UC Berkeley
Recent Work

Title
Women Can't Jump: The Uphill Battle to Include Women Ski Jumpers at the 2010 Winter Olympics

Permalink
https://escholarship.org/uc/item/5bw3k95s

Author
Bloom, Anna

Publication Date
2010-05-08

Supplemental Material
https://escholarship.org/uc/item/5bw3k95s#supplemental
[WOMEN CAN'T JUMP]

A Script for a Longform Television Piece Produced by Anna Bloom

May 5, 2010

[SEE]

Chairlift goes up hill at Utah Olympic Park, you get a wide shot of the ski jumps
Alissa Johnson, ski jumper, takes a jump
Lindsey comes down to sit on steps with her father at the top of the jump

Interview with Lindsey Van, U.S. ski jumper

Van's dad at top of jump

Van jump

Van at top of the hill -- close up of face, wide jump

Van jumps

Van training

Interview with Alissa Johnson and Jessica Jerome, both U.S. ski jumpers

[HEAR]

music; sound of lift

music, the natural sound of the jump

Lindsey Van: My family's been behind me the whole time. but you know they're also in the same position i am they're sick of it they don't, its like, they just want it to go away.
Which is probably why my dad didn't talk to you. It stresses him out, he gets angry and he really doesn't have anything good to say about it anymore.

LINDSEY VAN IS THE BEST WOMAN SKI JUMPER IN THE WORLD
SHE CURRENTLY HOLDS THE DISTANCE RECORD FOR THE 90-METER HILL AT THE SITE OF THE 20-10 OLYMPIC GAMES FOR BOTH WOMEN AND MEN.

VAN TRAINS AND COMPETES 11 MONTHS A YEAR. SHE'S BEEN SKI JUMPING SINCE THE AGE OF SEVEN. BUT WHEN ATHLETES GATHER IN VANCOUVER FOR THE 2010 WINTER OLYMPICS, VAN WILL NOT BE THERE.

Jerome: You know as far as anybody else is concerned you know women's ski jumping not being in the olympics, we're at the same level as underwater basket weaving -- (Johnson: beer pong, really yeah) -- beer pong you know like, you know, what is it? um, you know, sitting in an
intertube behind a car and driving in the snow
like, you know, while shotgunning.

Johnson: It makes it impossible to become
serious -- a serious sport -- or be taken serious
and do what you love without the olympics
VAN LEADS A GROUP OF AMERICAN
WOMEN THAT FLIES HIGHER AND
LONGER THAN ANY OTHER TEAM IN
THE SPORT. AT 25, SHE MENTORS
YOUNGER JUMPERS, INCLUDING
15-YEAR-OLD SARAH HENDRICKSON.
TOGETHER, THEY HAVE SPENT THEIR
YOUTH COMPETING IN SPITE OF A
LACK OF RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO
MALE JUMPERS WHO HAVE BEEN
INVITED TO THE GAMES SINCE 1924.
Deedee Corradini: While the boys and the guys
were all staying in nice hotels, our girls were
staying in barns with leaky roofs and no hot water
and no heat
you're above the cows because the cows, the heat goes up
and that's what keeps you warm. That's where we stayed --
I'm not kidding.

IN FEBRUARY, 2009, THE
INTERNATIONAL SKI FEDERATION
MADE HISTORY BY HOSTING THE FIRST
WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP FOR WOMEN'S
SKI JUMPING.
Van: I didn't expect to win at all so when I did it
was uh, a very gratifying feeling for sure, like I
felt like I had done something with the sport
Corradini: She is the pioneer and she deserves to
be the world champion. To have her win was just
phenomenal
It's just been one of the most meaningful battles
of my life to be able to help these women.
Van: Firth. Firth. I'm the Firth.
Friend: And they're sending another
Van: They're sending another pair exactly like
this. Friend: Because they think it's absolutely
correct.

