

Big Kids - Big Sleds

Brad Stewart & Kimber Gabryszak

Vol. 2 - Winter 2008-2009

Team Trials

Kimber and Brad headed out to Lake Placid, NY, in early October for the 2008-2009 US Team Trials. Fall was in full swing, the forest and sky were beautiful, and it didn't feel like winter at all! But they were on the ice!

Team Trials SEMI-Finals were held the first weekend, consisting of a one-race format, with the top four finishers moving on to the Finals. The stress of a one-race format was added to when several former Olympians, World Champions, and World Cup sliders were required to race in the Semi-Finals in order to return to competition after a year or two of retirement!

Additionally, the ice conditions were not great, due to the warm temperatures. It was frustrating to slide under these inconsistent conditions and against such stiff competition, but Kimber and Brad made the best of it and slid as well as they could.

Semi-finals results:

Brad: 6th

Kimber: 4th

While Brad technically did not compete in the Finals, the coaches encouraged him to stay and forerun for the races. His national rank after Team Trials was **USA 15**.

Kimber made the Semi-Finals cut by the skin of her teeth...nearly crashing on her first run but making enough of a comeback to stay in 4th place. Phew!

Team Trials FINALS

Finals consisted of four races: two races in Lake Placid, and two races in Park City, with the worst race dropped. Kimber's best Lake Placid finish was an 8th, and then she stunned everyone (including herself!!!) with a 6th place finish in the first Park City UT race, and then a 4th place finish in the second!

Overall, her results resulted in her becoming ranked as: **USA 7**

This rank placed her on the Europa Cup Team.



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Altenberg: huge entrance to Kriesel



Igls Kriesel



Altenberg suit carnage
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Kimber walking the Altenberg Kriesel

EUROPA CUP - 1st Half

After convincing her professors to let her finish the fall semester early (she's in her last year of graduate study at the University of Utah) Kimber flew to Berlin on December 6, 2008, to begin her first Europa Cup experience.

ALTENBERG, Germany

The first race was held on a notoriously difficult track in Altenberg, a small town in Eastern Germany. Altenberg was an interesting town; just barely stretching its wings after the end of the Cold War, it still felt like the old East Germany, with hints of change.

After doing a trackwalk and freaking herself out, Kimber's heart was in her throat as she pushed off for her first run. Just over a minute later, she crossed the finish line in one piece, a grin on her face. The track was certainly difficult, but was not as scary as she'd been led to believe, and was actually fun! It is now her favorite track (thus far of course- there are a lot of tracks she's never been to).

After a week of official training, she competed in two races. The first race went well, with only a few bobbles, and she's exited for her first Europa Cup top 10: **8th!**

Race 2 was a little rougher, as she caught a buildup on a corner and rode her elbow for a little while (burning a hole in her favorite suit!), ending up in 15th the first run. The second run was much better, enough to move her into: **11th**. Overall, she's very satisfied!

IGLS, Austria

After Altenberg (and after a fun day trip to Prague during the only non-sliding break the team had), the Europa Cup team drove 7 hours to Igls Austria, just outside of Innsbruck, for the next three races. The track was very different from Altenberg: very short and smooth, and easy! Kimber kept waiting for a G-load, and never got one!

The area was amazingly beautiful, but the weather was not as forgiving as it snowed nearly all week. The snowy weather resulted in race 1 being canceled, and the Jury had to scramble to fit 3 races into the 2nd day. Meanwhile, the athletes made lemonade and had an epic snowball fight!

In the end, the jury decided on a 3-run-3-race format, where each run was an independent race. The pressure on each run was incredible! It's a format seldom seen and one that Kimber doesn't want to see again...

Race day dawned with pouring rain that didn't let up all day, but the athletes sucked it up (it was better and more fair than snow) and raced. Three runs, and Kimber's finishes were: **8th, 14th, and 8th**.

Overall, her Europa Cup rank is now **13th**, though it's not a rank she'll get to improve on during second half...

Big news! Kimber moved up to the next race circuit and, instead of remaining on the Europa Cup team, she will be joining the Intercontinental Cup (ICC) team! The ICC team is a step above Europa Cup, and is affectionately known as "World Cup B," as it's composed of those athletes that barely missed the World Cup in their respective countries. She left January 17th, 2009, to race in Turino Italy, back at Igls Austria, and in Konigssee Germany. Wish her luck!



Igls
Snowball
fight!

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My parents, Alan and Sandy surprised me by coming to Calgary!



Lake Placid US Team Trials



Lake Placid

AMERICA'S CUP - 1st Half

After a challenging team trials, Brad was notified by the US coaches that there was a spot open for the Calgary stop on the America's Cup tour. Initially Brad wasn't expecting to get any international races this season so when this opportunity came up he took all of 30 seconds to accept the offer.

