

Gold Rush

NEVER BEFORE HAVE AMERICAN SKIERS—AND THEIR FANS—HAD SUCH HIGH HOPES FOR OLYMPIC SUCCESS. THE RUSSIAN GAMES PROMISE TO BE A STAR-SPANGLED SPECTACLE. DON'T MISS A MINUTE.

By Kelley McMillan and Nathaniel Vinton

At the 1998 Olympics in Nagano, Japan, America's ski racers won exactly one medal—Picabo Street's super-G gold. It was a dismal showing but not unusual. Despite flashes of true greatness over the years, from Mead to the Mahres, the U.S. Team had never earned much respect on the world stage.

And yet by 2010, an astonishing transformation had taken place. American alpine racers brought home eight medals from the Vancouver Games, a record for the U.S. Ski Team, establishing it as a ski-

racing powerhouse.

Credit goes at least in part to U.S. Ski and Snowboard Association CEO Bill Marolt, who retires this year after 18 years (see page 104). Marolt has endured criticism—for being very well compensated, among other things. But almost everyone now acknowledges that he's been a savvy executive and effective fundraiser.

Sheer luck also played a role. Marolt's tenure has coincided with the rise of some of the greatest American racers ever, including Daron Rahlves, Bode Miller, and Lindsey Vonn—

athletes who, by virtue of their talent and example, seemed to elevate the performance of the entire group.

Now the American alpine crew, anchored by Vonn (if she's healthy), Miller, GS ace Ted Ligety, big-event specialist Julia Mancuso, and 18-year-old slalom champ Mikaela Shiffrin, is poised to launch a blitzkrieg on the ski-racing events at Sochi. Throw in the best freeskiers on the planet (always a U.S. strength) and a suddenly respectable nordic team (once unimaginable), and the U.S. Ski Team has never looked better.

Bode Miller's goals for the Games—and the season—might seem ridiculously lofty. But he's Bode Miller. This will be entertaining.

COURTESY OF HEAD SKIS

Bode

BODE MILLER

AGE	36
HOMETOWN	Franconia, N.H.
WINS	5 Olympic medals, 5 World Championship medals, 33 World Cup wins
TITLES	8 (3 combined, 2 overall, 2 super G, 1 GS)
EQUIPMENT SPONSOR	Head

America's most decorated male ski racer and the sport's favorite bad boy, Bode Miller is now a married man and father of two, contemplating retirement. Despite his time away from the slopes—he spent the last year and a half recovering from a knee injury—don't underestimate Miller. Remember his epic three-medal haul in the 2010 Olympics? That came on the heels of an injury and a season spent mostly away from the sport. So watch out, world. Bode is back. —K.M.

HOW DO YOU FEEL COMING BACK FROM INJURY?

Anytime you're coming back from injury, it's a little bit different. I feel ready, like I've had enough time to recover. This injury is something I've been dealing with for a bunch of years.

WHAT ARE YOUR GOALS FOR THE SEASON?

My goals are to race a whole season, every race, every event. All the objective goals I've had over my career, I'd like to see if I could accomplish them in one season—winning the overall, Olympic medals, breaking 2,000 points on the men's side. I'd love to have the men's record. The Hahnenkamm and being the first American male to win the downhill title are in there too. Being healthy and happy are my primary goals, and my personal life is obviously a huge focus, so balancing all that stuff is where the challenge is.