BUT THE FIRST WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP
WAS HARD-WON
2006 FIS Vote footage -- wide shot of cards; 
Close up of FIS President Gian Franco Kasper

Still: FIS President Gian Franco Kasper

Jerome/Johnson interview

Corradini interview

Corradini at desk answering a phone call.

Vic Method, vice president of Women's Ski Jumping USA

Method in office; photos of women ski jumpers

Method interview.

Helmet cam footage of skier cross.

JUST A YEAR BEFORE THE INTERNATIONAL SKI FEDERATION VOTED TO HOST THE WOMEN'S EVENT, THE PRESIDENT OF THE ORGANIZATION QUESTIONED WHETHER IT WAS HEALTHY FOR WOMEN TO JUMP AT ALL.

Gian Franco Kasper on NPR Day To Day, 2005: Don't forget it's like jumping down from let's say two meters on the ground about 1,000 times a year which seems not to be appropriate for ladies from a medical point of view.

Jerome: I bet he kicks himself (Johnson: every time he hears that, every time he hears that) And it's and he knows it was probably a dumb thing to say and with the way it was blown up, um, it makes him look really stupid

Corradini: I mean, are our uteruses going to fall out or something?

Corradini: I keep bumping up against the old school attitude,

Method: Now, John Wooden, this is kind of neat...

VIC METHOD IS A SPOKESMAN FOR THE WOMEN. HE SAYS THE TEAM WAS CONFIDENT THAT WITH THE BACKING OF THE SKI FEDERATION AND A WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP, THE 20-10 OLYMPICS WOULD FOLLOW.

Method: We got the world championship in 2009 and i remember thinking and deedee thought this and peter thought this there's no way the IOC's not going to approve this. the tough one's the FIS.

and then, you know, six months later it's of course voted down by the IOC.

INSTEAD, THE OLYMPIC COMMITTEE CHOSE TO ADD MEN'S AND WOMEN'S SKIER CROSS-- A BRAND NEW SPORT. THE IOC TOLD THE WOMEN THEY WEREN'T READY. THERE WEREN'T ENOUGH ELITE WOMEN JUMPERS AND THEY DIDN'T MEET CERTAIN TECHNICAL MERITS.
The reasons why we took the decision not to include women's ski jumping was made strictly on a technical basis, and absolutely not on gender grounds and was part of a process employed across all sports in the program. All we're asking for is why technically we're not allowed to compete in the olympics. and saying because technically you're not good enough is not technical.

Van: i think it's just a big phhhheeeew ((((((waves hand)))))) screen, A nice smoke screen over what the real issue is because he never really addresses any real specific questions we ask.

Dick Pound: we can understand that it's disappointing, maybe infuriating to some people that the women's ski jumping event is not yet on the program but i mean, that's the way it is.

**DICK POUND, WHO SWAM FOR CANADA IN THE 1960 GAMES, HAS BEEN A MEMBER OF THE OLYMPIC COMMITTEE FOR MORE THAN TWO DECADES**

HE IS KNOWN AS AN OUTSPOKEN CRITIC OF CORRUPTION WITHIN THE OLYMPIC MOVEMENT ... AND FOR HIS EXPERTISE IN CANADIAN TAX LAW.

HE AFFIRMS THE COMMITTEE'S FINDINGS: THE VANCOUVER GAMES WOULD BE TOO SOON FOR THE WOMEN.

Pound: There are lots of sports. squash is not on the program, you know, rollerskating is not on the program -- they're disappointed as well and again, somebody has to decide.

**FOLLOWING THE OLYMPIC COMMITTEE'S DECISION, THE AMERICAN WOMEN WERE DEALT ANOTHER SETBACK.**

**THE U.S. SKI AND SNOWBOARD ASSOCIATION ANNOUNCED IT WOULD DROP THEIR TEAM.**

**THE ORGANIZATION SAID IT COULD NO LONGER AFFORD TO SUPPORT ATHLETES THAT WOULD NOT BE GOING TO THE OLYMPICS.**
Tilt: women in a tent

Donation box, people donating; close up of sign: "Implementing the principle of Equality of Men and Women" The Olympic Charter

Vic Method at the Market speaking to woman

Lindsey sitting cool at the market; reaction of woman at the market.

