

USG-Sponsored Team USA Athletes

ALANA NICHOLS

I love what I do. I absolutely love it, and I believe in myself. I really do believe that I can accomplish what I set out to accomplish. —Alana Nichols

The words ‘courage’, ‘determination’ and ‘champion’ are used a lot when describing Olympians. But when it comes to Alana Nichols, those words have never been more accurate.

At the age of 17, Alana Nichols was snowboarding during an annual family vacation in Colorado. Attempting an ambitious back flip on the snowy mountains, Alana over twisted, lost control and landed forcefully on a rock, leaving her paralyzed from the waist down.

The years that followed required tremendous courage and commitment as she recovered from this accident and became even stronger than she was before.

While recuperating, Alana took an interest in the sport of wheelchair basketball. After two years of hard work and training, she found herself as an alternate for the U.S. Women’s Team during the 2004 Paralympic Games in Athens. Alana’s determination eventually led to her becoming a full-time member of the national team. And in 2006, she won her first silver medal at the 2006 Wheelchair Basketball Championship.

In 2008, Alana was on the big stage again at the Paralympic Games, this time on a basketball court on the other side of the world, in Beijing, China. And that day, she and her teammates won Gold.

But Alana, didn’t celebrate long. Instead, she moved to Colorado, with her eye set on an entirely different sport – Alpine skiing. After spending countless hours back on the slopes, Alana found success quickly. By the end of her first season, she had won the national titles in super-G and downhill. And in 2010, completed her first IPC Alpine World Cup, taking first place in the downhill, second in the super combined and third in the super-G. All less than two years after dedicating herself to the sport.

This success led Alana to the 2010 Paralympic Winter Games in Vancouver—her first Winter Games. And she didn’t disappoint. Alana won the Gold in the downhill, Gold in the giant slalom, Silver in the super-G and Bronze in the super combined.

And as she gears up for Sochi 2014 Paralympic Winter Games, Alana talks about the difference between this upcoming experience and Vancouver. "Every Paralympic Games are different and just because I have medaled in the previous games doesn't mean winning will come easier for me in Sochi. I will have to work equally as hard if not harder to win." Alana adds, "And I am prepared for that."

2011: Parapan American Games, Guadalajara, Mexico

GOLD Medal

Vancouver 2010 Paralympic Winter Games

GOLD in Downhill skiing
GOLD in Giant slalom sitting
SILVER in Super-G sitting
BRONZE in Super combined sitting

Beijing 2008 Paralympic Games

GOLD in Wheelchair Basketball

2006 Wheelchair Basketball World Championship

SILVER Medal

2007 Parapan American Games, Rio De Janeiro, Brazil

GOLD Medal

BILLY DEMONG

"You take the good days with you and learn from and then leave behind the bad ones. I try to find enjoyment each day because this is an awesome life."— Billy Demong

After competing in the past four Olympic Games, the name Billy Demong has become synonymous with the snow event nordic combined.

At age nine, after a few years of cross-country ski racing and ski jumping, Billy discovered nordic combined skiing—an event that mixes the ski jump with cross-country skiing. Billy found enormous early success with this sport and, while still in high school, he had the opportunity to do what many consider a lifelong dream. "As

a youngster at 17, I made the 1998 Olympic Winter Games in Nagano, Japan,” says Billy.

With his first Olympic Winter Games already under his belt, Billy was looking forward to a long career of competition, medal ceremonies and most importantly, finally putting the U.S. on the map in the world of nordic sporting events. Then in 2002, Billy fractured his skull diving into a swimming pool. The injury kept him out of nordic combined for over a year, but the larger effect it had on him was much more dramatic.

“At that stage in my life, I think my motivation became to get away from the sport and then to come back to it more centered,” relates Billy. “So I tried to mentally quit. Since the doctors weren't going to let me do it anyway, I started working construction and going to school and trying to get a fresh perspective.”