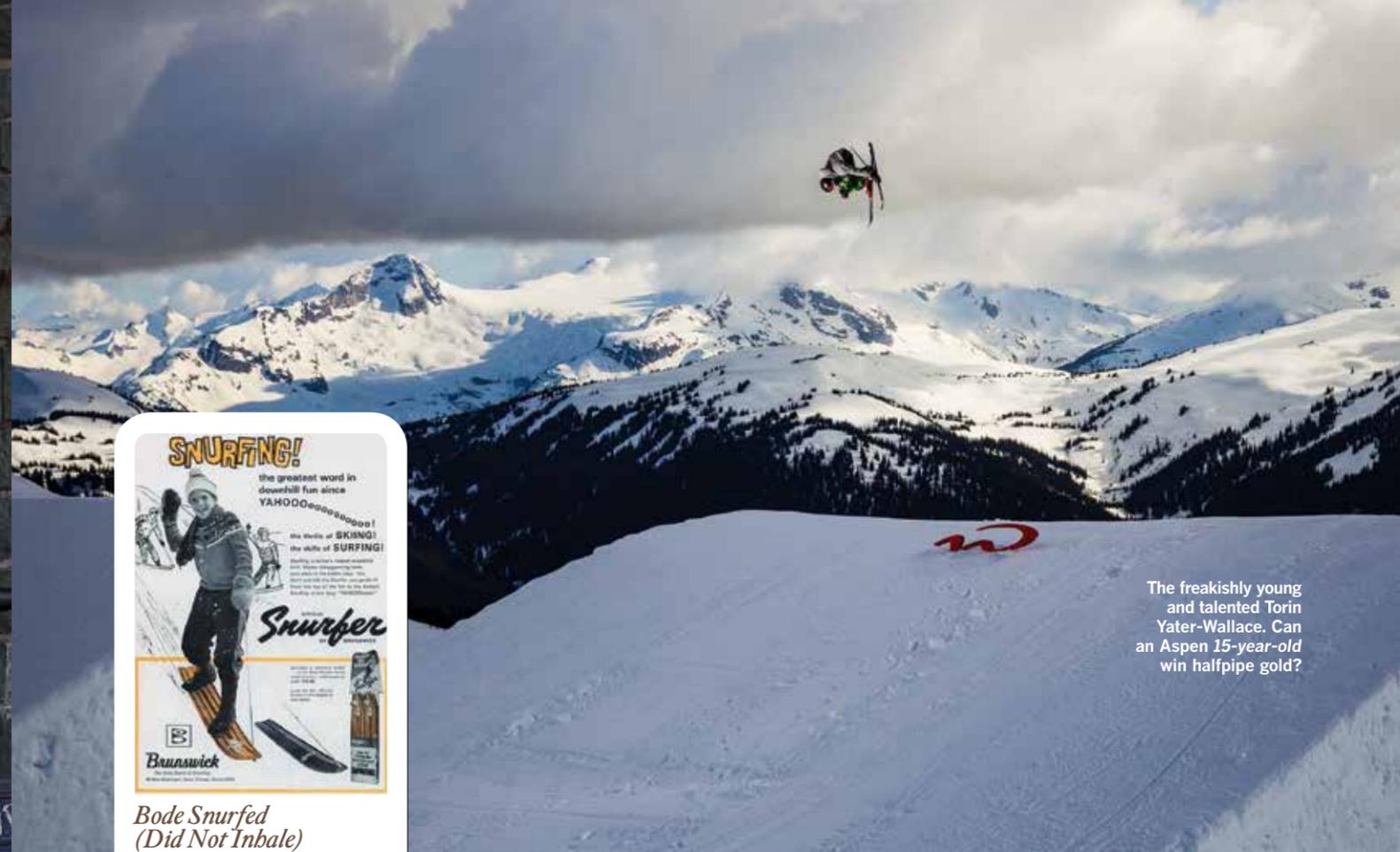
WILL YOU RETIRE AFTER THIS SEASON?

It's normal to retire after an Olympics, but it doesn't make much difference to me if I stop this year or right now or in December. I don't feel like there are any rules dictating what I do and don't do in my sport. If I'm feeling good, anything's possible.

JONATHAN SELKOWITZ



HORSE POWER
Hasn't missed a Kentucky Derby since 1999; co-owns two thoroughbreds.



The freakishly young and talented Torin Yater-Wallace. Can an Aspen 15-year-old win halfpipe gold?



Bode Snurfed (Did Not Inbale)

We've heard about the rustic New Hampshire cabin where Bode Miller grew up, off the grid and never on level ground. There beside a mossy stream, his hippie parents taught their kids to push limits and challenge convention, making Bode's storied career a sort of belated triumph of the '60s.

But almost as important was a backyard toy that Jo and Woody Miller gave Bode in 1979 (for Christmas, Jo thinks). The Snurfer, a precursor to the snowboard, soon became his preferred means of descending the steep, icy path from the cabin to Route 116 in Easton. "He got pretty good at navigating that hill," Woody recalls.

