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STORY HEADLINE: Latvia celebrates first gold medal of Winter Youth Olympic Games Lausanne 2020 in Men's Singles Luge.

LOCATION: St Moritz, Switzerland

DATE: January 18, 2020

LANGUAGE: Latvian

Broadcast quality footage available at the IOC Newsroom: <http://iocnewsroom.com>

STORY SCRIPT:

Latvia's Gints Berzins pulled off a test of nerve in St Moritz by narrowly winning the men's single luge competition of the Winter Youth Olympics (YOG) - the first gold of these Games to be going back to the Baltic state.

17-year-old Berzins, who is from Sigulda and competes for Latvia's MSG club, held a narrow advantage of 0.027 seconds after the first run over his Russian rival Pavel Repilov. Gints was tracked at a speed of 77.2 mph, finishing in 54.036 seconds.

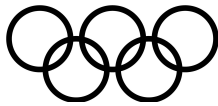
For his closing run, he went slightly faster finishing in 54.009 seconds, again tracked at 77.2 mph or 124.2 km/h. Overall he won by just under two tenths of a second in 1:48.229.

Given a dusting of snow prior to the race, the track was slower than the athletes expected. Berzins admitted it made him a little nervous. He said: "I thought the race was going to be more difficult because sleds are not as fast in the snow. I was a little bit scared and stressed as I like to go fast and this is normally one of the fastest tracks.'

Repilov was left with the silver medal. Behind him in third, Germany's Timon Grancagnolo won bronze.

Lausanne 2020 is the third edition of the Winter YOG, bringing together the world's best young athletes between the ages of 15 and 18. For the first time in Winter Olympic history the Games will have gender equality, with equal numbers of male and female competitors in the 81 medal events.

1,872 athletes from 79 National Olympic Committees (NOCs) will be in action in Lausanne, 12 of those NOCs for the first time at a Youth Olympic Games - Albania, Azerbaijan,



Ecuador, Haiti, Hong Kong, Kosovo, Pakistan, Qatar, Singapore, Thailand, Turkmenistan and Trinidad & Tobago.

As well as the brand new sport of Ski Mountaineering, Lausanne 2020 features five new events, Women's Nordic Combined, Individual Normal Hill/4km, Women's Doubles Luge, Mixed NOC 3x3 Ice Hockey, Freeski Big Air, Snowboard Big Air.

The first Winter Youth Olympic Games took place in Innsbruck, Austria, in 2012. The second edition was held in the Norwegian city of Lillehammer in 2016.

SHOTLIST:

00:05 Gold medallist in Men's Singles Luge Gints Berzins starts

00:14 Shots of Gints Berzins on track

00:22 Shots of Gints Berzins crossing the finish line

00:29 Gints Berzins being congratulated by teammate

00:30 Shots of Gints Berzins at Mascot Ceremony

00:41 Gints Berzins, Russia's Pavel Repilov and Germany's Timon Grancagnolo on podium pose for pictures during Mascot Ceremony

00:46 SOUNDBITE: Gints Berzins, Gold medallist, men's singles luge (Latvian Language).

"The feeling is incredible! I'm very happy. I haven't really comprehended it yet. I couldn't be happier for what I have achieved today."

00:57 Shots of Gints Berzins at start line

01:01 SOUNDBITE: Gints Berzins, Gold medallist, men's singles luge (Latvian Language).

"I should manage my stress better. Stress levels are high because it's the first major competition for the youth athletes. This is a turning point for the future. For the future I need to manage my stress better."

01:13 Gints Berzins on track

01:15 SOUNDBITE: Gints Berzins, Gold medallist, men's singles luge (Latvian Language).

"As I said it has to be very strong, because you have to do two runs and after the first run it is not yet over. After the first run it starts from the beginning again, so it's difficult to pull yourself together if you are first after the first run already."

01:27 Various shots from the medal ceremony

-- ENDS --

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