Woman at market.

Method interview

Method interview

helmet cam footage of ski jumping, looking down at jump

helmet cam footage from behind, jerome's ponytail can be seen flapping in the wind as she jumps

Male jumper skis from behind

Male jumper skis from behind

Driving up the road to Whistler, the sign

Van's jump at Whistler

Van's jump at Whistler in 2008

Method Interview

Van's jump at Whistler in 2008 again but in slow motion.

Women wax skis

SO THE WOMEN SPEND A SIGNIFICANT AMOUNT OF TIME -- SOMETIMES 30 HOURS A WEEK -- RAISING MONEY ... AND RAISING AWARENESS ABOUT THEIR NON-PROFIT, WOMEN'S SKI JUMPING, USA.

That's Jessica Jerome -- She's the U.S. National Champion.

and that's Alissa Johnson. They're not allowed into the Olympics because they're girls. Only event now in the Summer and Winter Olympics ... that does not allow women to compete is ski jumping.

Method: the European male has not wanted this to happen.

we've been told that to our face.

think about this: I go down an icy run at 55 miles an hour

and I propel myself the length of a football field through the air?

and that makes the European male kind of look bad, because this little girl just flew as far as i did?

AND SOMETIMES EVEN FARTHER.

IN FACT, NOT SO LONG AGO, ONE LITTLE GIRL SET THE MEN'S RECORD FOR JUMPING ... ON THE COURSE WHERE THE OLYMPICS WILL BE HELD.

Announcer: And on course for the United States, Lindsey Van...

Vic Method: The men and women both started from the same starting point, and i'll be darned lindsey van jumps 106 and a half meters. she sets the record for the hill.

that record still stands and this coming February when the olympics are held, the television announcers will be talking about the hill record on the normal hill is held by world champion lindsey van and she can't be here because she's a girl.

Corradi: There are no standards. If you read the Olympic charter it's up to the IOC executive board to do whatever they want.
We've had enough. I mean the time has come to fight and sometimes — often — women have to fight for everything.
Van: the lawsuit is not something that I ever wanted to do. I never wanted to go into court to fight for this, but it came to that point where we had played nice and played by all their rules and it was to the point that we didn't have any other options and that was the only option where we could keep fighting without being pushed around too much.

**IN APRIL 2009, 15 WOMEN SKI JUMPERS FROM AROUND THE WORLD SUED THE VANCOUVER OLYMPIC ORGANIZING COMMITTEE, KNOWN AS "VANOC" FOR DISCRIMINATION.**

**THEY ARGUED HOSTING SKI JUMPING WITHOUT THE WOMEN WAS A VIOLATION OF CANADA'S LAWS OF EQUALITY.**

Corradini: the judge said to VANOC's lawyer, 'Now are you telling me that if the IOC said to you, VANOC, um, blacks, black athletes are not allowed to compete in Vancouver 2010 that you would go along with that?' ... And there was this dead silence in the courtroom.

**THE CANADIAN COURT DID FIND THE OLYMPIC COMMITTEE GUILTY OF DISCRIMINATION. BUT RULED VANOC HAD NO POWER TO CHANGE THE PROGRAM. IN OTHER WORDS, THE ACTIONS OF THE OLYMPIC COMMITTEE WERE NOT SUBJECT TO CANADIAN LAW.**

Pound: Maybe someday they will maybe as early as 2014, but we'll have to wait and see how many countries, how many athletes, how good they are, and we'll decide again.

Pound: but if in the meantime you've you're uh making all kinds of allegations about the IOC and how it's discriminating on the basis of gender and so on the IOC in a very predictable human reaction might say oh yeah, I remember them, they're the ones that um, embarrassed us and
caused us a lot of trouble in Vancouver, maybe they should wait another four years ... or eight years. Or whatever it may be.