With the excitement of getting to race internationally again, Brad packed up with the rest of the America's Cup team and made the 15 hour drive to Calgary from Park City. Fortunately the same roads that gave Kimber the nick name "Ice Road Trucker" the previous season were much more navigable and led safely to Calgary.

This was Brad's fourth trip to Calgary so he was exited at the prospect of racing on a familiar track; upon arrival, however, he was somewhat surprised to find that the field included 6 former Olympians and World Cup level sliders. Because of the world ranking system these athletes were hoping to pick up some easy points on the "lower" tours before they started their World Cup season. Oh well, they always said when Brad was ski racing that "if you want to get better, then find the best person on the mountain and follow them". Well, here's his mountain, and here's his sled. Let's go.

Calgary can be a notoriously difficult track simply because the ice is usually very hard due to the northern latitude. Last season racing occurred in -5 F weather during a blizzard that made the ice feel like sliding on granite. Brad's first race started off good with a 9th place first run but then the hard ice bit him and sent him down to 13th place.

Still, this finish was an improvement over his best race in the last season. Searching for redemption, Brad made some changes to his sled for the second day and fared much better. He laid down two great runs and ended up in 9th place, his first international top 10! While he missed 8th place by 3 hundreths of a second, Brad was satisfied in knowing that he was sliding with some of the best international sliders on a foreign track.

Brad's performance in Calgary moved him up to USA #10 and gave him a world ranking of 83rd. Janurary will be spent in Park City while February will hopefully see Brad visiting Europe to try and get on some new tracks. While he won't be racing it will give him the opportunity to learn new tracks and freshen up his sliding season.

Upon his return he will spend the remainder of February in Park City getting ready for the Western Regionals Races, which may give Brad an opportunity to qualify for Olympic Trials next fall.

After Regionals, he will likely visit Lake Placid, NY in April for a few weeks to finish up his sliding season. April sliding in Lake Placid can bring the best sliding conditions of the year, last April it was 70 degrees outside and the ice was the fastest and smoothest it had been all year. There's nothing like showing up to the track to slide in shorts with a BBQ in tow!



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What is skeleton?

Skeleton is the oldest sliding sport, predating both Bobsled and Luge. As skeleton sliders, we slide head-first down the same track as bobsleds, our chins only 2 inches off the ice. We routinely reach speeds in excess of 80 mph and experience more than 5 g's of pressure, with our chins only an inch above the ice. Think of it this way: 5 g's is more pressure than an astronaut being launched into space! We have to push hard, think fast, and react quickly; it's certainly harder than it looks...

Why sponsor us?

Brand Extension

Citius, Altius, Fortius (Swifter, Higher, Stronger) - The Olympic Motto. By associating with us you are aligning yourself or company with aspiring Olympians who aim to achieve the pinnacle of success. By supporting us, the media and consumers will positively view you as supportive of us and the Olympic ideal.

Employee Morale

Following our success throughout the season creates camaraderie and a rallying symbol for all employees young and old alike. By watching us achieve our goals, your employees will be motivated to pursue their own. Depending on racing and training schedules, we are also available for speaking engagements to speak to your organization on achieving goals, dedication and how to prioritize at 80mph.

Philanthropy

Donations to us can be made through a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, and are often tax deductible. Please consult a trained financial professional to see how your donations to us can fit into your financial planning.

National Pride

As athletes pursuing their Olympic goal we are ambassadors for our country and represent each and every American wherever we travel and compete. We aim to be humble in victory, and gracious in defeat. Be proud in knowing that you are supporting us and that every time we stand on a podium and hear our national anthem, you are right there beside us.

As a sponsor, we will actively promote you or your company on our websites, in our newsletter, on our sleds and gear, and whenever else your product or company would deem appropriate.

Sometimes people want to give but are unable to give cash. Other items that would be useful include airline miles, gas cards, and travel accommodations, such as unused timeshares, frequent traveler reward rooms, and so on.

Making a Donation

Donations can be made through the Utah Skeleton and Bobsled Association (USBA) in the athlete's name.

USBA website: <http://www.utahice.org/>

Mailing address: **USBA, P.O. Box 581131, Salt Lake City, UT 84158**

A slider's budget

Where do my sponsorship dollars go? While we are considered "US Olympic Committee funded athletes", we are still primarily self funded. Our USOC funding is limited to housing and ice fees in Lake Placid. The remaining expenses are left to the athletes to cover. For an example, in 2008, Kimber spent over \$8000 on sliding, racing, and training! Typical per person costs:

Airline Tickets/lodging

Lake Placid \$1000
Calgary \$1000
Europe \$2000 - \$4000
Airline Luggage Fees \$1400

Gear

Sled \$5500 (ideally)
Runners \$600
Speed suit \$125
Helmet \$75
Spikes (shoes) \$350

Training

Weight Training - \$200/month (\$2400/yr)
Sprint Training - \$150/month (\$1800/yr)
Winter Track Fees - \$1200