



Women's Ski Jumping - USA

WOMEN SKI JUMPERS – OUR OLYMPIC STORY

What's the story about women ski jumpers and the Olympics?

Women have been ski jumping for over 100 years. While it's arguably the dream of every elite athlete to represent her country at the Olympic Games, that opportunity did not exist for women ski jumpers around the world. Ski jumping and Nordic combined, which consists of cross-country skiing and jumping, were the only events in the Olympic Winter Games in which women were not allowed to compete like the men.

In 1991, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) announced that all future Olympic sports must be opened to both genders. However, this excluded the original sports featured at the inaugural Olympic Winter Games in 1924, including ski jumping.



Getty Images Photo by Chris McGrath/Getty Images

Why weren't women allowed to jump in the Games?

These skilled athletes ski down an in-run at 60 mph and can fly farther than the distance of a football field. But early on in the push, some felt that women's bodies couldn't handle the sport — not unlike what was said in the 1970s and 80s about women marathoners.

In 2006, the IOC executive committee turned down the International Ski Federation's (FIS) overwhelming recommendation that a women's ski jumping event be added to the 2010 Games in Vancouver. At the time, the IOC maintained that women's ski jumping lacked universality – despite having more athletes and more countries competing internationally at the elite level than other Winter Olympic sports for women.

For example, at the time of the IOC decision, women's ski jumping had 83 athletes from 14 nations competing at the highest levels; skier cross had 30 athletes from 11 nations; bobsleigh 26 athletes from 13 nations, luge had 45 athletes from 17 nations, and skeleton had 39 athletes from 12 nations.

What was the Vancouver court case?

For 10 years, female ski jumpers were continually denied inclusion in the Games despite pushing their sport through the system and greatly increasing participation.

Feeling as if they had exhausted every avenue, Americans Lindsey Van, Jessica Jerome, and retired jumper Karla Keck, risked their careers and teamed up with 12 women jumpers from five countries to sue the Vancouver Organizing Committee (VANOC) in 2008 for their right to compete in the 2010 Olympic Winter Games. The lawyers for the jumpers, **Ross Clark** and **Jeff Horswill** of Davis LLP, took on the case pro bono.

The historic human rights legal battle resulted in the British Columbia Supreme Court declaring in 2009 that the IOC exhibited gender discrimination by excluding women's ski jumping from the Vancouver Games, but stopped short of forcing VANOC and the IOC to hold an event for women.

Ironically, before the Winter Games in 2010, Lindsey Van held the K95 Vancouver hill record of 105.5 meters, for both men and women. That distance would have earned her a podium spot in the men's competition in the Vancouver Games.

When was women's ski jumping added to the Olympic program?

On April 6, 2011, the IOC finally announced that a women's ski jumping event would be added to the 2014 Sochi Olympic Winter Games program. The women will have one event — normal hill competition. The men have three events (normal hill, large hill, and team competition). WSJ-USA leaders continue to lobby to reach parity in ski jumping in the Winter Games.

Source: <http://www.wsjusa.com/olympic-inclusion/> - official site of women's ski jumping