

Brits Battle for Olympic Places

This was the final weekend for athletes to qualify for the Winter Olympics in Salt Lake next month and the British Freestyle Ski Team members have continued their battle to qualify right to the end. The British Olympic Association set an earlier deadline of 5 th January but extensions were given to a few borderline athletes.

By 5 th January Sam Temple (29, Oxford) and Joanne Bromfield, aged 19 who was born in England but grew up in Salt Lake due to her father's work placement, had met the tough criteria set by the International Ski Federation. They are hoping to be named as Olympic Team members by the BOA. Temple and Bromfield are already in the States training hard with their coaches and competed in the US Gateway World Cup Mogul Challenge at Lake Placid on Saturday. Both put down clean runs with scores of 22.36 for Temple and 20.44 for Bromfield (out of 30). The event is judged on quality of the turns made over the bumps, the execution and difficulty of two jumps and speed down the course of over 230 metres, which the top competitors finish in about 22 seconds. Imagine skiing a back mogul run at over 10 metres per second, throwing a couple of tricks off the jumps and you

get the picture! 'They both just need to get a little more speed and gain those vital extra points to be up there with the winners' reported their coaches yesterday.

Meanwhile back in Europe two Scots, Laura Donaldson (30, Glasgow) and Simon Bates (24, Edinburgh), have continued their fight to join their team-mates in Salt Lake. A 25 th place at World Cup or top 5 at Continental Cup has been their quest. Since the qualification period started in July 2000 they have both travelled thousands of miles training and competing all over the world without a regular coach and with limited financial support. The British Freestyle Ski Team does not have a team sponsor so the athletes have to rely on grants from Sport UK and Sport Scotland, plus help from families and whatever they can earn themselves when not training.

On several occasions they have both come tantalisingly close to qualification, but this weekend in Andermatt, Switzerland, Donaldson made 5 th place on Saturday and 4 th on Sunday in the Europa Cup. 'I now have a nail-biting time to see if the selectors at the BOA will accept these results as I wasn't given an extension to the qualifying period' she commented with apprehension.

Although Bates put down his personal best run scoring 24.45 and was fastest male of the 50 competitors on Saturday, he just missed the 5 th place. 'I'll now have to re-organise my goals and start working towards the World Championships in 2003 and the 2006 Olympics' he said.

GATEWAY FREESTYLE MOGUL CHALLENGE

Lake Placid, USA - 19 January 2002

WOMEN

- 1 Kari Traa NOR 27.12
- 2 Hannah Hardaway USA 26.14
- 3 Jillian Vogtli USA 25.96
- 35 Joanne Bromfield GBR 20.44

MEN

- 1 Jeremy Bloom USA 27.96
- 2 Travis Meyer USA 27.79
- 3 Jean-Luc Brassard CAN 27.65
- 39 Sam Temple GBR 22.36

EUROPA CUP MOGULS

Andermatt, Switzerland - 20 January 2002

WOMEN

- 1 Jenny Kittstein GER
- 4 Laura Donaldson GBR 20.90

MEN

- 1 Christoph Stark GER
- 7 Simon Bates GBR 24.45