“When I came back,” he continues, “it took me three years before I even scored a top 10 in the World Cup, but I had a much better time every day along the way. That was one of the changes I made, making sure that I was appreciative of the opportunity. Going forward, I had the ability to improve, meanwhile taking myself less seriously. I found happiness in becoming more well rounded and no longer defined myself by the results page.”

Over the next few years, Billy rebounded to earn several World Cup victories, but it was 2009 that he experienced a breakthrough. That year, he netted an impressive nine World Cup wins, numerous top 10 finishes and, by year's end, he was ranked third in overall World Cup standings.

Next up was the 2010 Olympic Winter Games in Vancouver. “Going into Vancouver there was a feeling of culmination for our team,” Billy reflects, “...not only did we have the physical strength but the strength of results to back that up.” In Vancouver, Billy earned a gold in the 10km large hill—making him the first American to win an Olympic Games gold medal in a nordic event. He also earned a silver medal in the 4x5 km team.

And as the 2014 Olympic Winter Games in Sochi approaches, Billy Demong, with a smile on his face, is looking forward to it. “It's been a really exciting process to not only become a five time U.S. Olympian, but also to go where no other Americans have gone before. And kind of start a legacy in a sport that the United States has not historically been successful. That's not only for our team, but it also creates an environment for future generations to follow in our footsteps.”

Winter Olympics The Olympic Winter Games

Gold in 10 km large hill at 2010 Vancouver Olympic Winter Games

Silver in 4x5 km team at 2010 Vancouver Olympic Winter Games

World Championships

Gold in 10 km large hill at 2009 Liberec World Championship

Silver in 15 km gundersen at 2007 Sapporo World Championship

Bronze in 10 km normal hill at 2009 Liberec World Championship

Bronze in Team normal hill at 2013 Val di Fiemme World Championship

MONIQUE AND JOCELYNE LAMOUREUX

“Ever since we lost the gold medal in Vancouver, Sochi is what we’ve been looking towards.”—Jocelyne Lamoureux

The journey of twin-sister hockey duo, Monique and Jocelyne Lamoureux reads like a Hollywood movie script. Two sisters, competing side-by-side on the ice, motivating each other every second of the day, so that one day they could win the Olympic Winter Games gold medal for Team USA.

“We set the goal at a young age,” Monique explains. “Training in middle school, doing sports acceleration and plyometrics and really just kind of working out.”

Their hard work began paying off immediately. At age 12, they led the Pee Wee A Boys’ Hockey Team to the North Dakota State Hockey Championship. By the time they graduated high school, the sisters had won four state championships and three national championships. And in their college career, Monique tallied 265 points (113 goals) while Jocelyne got 285 points (125 goals) in just 148 games

But it was when they were only 17 years old that Team USA came calling. And for Monique and Jocelyne, it was the perfect step to help realize their childhood dreams.

“Our first experience with the National Team was at a very young age,” Monique recalls. “But for us we knew we wanted to go to Vancouver in 2010, so getting into the mix of the National Team was ideal if we were going to be on the Olympic Team.”

And, in fact, outstanding play on the National Team helped the sisters get to Vancouver in 2010. Where Monique scored three goals in the semi final game against Sweden. But in a stunner at the Gold Medal Game, USA lost to hometown favorite, Team Canada. Despite the loss, the sisters were still proud of their accomplishments. “It’s hard to put into words the feeling of walking into the opening ceremony and knowing all that hard work paid off, knowing that the early mornings, the late nights, the cold walks to the rink, it was all for something,” Jocelyne says.

And the loss to Team Canada has only spurred the Lamoureux sisters to work harder in preparation for Sochi. As Monique says, “to us we want to win a gold medal and that’s what we’re training for. And I think there are twelve or thirteen of us that are returning from Vancouver that have been thinking about 2014 and being ready to go, ready for the gold medal.”

