THE HISTORY OF THE SPORT OF LUGE

XX Olympic Games - Torino, Italy 2006

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

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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: 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 Clustert 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 he 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 Rottenmann, 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.