Invented in the 1960s by Sherman Poppen of Wisconsin, the Snurfer was a wide, short ski with no bindings. The user stood with one foot ahead of the other and steered with the help of a lanyard attached to the tip.

The last of Bode's several Snurfers wore out long ago, but 30 years later Bode describes it in fine detail, down to the rounded ridge that ran under the tail like the keel of a canoe.

"It's a piece of wood with staples in two spots," Miller says. "The staples give you traction when there's snow on it, and it has a little bit of a tiny little natural V. Not a V in but a V down. Just in the tail." —N.V.

ERIK SEO

THE OLYMPICS: KISS OF DEATH FOR FREESKIING?

With the addition of slopestyle and halfpipe to the Sochi lineup, the 2014 Games mark freeskiing's debut in the Olympics. In slopestyle, athletes launch tricks off of rails, walls, and jumps in a terrain park. Halfpipe has been the exclusive domain of high-flying snowboarders, but skiers go even higher, executing even more complicated tricks.

Jib-style freeskiing started

in the '90s with a renegade group of Canadian bump skiers, including J.P. Auclair and Mike Douglas, who thought overregulation of competitive mogul skiing stifled athletes' creativity and the sport's progression.

Freeskiing's founding fathers have mixed feelings about their sport's Olympic induction. "If you want to see a high level of anything, you have

to have people that commit to that one precise thing for many years, and that's what the Olympics do," Auclair says. "On the other hand, if it affects the spirit of the sport, that used to bother me. But individuality and creativity will happen, whether it's in the Olympics or not."

The U.S. fields the best freeskiing squad in the world. Medal hopes are high. —K.M.

FREESKIERS TO WATCH > Simon Dumont, Jen Hudak, and Torin Yater-Wallace in halfpipe; Sammy Carlson, Bobby Brown, and Grete Eliassen in slopestyle. WSI/AFP champion Gus Kenworthy is a double threat.

MOGULS > Olympic champ Hannah Kearney and bronze medalist Bryon Wilson.

SKI CROSS > X Games and World Cup star John Teller, Joe Swenson, and Langley McNeal.

WHAT TOOK SO LONG?

In 2014, freeskiing and women's jumping join the Games. Preceding them:

1924 Cross-country, nordic combined, ski jumping	1948 Downhill, slalom	1988 Super G, alpine combined (reinstated)	1994 Aerials	2006 Snowboard cross
1936 Alpine combined	1952 Giant slalom (alpine combined dropped)	1992 Moguls	1998 Snowboard halfpipe, snowboard GS	2010 Ski cross

5 Americans to Watch

ALPINE >
ANDREW WEIBRECHT

AGE > 27
HOMETOWN > Lake Placid, N.Y.
WINS > 1 Olympic medal
EQUIPMENT SPONSOR > Head
LUCKY STIFF > Married a former Lange Girl
Nicknamed "the Warhorse," Weibrecht surged out of obscurity to win the super-G bronze in Vancouver. He has struggled with injuries and technical issues ever since, but all Weibrecht has to do is string together a clean run and he's a definite medal contender in the speed events.

ALPINE >
MARCO SULLIVAN

AGE > 33
HOMETOWN > Truckee, Calif.
WINS > 1 World Cup win (downhill), 3 additional podiums (downhill)
EQUIPMENT SPONSOR > Atomic
GNARLY > Four-time winner of Arctic Man, Alaska's snowmobile-assisted ski race.
After resolving health issues and switching to Atomic, 14-year Team veteran Sully opened last season finishing third in the Lake Louise downhill. He finished 14th in the downhill standings (tops among U.S. men), and the Sochi course favors good gliders like him.

ALPINE >
STACEY COOK

AGE > 29
HOMETOWN > Truckee, Calif.
WINS > 2 podiums (downhill)
EQUIPMENT SPONSOR > Rossignol
MACHING > Once flew in an F-18 Super Hornet fighter jet
After nipping at the podium for years, Cook had a breakthrough season last year, notching two second-place finishes in Lake Louise and placing fourth in the World Cup downhill standings. She's fast, and she's a contender on the Rosa Khutor downhill track.

