

Members of the US Olympic Luge Teams

(continued from previous page)

XX Olympic Games - Torino, Italy 2006

8 th	T. Benshoof	11 th	E. Hamlin	6 th	C. Niccum/D. Joye
13 th	C. Mazdzer	17 th	J. Clukey	13 th	M. Grimmette/B. Martin
15 th	C. Niccum	22 nd	M. Sweeney		

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UNITED STATES LUGE ASSOCIATION

THE HISTORY OF THE SPORT OF LUGE



Member, United States Olympic Committee



U.S. Representative, Fédération Internationale de Luge de Course





THE HISTORY OF THE ★ SPORT OF LUGE

From leather caps to “conehead” helmets and from snow covered trails through the forest to multi-million dollar refrigerated tracks...the sport of luge has a rich and colorful history.

Q: What does the word “Luge” mean?

A: The word “luge” comes from the French word for sled. In modern times, German has become the international language for the sport, where it is known as “rodel”.

Q: When did luge start?

A: The roots of luge date back to ancient Egypt and the construction of the pyramids, where heavy blocks of rock were transported with so called “slides” similar to sleds. Sleds with two runners were used as early as 800 BC by the Vikings. References to actual sled racing appear in chronicles from Norway dating back to 1480. Above all, in the mountainous areas and in those flatlands where there is a lot of snow the sled continues to be used even today to carry heavy loads and people, be it a toboggan, a horse drawn sleigh or dog sled.

The first international luge competition was held in Switzerland on a road between Closters and Davos on 12 February 1883 with 21 athletes from 6 countries. In 1913 the International Sled Sport Federation was founded, and in 1914 the town of Reichenberg (today Liberec in the Czech Republic) was the venue of the first European Championships. In 1935 the Federation Internationale de Bobsleigh et de Toboganing (FIBT) admitted athletes as ‘Section de Luge’. In 1955 the first World Championships were held in Oslo and in 1957 delegates from 13 countries established the Federation Internationale de Luge de Course (FIL) in Davos, Switzerland which was recognized the same year by the International Olympic Committee.

Today the sport of luge is performed on two kinds of tracks: artificial (contested in the Winter Olympics) which includes refrigerated tracks with large banked curves, and natural track luge which uses unrefrigerated, unbanked and hand made courses which can be easily developed in winter areas.

Originally based in Rottenman, Austria, the FIL headquarters is now located in Berchtesgaden, Germany.

Q: When did luge become part of the Olympic Games?

A: Luge was inaugurated as an Olympic sport in 1964 at the IX Winter Olympic Games in Innsbruck, Austria.

Q: When was the first international luge race?

A: The first documented international luge race took place in 1883 and was organized by hotels in the resort town of Davos, Switzerland. It took place over a 4 kilometer course (2.5 miles) from the towns of St. Wolfgang to Klosters with 21 competitors representing 7 nations.

Q: When did luge start in the United States?

A: Having no official luge program at the time of the 1964 Olympics (when luge was first officially included in the Games), the United States first Olympic Luge Team consisted mainly of American soldiers who were stationed in Europe at that time. Back in the US, luge attracted a small number of athletes who were relegated to training on the 1932 Olympic bobsled run in Lake Placid, New York, the only track in North America at that time. While the 1960 Winter Olympics were held in Squaw Valley, CA, oddly, bobsled was left out of the Games that year so no track was built. With no organization to support, develop and promote luge, American sliders remained in relative obscurity over the next couple of decades.

The arrival of the XIII Olympic Winter Games in Lake Placid, NY in 1980 brought the construction of the nation’s first refrigerated luge run in 1979.

Q: When was the US Luge Association created?

A: The US Luge Association (USA Luge) was formed as the sport’s National Governing Body in the early 1980’s. Since it’s inception, USA Luge has overseen the selection and preparation of the US National and Olympic Luge Teams. In addition, a national network of luge clubs as well as a comprehensive recruitment program have also been developed, giving the US Luge program improved depth at every level of participation.

Q: How many tracks are in the United States?

