deportes gracia a los programas de Olimpiadas entre ellos estan: Nastacion, Voleibol, basquet entre otros. Su mama nos comento que en las competencias ella se emociana mucho, sus hermanos la apoyan y lo mas importante para Tekla ha sido el socializar con otros atletas, tener amigos nuevos y tener otras actividades extra con sus compañeros de Olimpiadas.

Para concluir la Sra. Julia finalizo: "algunas veces los atletas comentan, No queremos derrotar o competir con alguien, solo queremos hacer lo mejor".

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THE WORK OF THE VOLUNTEER IS NOT EASY

By: Denise Moncibais, athlete & Christina Due, partner

Today we got an interview with a volunteer at the cross country skiing venue for the 2005 Special Olympics World Winter Games. Her name is Yoko Yokota and even if she is only 20 years old we were able to see her hard work and good will with the athletes.

Yokota is volunteering for the first time with Special Olympics. When the initial call for volunteers was made, she didn't even know what Special Olympics was about. She found out more through her university and has been excited about the event ever since.

"Before I didn't know what the athletes could do, now I see them equally," Yokota said.

Everyday she wakes up at 6 a.m. in order to take the bus to go to the cross country skiing venue and she knows she won't be home until late.

"Part of my job is to cheer for the athletes and be present in the award ceremonies," Yuko said. "I would also like to say that it has been very emotional to see how every day athletes achieve their goals they have wanted to reach for a long time."

While communication has posed some challenges, Yokota has been impressed with the simplest form in which she can exchange emotions with other athletes, by simply smiling. In her eyes, Special Olympics is all about friendship, not only competition. To see the World Games in this respect is great as often times the experience comes and goes without paying much attention to the valuable contributions of volunteers like Yokota.



SPECIAL OLYMPICS IN MY POINT OF VIEW

By: Denise Moncibais, athlete & Christina Due, partner

For Special Olympics Spain athlete Jose Luis Vecino, explaining why he is here in Nagano isn't that difficult.

"I love sports," said the 41-year-old snowshoeing veteran. Vecino has already won a silver medal here and still has a few more competitions before week's end. This is the first time Vecino has left his own country, let alone visited Japan. So far he has loved his stay although he misses his four brothers and is hoping to surprise them with a phone call letting them know that he's won a gold medal.

The first time Vecino heard about Special Olympics was from friends he made at a workshop where he does several activities such as painting. This workshop makes him feel very integrated with society and community because he is paid and he then uses the money for his leisure activities such as going to the cinema and the theatre.

He has many friends in his hometown who are also involved in Special Olympics.

"I practice every day with my friends because I love sports, many sports," he said.

Presently, he is involved in sports such as hockey, basketball, volleyball and football, among others. Even though he loves Japanese food he misses his traditional food such as paella and cerveza.

"Everybody can do this (compete)," said Vecino. "That's the meaning of Special Olympics in my point of view."

Vecino is very incorporated with society and excels at working with his team. He proves that Special Olympics can touch someone's life because even if it is centered around sports, it can help everybody in different ways.



Special Olympics

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2005 Global Youth Summit

THE STORIES



MAKING SPECIAL OLYMPICS HISTORY

**By: Krystal Torres, athlete & Lee Tyrell, partner
Special Olympics Nevada**

On 1 March 2005, Special Olympics Global Youth Summit members from the United States and Taiwan participated in the first-ever Webinar for Special Olympics. The Global Youth Summit members from the United States were athlete Krystal Torres, her partner Lee Tyrell, and their chaperone, Peanuts Boyer. Taiwan's Global Youth Summit team is made up of athlete Meng-Hsuan Chou, her partner Melody Mee-Lin Kwok, and their chaperone, Shu-Yuan Wang.



Taiwan and the United States shared presentations with students, family, athletes and friends from Rochester, New York, USA; Oregon, USA; Nevada, USA; Canada; and Columbus, Ohio about their Special Olympic Programs. Some of these people also shared about their Programs and some of the things they do in their hometowns.