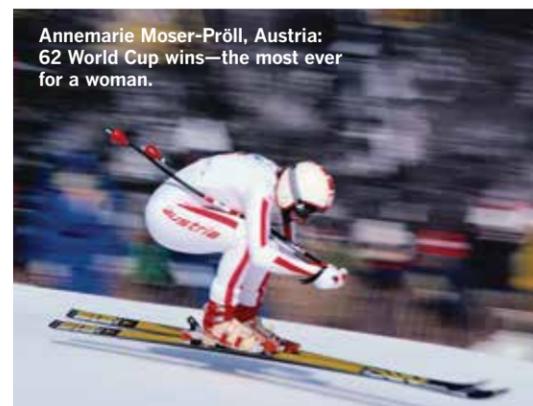
FREESKIING >
MAGGIE VOISIN

AGE > 15
HOMETOWN > Whitefish, Mont.
WINS > 2013 WSI World Championships gold
EQUIPMENT SPONSOR > Armada
TRUANT > Gets to miss (high school) classes to ski in Russia
Last year, Voisin came out of nowhere to win the slopestyle at the WSI/AFP World Championships. In doing so, she beat women 10 years her senior, established herself among freeskiing's elite, and earned a shot at the Olympics.

JUMPING >
LINDSEY VAN

AGE > 29
HOMETOWN > Park City, Utah
WINS > 2009 World Championships gold
EQUIPMENT SPONSOR > Rossignol
HERO > Bone-marrow donation advocate
Women's ski jumping has finally cracked the Olympic events lineup, and no one gets more credit for that than Van. Though she's been plagued by injuries, the former world champ says she's healthier than she's been in years. She's a high flier who once dominated the circuit: Don't count her out.

HOW HARD Racecourses are injected with water to make them icy, reducing course deterioration so that every racer has a fair chance.



Annemarie Moser-Pröll, Austria: 62 World Cup wins—the most ever for a woman.



Lindsey Vonn, USA: 59 wins through 2012-13 season.

Faster than Vonn? There's Only One.

Sometime this winter, Lindsey Vonn, if healthy, will likely surpass Annemarie Moser-Pröll's career total of World Cup race victories, a women's ski-racing record that has stood unchallenged since 1980. The Austrian legend collected 62 wins. Vonn had 59 when injury ended her 2013 season early.
In the United States, little is known of Moser-Pröll, the farm girl from the tiny village of Kleinarl whom *Ski Racing* magazine labeled the sport's "problem child" in 1975 because of her squabbles with coaches, her unconventional approach to training, and "a smoking habit that occasionally got out of control."
In fact, Moser-Pröll was a dignified and determined athlete who was supporting her family with race wins by age 16. American downhill pioneer Cindy Nelson, who upset one of Moser-Pröll's winning streaks, remembers an "amazing aura" and intimidating ability to study a course.
"Back then nobody knew about physical training," recalls Nelson.

"For the most part she was pretty quiet. She did smoke, she did drink. She hung out with her serviceman at the hotel bar... But she was an incredibly talented ski racer. She was very competitive-spirited."
Greater international fame may have found Moser-Pröll had she not chosen, at the peak of her powers, to sit out the 1975-76 season and miss the Innsbruck Games, where her countryman Franz Klammer struck downhill gold (see page 70). She returned the next year and went on to win a record sixth overall World Cup title in 1979 and the downhill gold at the Lake Placid Games in 1980.
The reason for her career intermission—not always disclosed by the discreet reporters of the day—was that her father, Josef, was dying of lung cancer. That year Moser-Pröll bought a café in her hometown, and although she has since sold it, the Café-Restaurant Olympia still exhibits her memorabilia collection, including a splendid trophy case that perhaps only Vonn will be able to match. —N.V.

FROM TOP: GETTY IMAGES; COURTESY OF HEAD SKIS

JACK AFFLECK



LINDSEY VONN

AGE	29
HOMETOWN	St. Paul, Minn.
WINS	2 Olympic medals, 5 World Championship medals, 59 World Cup wins
TITLES	17 (4 overall, 6 downhill, 4 super G, 3 combined)
EQUIPMENT SPONSOR	Head

With record-shattering achievements or stuff-of-tabloids personal dramas, Lindsey Vonn has done as much as any racer to bring her sport into the mainstream. A crash at last February's World Championships wrecked her knee. Another during training in November set her back again and cast doubts over her Olympic hopes. But the winningest American of all time, well known for strength and discipline, is hard at work rehabbing. She's the fiercest of competitors, and if she's healthy enough to start at Sochi, she'll be a threat. —K.M.