A: There are two artificially refrigerated tracks in the United States. The first, in Lake Placid, NY, opened in 1979 and was used during the 1980 Olympic Games. This track has since been demolished and replaced by a \$24 million combined luge/bobsled and skeleton track which opened in February of 2000 and hosted the inaugural Winter Goodwill Games. The second facility, opened in 1997 in Park City, Utah, was used for the 2002 Olympic Winter Games. In addition to these tracks, there are also two unrefrigerated tracks in the US. One is located in Negaunee, Michigan and is a “natural” track (meaning it has no banked turns) and is sanctioned for international competitions. The other is located in Muskegon, Michigan and is an “artificial” track of a short length--a few hundred meters. That is to say it has banked curves but is also not refrigerated although some refrigeration may be in its future in 2002-2003.

Members of the US Olympic Luge Teams

IX Olympic Winter Games - Innsbruck, Austria 1964

13 th F. Feltman	DNS	D. Hirshland	13 th R. Fales/N. Mastromateo
17 th T. Neely	DNS	E. Gould	DNS J. Higgins/R. Walters
22 nd M. Hessel			
29 th G. Farmer			

X Olympic Winter Games - Grenoble, France 1968

26 th K. Layton	14 th K. Roberts	DNS M. Hessel/J. Moriarty
28 th J. Murray	16 th E. Williams	DNS T. O’Brien/B. Pettit
30 th M. Hessel	17 th S. Johansen	
46 th R. Partch		

XI Olympic Winter Games - Sapporo, Japan 1972

28 th J. Murray	15 th K. Homstad	15 th J. Elder/Francis Jones
31 st T. O’Brien	DNS I. Hopkins	17 th R. Berkley/R. Cavanaugh
32 nd R. Havens	DNF M. Friar	
44 th R. Rock		

XII Olympic Winter Games - Innsbruck, Austria 1976

25 th R. Cavanagh	21 st K. Homstad	23 rd R. Berkley/R. Cavanaugh
26 th J. Murray	24 th K. Roberts	24 th J. Moriarty/J. Fee
28 th T. O’Brien	25 th M. Haponski	

XIII Olympic Winter Games - Lake Placid, USA 1980

12 th J. Tucker	15 th D. Genovese	11 th D. Healey/T. Danco
14 th J. Fee	17 th D. Burke	18 th F. Masley/R. Bateman
20 th R. Stithem	DNF S. Charlesworth	

XIV Olympic Winter Games - Sarajevo, Yugoslavia 1984

14 th F. Masley	15 th B. Warner	9 th R. Rossi/D. Bateman
17 th D. Gilman	19 th T. Reidel	13 th F. Masley/R. Bateman
21 st T. Nardiello	20 th T. Damigella	

XV Olympic Winter Games - Calgary, Canada 1988

12 th F. Masley	6 th B. Warner	11 th M. Zayonc/T. Nardiello
14 th D. Kennedy	9 th C. Myler	16 th J. Barile/S. Maher
23 rd J. Owen	11 th E. Terwillegar	

XVI Olympic Winter Games - Albertville, France 1992

10 th D. Kennedy	5 th C. Myler	9 th W. Suckow/B. Tavares
12 th W. Suckow	9 th E. Terwillegar	12 th C. Thorpe/G. Sheer
21 st R. Pipkins	18 th B. Warner	
DNST. Wiley		

XVII Olympic Winter Games - Lillehammer, Norway 1994

5 th W. Suckow	11 th C. Myler	4 th M. Grimmette/J. Edwards
16 th R. Pipkins	12 th B. Calcaterra	5 th C. Thorpe/G. Sheer
DNF D. Kennedy	DNF E. Warren	

XVIII Olympic Games - Nagano, Japan 1998

6 th W. Suckow	6 th E. Warren	2 nd C. Thorpe/G. Sheer
9 th A.. Heidt	7 th C. Myler	3 rd M. Grimmette/B. Martin
13 th L. Dolan	8 th B. Calcaterra	

XVIII Olympic Games - Salt Lake City, USA 2002

4 th A. Heidt	5 th B. Wilczak	2 nd M. Grimmette/B. Martin
17 th T. Benshoof	8 th A. Hayden	3 rd C. Thorpe/ C. Ives
26 th N. Sullivan	13 th C. Zablocki	

XX Olympic Games - Torino, Italy 2006

4 th T. Benshoof	4 th C. Zablocki	8 th P. Griffall/D. Joye
18 th J. Myles	12 th E. Hamlin	DNF M. Grimmette/B. Martin
23 rd C. Niccum	DNF S. Retrosi	