Olympic Games

Silver Medal at Vancouver 2010 Olympic Winter Games

Women’s World Championship

Gold Medal at 2013 Women’s World Championship in Canada

Silver Medal at 2012 Women’s World Championship in United States

Gold Medal at 2011 Women’s World Championship in Switzerland

Woman’s 4 Nations Cup

Gold Medal at 2011 Woman’s 4 Nations Cup in Sweden

Silver Medal at 2010 Woman’s 4 Nations Cup in Canada

RICO ROMAN

“I’m super excited about playing in Sochi, Russia. Because I get to represent the greatest country in the world.” — Rico Roman

The last three years have seen Rico Roman rewrite his own personal story. As a member of the U.S. National Sled Hockey Team, Rico has already won two gold medals in tournament play and is hopeful to compete in the 2014 Paralympic Winter Games in Sochi, Russia—his first Games.

“Sled hockey is very fast-paced, hard-hitting, and full-contact, just like regular stand up hockey,” Rico describes. “It’s actually very challenging because we’re skating and shooting with our arms.”

Rico is used to challenges. After one fateful day in 2007, as part of the U.S. Army in Iraq, Rico experienced one of the greatest challenges of his life. “I was in the service and it was my third tour. My vehicle was leading—actually I liked to lead, to be in front of my troops. That particular day, though, we just didn’t see the roadside bomb...”

The explosion that destroyed their vehicle injured both of Rico’s legs, one of which

was permanently damaged. He described the months that followed as a “tough, difficult time.” After doing some soul searching and talking with other veterans with amputated limbs, Rico decided to amputate his mangled leg. “I’m so happy with the outcome. I’m way more mobile than I was before and I’m just blessed it all worked out for me.”

Rico began the rigorous process of rehabbing to learn how to use prosthetic legs. During this time he was introduced to hand cycling. To say his progress was astounding would be an understatement. Within three months, he entered two bike marathons and, six months after, he rode 150 miles in just two days to raise money for multiple sclerosis.

Soon after, Rico discovered sled hockey. There he found his new passion, and more than that, he found a team. “With the members of our Paralympic Team, the great thing about it is you have that same camaraderie that you had when you were with your platoon. We just continue to progress and our team is really great and so much fun. We know we have the talent, it’s just putting it to work.”

Entering his fourth season in sled hockey, Rico contemplates what it will be like to play with the 2014 U.S. Paralympic Sled Hockey Team in Sochi. He was nominated to the team in July 2013.

“It means so much to represent my country in another way,” explains Rico. “We also have this humongous American flag in the locker room and when I see it, it really doesn’t make me feel like an individual, like I’m just doing this for myself or I’m trying to win this medal for myself. It’s for all the people back home, all the people that have supported me to get me where I am now—this means more to me than anything.”

U.S. National Sled Hockey Team Member

2011-2012

2012 IPC Ice Sledge Hockey Championship

Gold

2011 World Sledge Hockey Challenge

Second place

SETH WESCOTT

“It’s been an absolute joy and I feel so lucky that I get to do something that I’m so passionate about and love to do so much.” — Seth Wescott

For nearly three decades, the always-humble Seth Wescott has carved out a path for himself in the world of professional snowboarding. And at nearly the same time, snowboarding has carved out some recognition in the world of sports.

“I discovered the sport in 1986 when, at the time, I was a ski racer and skateboarder. So when I saw snowboarding, it seemed to make sense that *that’s* what I should be doing.”

Over the next decade, Seth dedicated himself to his new passion and saw his skills, and the sport he loved, gain momentum. In the early days, Seth’s focus was to one day become a world champion snowboarder. But the Olympic Winter Games were never really a goal, because at the time snowboarding was not yet an Olympic Winter Games sport.

“My generation in snowboarding never set out to be Olympians because growing up we never felt that the sport would gain Olympic acceptance within the timespan of our careers. So the initial goal as a kid was to become a world champion and just get to do the sport through the World Cup.” But all that changed in 1996, when the IOC announced snowboarding would be a part of the 1998 Olympic Winter Games in Nagano, Japan.