WHAT ARE YOUR GOALS FOR THE SEASON?
I'm focusing on the Olympics. That's not to say the World Cup isn't important, but if I'm not ready, I'll skip more World Cups so I'll be good to go by Sochi.

DO YOU THINK THEY SHOULD HAVE GONE AHEAD WITH THE RACE THE DAY YOU GOT INJURED AT THE WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS?
No. The reason I got injured was because of the snow conditions. There's no need to risk athletes' health to save a few dollars, but they did it again at World Cup finals and a bunch of people got hurt.

WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED FROM DATING TIGER WOODS?
He's so mentally tough—always able to clear his mind. I'm good at that too, but he takes it to another level. He's taught me to be tougher, have thicker skin.

HOW LONG DO YOU SEE YOURSELF RACING?
For sure through the 2015 World Championships at Beaver Creek. After that it might just be downhill and super G. I have to see how my body is holding up and if I'm still enjoying it.

TIGERESQUE:
Hit a hole in one in her first 18-hole round of golf.

Lindsey

Success Never Goes out of Style

As a famous coach once said, "You've got to look like a team to play like a team." Over the years, U.S. Winter Olympic fashions have ranged from tasteless to timeless.



1956 • Cortina
Appropriately stylish for an Italian Olympics.



1964 • Innsbruck
Headbands looked cool...back then.



1980 • Lake Placid
White-hatted heroes for an American Games.



1994 • Lillehammer
Ever so casual in faded blue jeans.



1998 • Nagano
Cowboy hats again, but this time black ones.



2014 • Sochi
Ralph Lauren pea coats (with a logo you can't miss).



AMERICAN NORDIES: SUDDENLY CONTENTENDERS

For the first time in history, the U.S. has medal potential in all three nordic sports—cross-country, ski jumping, and nordic combined. Kikkan Randall (above), a favorite in women's cross-country, attributes the team's collective rise to maturity. "Nordic skiers are like fine wine: We get better with age."

Johnny Spillane and Bill Demong snagged the United States' first Olympic medals in the nordic combined at the 2010 Games and are good bets this time around.

Meanwhile, the 2014 Olympics mark the debut of women's jumping, and the U.S. squad boasts the best female jumpers in the world, including 19-year-old Sarah Hendrickson, the 2013 World Champion, who despite blowing out her knee in August is still gunning for an inaugural medal. —K.M.

HOW STRONG

At times, alpine racers must resist as many as

8 g's of centrifugal force.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: AP IMAGES; GETTY IMAGES; COURTESY OF USSA/SARAH BRUNSON; AP IMAGES; COURTESY OF RALPH LAUREN; AP IMAGES; SPORTS ILLUSTRATED/GETTY IMAGES

TED LIGETY

AGE	29
HOMETOWN	Park City, Utah
WINS	1 Olympic medal, 5 World Championship medals, 18 World Cup wins
TITLES	4 (GS)
EQUIPMENT SPONSOR	Head

ADMITS
Total Game of Thrones geek.