**WITH LESS THAN 100 DAYS UNTIL THE VANCOUVER GAMES, THE WOMEN'S LAST CHANCE FOR 20-10 WAS TO APPEAL THE SUPREME COURT'S DECISION.**

Jerome: Why is everybody getting all antsy, like there's not a decision today.

Van: You don't know that. You don't know anything Jessica...negative nancy over here.

Reporter: Are they listening? What is your interpretation?

Corradini: I feel very good about the judges I think we're feeling like we're getting a very good and fair trial

**THE JUDGES' DECISION WAS UNANIMOUS AND ARRIVED SOONER THAN EXPECTED.**

CBC News: CBC News Vancouver at 6 --

CBC Anchor: There will be no gold medal and no appearance in the Olympics for a group of disappointed young ski jumpers.

CBC Reporter: They pretty much dashed any hopes that these women had for competing at the 2010 Games.

Van on CBC: You know, it's 2009 and the Canadian courts can't even uphold their own laws about discrimination and equality -- it's kind of, from my point of view, it's pathetic and a little bit sad.

SOT: sound of reporter's notebooks opening.

Van: it's embarrassing to cry, always,

and then you're crying in front of 20 cameras and a bunch of reporters asking you how you feel -- i'd almost rather get kicked in the face.

Reporter: Is there anything that could possibly happen now that would allow you guys to jump at this point?

Van: No.
Van outside Vancouver courthouse post-decision -- she breaks down, reporters flip over their notebooks...

Johnson/Jerome interview

Newspaper clippings: "Ski jumpers fight on"; lead photo of van on courthouse steps.

Van takes off skis at bottom of hill

Van takes off skis at bottom of hill

Van interview -

In locker room, Hendrickson and older ski jumper talk

In locker room, Hendrickson and older ski jumper talk; ski boots

In locker room, Hendrickson and older ski jumper talk

Hendrickson interview.

Hendrickson's jump on Lillehammer's big hill

Photos of Hendrickson and brother;

Hendrickson's brother rubs her head as she's on computer

Hendrickson interview

Reporter: Is this a done deal? Van: Yeah, it's done.

Reporter: Should we have a revolution? Van: Have at it.

Johnson: after 2006 they said the exact same thing to us. you'll be there in 2010.

Jerome: After 2002 they said that too

Johnson: It's like it's a broken record and i'm sick and sick of hearing it it's ---

Jerome: it's just empty promises.

THE WOMEN ASKED FOR A SECOND APPEAL, BUT CANADA'S SUPREME COURT REFUSED TO HEAR THEIR CASE. VAN FEARS THIS MAY MARK THE END OF HER CAREER.

Van: I'm feeling a little bit guilty about being 24 almost 25

Van: and not finish my undergrad yet and i dunno it feels almost time to move on.

Van: i mean i care about being in the olympics but personally i'm kind of over it. i more care for the sport moving forward so it doesn't die. if there's not olympics people don't have sponsors, people quit.

Older ski jumper: Hey munchkin.

BUT NOT SARAH HENDRICKSON. IN 20-14 WHEN THE OLYMPICS ARE HELD AGAIN, SHE'LL ONLY BE 19.

Older Ski jumper: How's school Hendrickson: School's great.

Hendrickson: um the longest i've jumped is 142 meters on Lillehammer's big hill in Norway.

Hendrickson: I could definitely tell that it was going to be farther than the rest.

Coach on tape: Yo yo yo yo yo! it's definitely discrimination and like it's not fair for any of us, but I mean we just have to keep going and keep trying for people behind us and that's what lindsey and jessica are trying to help us do is that if they don't get in because they're a little bit too old,
they're trying to help us behind ... I don't know about Jessica or Alissa or Abby, I mean, I don't think they really know what they're gonna do. but for sure i'm going to stick around and just keep jumpin and lovin' it.
you're just out there over your skis and above the ground and you can feel like anything is possible.
Credits