Near the end of the Webinar, there was a question-and-answer period. Some of the questions asked were, "What have you been doing?" and "What is your favorite part so far?" After all queries were answered, the program came to a close.

"Success!" was the word that first came out of Melody's mouth. Everyone indeed felt like this Webinar was a success and was a great start to the many future Webinars that are sure to come.



ITALY ALL THE WAY

**By: Krystal Torres, athlete & Lee Tyrell, partner
Special Olympics Nevada**

A number of family members and friends from Italy have traveled to Japan to watch the 2005 Special Olympics World Winter Games here in Nagano. One of those is Silvia Sambruna Capra, who came to watch her daughter compete along with some of her other family members.

After 12 hours on a plane and a 14-hour delay in Paris because of snow, she and her family finally made it to Nagano and are enjoying their time here. It is exciting for them to see one of their own family members competing and doing their best.

The family member who is involved has been competing for 16 years in Special Olympics. She swam for 15 years and just recently started skiing in Special Olympics.

"My daughter has been skiing for only one year," says Silvia, "but we think she will win a medal."

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WOMAN ON HER WAY TO A MEDAL

**By: Krystal Torres, athlete & Lee Tyrell, partner
Special Olympics Nevada**

Special Olympics Liechtenstein athlete Sonia Haemmerle, 35, is an Alpine skier making her third visit to the Special Olympics World Games. Prior to Nagano, Haemmerle competed in two other World Games before this one: the 2001 Special Olympics World Winter Games in Anchorage, Alaska, USA, in cross country skiing and the 2003 World Summer Games in Dublin, Ireland, as a cyclist.

Haemmerle has been Alpine skiing for five years, but she isn't the only one in her family to be involved with Special Olympics. Her mother not only provides encouragement to Haemmerle and her friend, but also serves as the Family Coordinator for Special Olympics Liechtenstein.

Haemmerle is the definition of a multi-sport athlete. In addition to Alpine skiing, she is an avid swimmer, walker, cross country skier and cyclist.

Her plans for the 2005 World Winter Games are the same as those she has had in many of her previous competitions.

"I have won [a] gold medal, silver medal and bronze," she said after being asked about her previous successes. "I plan to win many more in the 2005 Games," Haemmerle said.



GOOD TIMES IN SPECIAL OLYMPICS

By: Krystal Torres, athlete & Lee Tyrell, partner

For Special Olympics Switzerland figure skater David Cadalbert, his involvement in Special Olympics has created lots of good memories.

"Every moment is a good moment."

Cadalbert and his skating partner Karin Roesch have many good times together. When Cadalbert found out he would be competing at the 2005 Special Olympics World Winter Games, he increased his practice time. Along with Roesch, they practice two days every week for two hours each day.

With 13 years of experience, Cadalbert has taken home many lessons and memories that are simply unforgettable. While his career started in swimming, he now favors figure skating.

"Moments when I am with the team are the best. They make me feel good."

Along with partner Roesch, Cadalbert hopes they'll share a memorable moment this week winning the gold in Nagano.



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Double but Not Trouble

By: Krystal Torres, athlete & Lee Tyrell, partner

There are only a few who have racked up several medals through Special Olympics, and one of those people is Special Olympics Team USA athlete Desire W. Kelso.

Kelso came to Japan to participate in her first Special Olympics World Winter Games. Her event is snowshoeing and so far here in Nagano, she has done well in her races. For Kelso, this is the first time she has competed in the sport.

Kelso got involved with Special Olympics at the youngest age possible, 8 years old. After some time away, she recently started up again early last year.

“I love Japan with all its meeting and greeting,” said Kelso. “You never know what is going to happen next.”

She never expected to come to Nagano and come away with a medal, let alone two. She claimed a silver medal and a bronze medal in the 25M race and the 50M race, respectively.

With the week still young and her competitions now over, Kelso looks forward to enjoying the remainder of the week at the 2005 Special Olympics World Winter Games.