Ted

JONATHAN SELKOWITZ

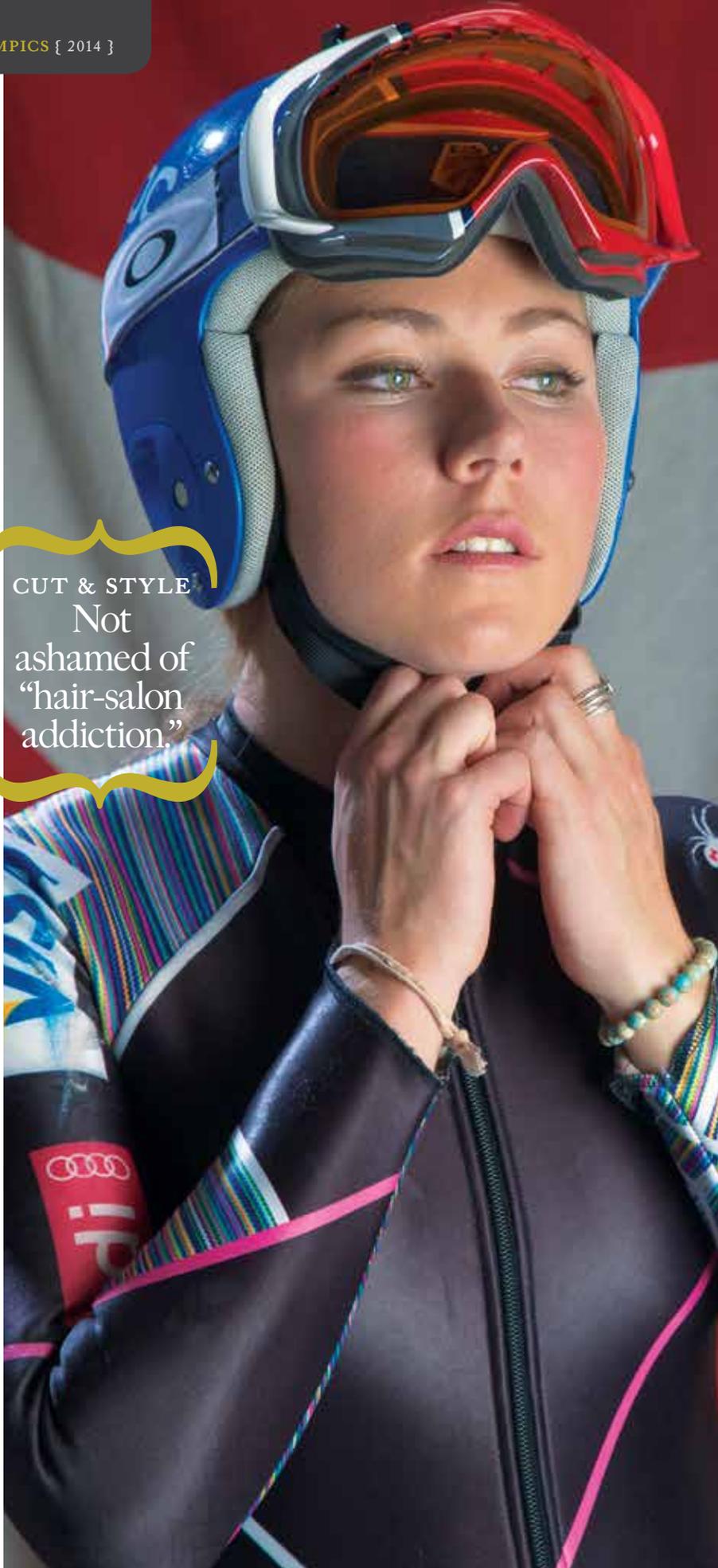
A one-trick pony no more, Ted Ligety emerged as a multidiscipline threat in February 2013, when he became the first man in 45 years to win three gold medals at a single World Championships. Sure, he won six out of eight GS races last season and people call him "Mr. GS." But he's a proven contender in super G and super-combined events as well, and preseason rumors swirled that he was scary fast in slalom training.

HOW DO YOU EXPLAIN LAST SEASON'S SUCCESS?
I think the new skis FIS implemented definitely benefited my type of skiing. I also changed what I do in the gym, which helped because the new skis are much more taxing on your body.

YOU WERE A FAVORITE IN GS AT THE 2010 OLYMPICS BUT PLACED NINTH. DO YOU HAVE A DIFFERENT STRATEGY GOING INTO THE OLYMPICS THIS TIME AROUND?

I'm in a totally different place now. In 2010, I was coming off of a knee injury, and I also played it too tactically, especially in the giant slalom. That was a good learning experience for me and changed my perspective on how I race. I decided I was going to go harder and be pushing the limit more often, and it's definitely paid off for me.

WHAT ARE YOUR OLYMPIC GOALS?
Hopefully, I can win the giant slalom there. That's my biggest goal for this season. Then, like last year at the World Championships, hopefully a few other events fall into play.