In the first ever snowboarding Olympic Winter Games qualifiers, Seth got off to a good start by quickly medaling the half-pipe competition. But his 1998 Olympic Winter Games dreams would come to an abrupt end when he crashed in the following two races and missed out on Nagano.

A torn ACL kept Seth out of the Salt Lake City 2002 Olympic Winter Games, but his fortunes would soon change. In 2003, the IOC announced that snowboard cross would be part of the Torino 2006 Olympic Winter Games—an event Seth specialized in. A healthy Seth went on to win the Snowboard Cross World Championship in 2005, which qualified him for the 2006 Olympic Winter Games. This also meant he would be making his Olympic Winter Games debut as the reigning world champion.

After nearly twenty years of hard work and perseverance in snowboarding, Seth, much like the sport he loves, had finally made it. And at the 2006 Olympic Winter Games, Seth took home the gold in snowboard cross

His success continues to grow. At the Vancouver 2010 Olympic Winter Games, Seth again won the gold medal in snowboard cross, and in the process, made history by becoming the first American male to successfully defend a gold medal in a snow

sport.

As Seth, humble as always, looks forward to his third Olympic Winter Games and the chance to defend his gold medal for the third time, he thinks about his long journey and the journey of professional snowboarding. "It's above and beyond what I ever contemplated as a kid. To be able to do what I love and represent the United States on the world stage is really just beyond my wildest dreams."

Olympic Winter Games

Gold in snowboard cross at Torino 2006 Olympic Winter Games

Gold in snowboard cross at Vancouver 2010 Olympic Winter Games

FIS Snowboarding World Championship.

Gold in snowboard cross at 2005 Whistler World Championship

Silver in snowboard cross at the 2003 Kreischburg World Championship

Silver in snowboard cross at the 2007 Arosa World Championship

Silver in snowboard cross at the 2011 La Molina World Championship

X GAMES MEDAL RECORD

Gold in UltraCross at 2002 Aspen X Games

Silver in snowboard cross at 2002 Aspen X Games

Silver in UltraCross at 2003 Aspen X Games

Silver in snowboard cross at 2004 Aspen X Games

Silver in snowboard cross at 2005 Aspen X Games

Silver in snowboard cross at 2010 Aspen X Games

Bronze in snowboard cross at 1998 Aspen X Games

Bronze in snowboard cross at 2001 Aspen X Games

Bronze in snowboard cross at 2007 Aspen X Games

Team Canada

TESSA BONHOMME

"Everybody always sees that happy picture at the end, the Stanley Cup picture. But nobody shows the hard times or the setbacks or the terrible games, the 8-0 losses. But those are the times that most champions remember and that's what they thrive off of. — Tessa Bonhomme

Tessa Bonhomme was raised in Sudbury, Ontario, Canada where hockey is seemingly part of everyday life. And like a lot of young Ontarians, she had NHL aspirations. That is, until she discovered the Olympic Games.

“Growing up, I always dreamed of playing in the NHL with the Mario Lemieux’s or the Wayne Gretzky’s, there wasn’t much girls hockey going on then. But when I found out that the girls were going to be playing in the Olympics, my dreams kind of shifted and my role models did as well.”

After a successful Pee Wee and secondary school career, Tessa worked hard at becoming a star defenseman for the Ohio State Buckeyes. As an ‘offensive-minded’ defenseman, she ended her college career with Ohio State’s single season record for most points for a defenseman (45), and is currently second all-time for defenseman points scored in women’s college hockey.

It was during this time at Ohio State when the Canadian National Team took notice and asked her to participate in Canada’s National Under-22 Team. But following a childhood dream is rarely a smooth journey.

“The Canadian Team does something called ‘centralization,’ where you put your life on hold, pack up your stuff, move out to Calgary to eat, sleep and play hockey 24/7. It was amazing. The coaches were heavy on how important defense was, and as an ‘offensive defenseman,’ I was confused with what type of game they wanted me to play. And when it came time to walk into the ‘cut meeting’ with the head coach, I was released. It was heartbreaking.”