MIKAELA SHIFFRIN

AGE	18
HOMETOWN	Eagle-Vail, Colo.
WINS	1 World Championship medal, 4 World Cup wins
TITLES	1 World Championship medal, 4 World Cup wins
EQUIPMENT SPONSOR	Atomic

In 2012–13, already in her second full World Cup season at age 17, Mikaela Shiffrin exploded onto the scene, winning four World Cups and a World Championship slalom title. At season's end, she became one of the youngest women—and only the second American woman—to win the slalom globe. She's a clear favorite in the Sochi slalom and could podium in GS. To call her a “phenom,” as Bode Miller did, is an understatement. —K.M.

WHAT ARE YOUR HOPES FOR THE OLYMPICS?
I believe I have the ability to win a medal in giant slalom and slalom, but the stars need to line up on race day for people to actually execute what they are capable of.

WHO ARE YOUR ROLE MODELS IN THE SPORTS WORLD?
At the moment, I look to Ted Ligety, Marcel Hirscher, Marlies Schild, and Tina Maze, among others, for their various strengths that I would like to bring to my own skiing. As far as managing my public image, I look to a few people who inspire me to just be myself and not feel like I have to force things: Jennifer Lawrence, Steffi Graf, Bode Miller, and Missy Franklin.

WHAT DO YOU THINK WHEN PEOPLE SAY YOU'RE THE NEXT LINDSEY VONN?
I'm flattered because I have a lot of respect for Lindsey, but we are our own individuals. I hope to have my own successful career and that in the future when people look back on these years of ski racing, they will know of Lindsey Vonn and Mikaela Shiffrin as different people who both have a love for racing.

DO YOU EVER REGRET MISSING OUT ON BEING A “NORMAL” TEENAGER?
I have no regrets. After all, what is “normal”?

CUT & STYLE
Not
ashamed of
“hair-salon
addiction.”

NATHAN BILLOW

5 Euros to Watch (Alpine)

**MARCEL
HIRSCHER**
AUSTRIA

This technical wunderkind has brought home the World Cup overall title the past two seasons, as well as the 2012 giant slalom and 2013 slalom titles. Ligety edged him for the GS crown last year. Hirscher won't have forgotten.

**AKSEL LUND
SVINDAL**
NORWAY

He's a three-time Olympic medalist and has won in every discipline except slalom, but speed events, where he's nearly unbeatable, are his specialty. A gruesome downhill crash wrecked his 2007 season, but he came back as fearless as ever.

TINA MAZE
SLOVENIA

Maze, a two-time Olympic medalist, is the strongest woman on the tour. In 2013 she broke Hermann Maier's record for points in a single season, winning the overall, super-G, and GS globes. She races independently of the Slovenian team, with her boyfriend as coach and manager.

**ALEXIS
PINTURAULT**
FRANCE

A tech-event specialist, the 22-year-old Frenchman has been nipping at the heels of Ligety and Hirscher for the past two years—and occasionally beating them. He hails from Courchevel, where his family owns the five-star Hotel Annapurna.

**MARIA
HÖFL-RIESCH**
GERMANY

One of Vonn's closest friends and rivals, Höfl-Riesch won two golds at the 2010 Olympics, edged Vonn for the 2011 overall title, and won three medals at the 2013 World Championships. She's a podium threat in all events.

HOW MANY

No nation gets more than four spots in each alpine discipline, which limits the chances of success for talent-deep nations. (Sorry, Austria.)



Julia Mancuso (center) and Lindsey Vonn (right) on the 2001 Nationals junior podium.

A Couple of 13-Year-Olds

In 1996, Aldo Radamus, coach of an underperforming U.S. Ski Team squad, thought American racing was hampered by all the space between mountain ranges. "A country such as Austria has all their skiers in a small geographic space, so every year they see each other." Thus was born the U.S. Development Team, a residential program with two coaches and a tight budget. (To save on hotels, skiers worked as housekeepers.) When the '98-'99 roster was announced, it included two 13-year-old girls, one from Squaw Valley, the other from Buck Hill, Minn. Julia Mancuso and Lindsey Vonn (then Kildow) quickly fell into the most productive and lasting of rivalries. Their coach, Todd Brickson, remembers each skiing with a style that reflected her origins—Vonn "edgy and aggressive" from nighttime slalom at cold, tiny Buck Hill; Mancuso with a light touch from skiing Tahoe powder. "If we did anything to help those two achieve what they have," says Brickson, "it was to bring them together." —N.V.

HOW HIGH

Most downhill courses have jumps. Racers typically fly

40 to **60** yards.

HOW FAST

Top speeds in downhill races can reach

100 mph.

JULIA MANCUSO

AGE	29
HOMETOWN	Squaw Valley, Calif.
WINS	3 Olympic medals, 5 World Championship medals, 7 World Cup wins
EQUIPMENT SPONSOR	Head

Little-known fact: Julia Mancuso has more major championship hardware than any American woman ever. Though she's routinely upstaged by teammate Lindsey Vonn (her World Championships bronze, for instance, was eclipsed by the frenzy over Vonn's injury), this ukulele-playing surfer girl has proved herself to be a big-game performer able to deliver in the downhill, super G, giant slalom, and super combined. —K.M.

WHAT HAS BEEN THE BEST MOMENT OF YOUR CAREER?

Winning the Olympics and living my childhood dream of being a ski racer.

WHAT IS IT ABOUT HIGH-PRESSURE SITUATIONS THAT BRING OUT YOUR BEST SKIING?

I love to ski, and I don't let the pressure get to me. I'm always stoked to go out and do my best, and I feel extra motivated in those moments.

HOW IS YOUR APPROACH TO SKI RACING DIFFERENT FROM YOUR COMPETITORS'?

I really follow my intuition. For me it's about how I feel, and it doesn't matter what times the other girls are getting. It's all about feeling confident and giving it everything you have on race day.



SEXY
 Launched her own lingerie line, Kiss My Tiara.

JONATHAN SELKOWITZ

Julia



Klammer (left) vs. Russi: An Olympic downhill for the ages.

'76 One Carved Turn

FRANZ KLAMMER SET AN EDGE AND STOOD ON IT. ALL OF AUSTRIA ROARED.

For nearly 40 years, Franz Klammer's performance at the 1976 Innsbruck Games has stood as the defining episode of modern ski racing. But while the reckless daring of his gold-medal downhill run is justly celebrated, the decisive factor may have been more mundane: innovative technique.

Klammer says he'd been working for years to bring carving methods to the downhill discipline and had located the pressure points that made his 222-cm Fischer C.4s arc despite their minimal sidecut. How much he would need such skills on the Olympic course was unclear when he woke up on Feb. 5, the day of the men's downhill. Throughout the week of training runs at Patscherkofel, the Austrian coaches had campaigned for a straighter course, bickering over gate placement with the chief race official, Erich Demetz of Italy.

Klammer was still every bit a 22-year-old farm kid that day, but he was already the world's fastest downhiller. Having drawn bib 15, he had the latest start position in the top seed and was the last of Austria's four starters. So when, after 14 racers, the fastest

time belonged to Switzerland's Bernhard Russi, Klammer knew he was his nation's last hope.

Klammer's wild descent thrilled spectators, but all the famous recoveries were costly, and at the final split he was 0.19 seconds off Russi's pace. Having pushed the

Klammer unexpectedly swung wide to his left, tucking close against the fence...

risk-recovery calculus to its limit, Klammer was acutely aware of the same thing Russi, resting on a hay bale at the finish, could feel where he stood: the entire forested hillside trembling under the sustained roar of the largest crowd assembled in the vicinity since World War II.

Then came the Bernegg section. Just before the narrow trail widened into a clearing where the course made a long right turn, Klammer unexpectedly swung wide

to his left, tucking close against the fence to set up, then loading his weight onto his left ski to initiate an exquisite carved turn the likes of which had never been seen. For a full six seconds Klammer etched a single long groove into the washboarded ice.

That turn sent him like a ragged missile into the final sections, catapulting him across the finish and into Austrian lore, 0.33 seconds ahead of Russi. The crucial momentum had come from the most patient and subtle maneuver in a run better known for its wild abandon.

The influence Klammer had on ski-racing pedagogy in Austria found its measure in the late 1990s, when the children of 1976 came of age and utterly conquered the World Cup. The echo was loudest on Dec. 21, 1999, when the men's tour swung through Patscherkofel for a super G in which the top nine finishers were, to a man, Austrian. All had been born between 1967 and 1974; all had grown up worshipping Klammer. And when they reached the finish, the great man was there, standing ready to congratulate them. —*N.V.*