Tessa came back home and worked hard on her strengths as well as her. And it worked. She made Team Canada the next year and competed in the World Championships. Although she thought she was now well on her way to Vancouver for the 2010, the Canadian National Team made a sudden coaching change, and soon after, Tessa was cut again. But she never once considered giving up.

“I really focused on my game and myself again. And I wasn’t doing it for anybody else, I was doing it for myself to prove that I can come back from this, and not to be the best player, but as the best player to help my teammates achieve the goal that we wanted. When I was invited back to the next ‘centralization’ year, I didn’t let any opportunity pass. Every moment I had, I was attacking it with a smile. I wasn’t angry, I was happy. I was extremely proud and I felt lucky to have an opportunity to still be working together with all these girls towards a common goal.

That year Tessa received an invitation to rejoin the team. And in the 2010 Vancouver Olympic Winter Games, she helped her teammates receive the gold. And as Tessa reflects on her sometimes rocky journey to Olympic gold, she realizes she is stronger for it.

“It’s a funny thing. I always say that I hope every hockey player in their life gets cut and devastated at least once, because if anything it builds more character and it teaches a heck of a lot more about yourself and your team. So I’m thankful that all

those things happened to me. And I'm proud to say that I came out of that."

Olympic Games

GOLD in tournament at Vancouver 2010

IIHF World Women's Championship

GOLD in tournament at 2007 Canada

GOLD in tournament at 2012 United States

SILVER in tournament at 2009 Finland

SILVER in tournament at 2011 Switzerland

SILVER in tournament at 2013 Canada

Canada Cup (women's)

SILVER in tournament at 2009 Canada

Women's 4 National Cup

GOLD in tournament at 2010 Canada

Air Canada Cup (women's)

GOLD in tournament at 2005 Germany

GOLD in tournament at 2006 Germany

DUNCAN KEITH

"I've always been focused and determined, and I knew there was nothing that was going to get in my way." —Duncan Keith

Hockey isn't only Duncan Keith's profession. It's his passion. As an eight-year NHL veteran and two-time Stanley Cup champion, Duncan is used to packed arenas, the intensity of the NHL playoffs and, of course, the championship parades. But Duncan admits it's hard to top his first Olympic experience at the 2010 Vancouver Games. An experience that ended in Olympic gold.

"I remember walking to the final game for the gold medal and thinking 'I've never been this nervous in my life to play a hockey game.' It was a great feeling and it's so lucky how we were able to come out on top," says Duncan.

But as Duncan gears up for his second gold medal push in Sochi, and his third

Stanley Cup next spring, he's not sitting back to admire his accomplishments. Instead he continues to be driven by an experience in his youth that occurred when he was attempting to make the British Columbia team. "I tried out for the team when I was 15 years old. I thought I was good enough but the coaches decided to go a different way, so they cut me. And I was devastated."

An experience like that may have deterred many young athletes, but for Duncan it was an opportunity to come back stronger. A determined Duncan committed himself to training, preparation and to doing everything possible to ensure he's always at the top of his game. It's a commitment he still carries and credits to this day.

Chicago Blackhawks coach, Joel Quenneville definitely knows it. "His conditioning level is very high end," Quenneville said. "You've been around a lot of hockey players. I think he's on one of those different levels, elite status as far as his conditioning."

All for good reason, says Duncan. "There is no way I can have the success that I've had without being prepared, using the training, and the nutrition, and everything. It's knowing once I put on the hockey equipment, the uniform, and step on the ice, that I have nothing to worry about, all my preparation is done." And, he adds with a smile, "I also want to make sure the coaches at Team British Columbia look back and say, 'how did we cut that guy!?"

2010 Olympic Winter Games

Gold Medalist

2008 World Championships

Silver in tournament

Stanley Cup Champion

2013 2010