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Story Script and Shot log

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STORY HEADLINE: From the only ice track in Southern Hemisphere to Lausanne 2020, Kiwi pair hope to inspire a generation with luge performances

LOCATION: Olympia Bobrun, St Moritz, Switzerland

DATE: 15 January 2020

LANGUAGE: English

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

STORY SCRIPT:

New Zealand might be well known for sporting achievements - the dominance of the Rugby All Blacks and their performances in the America's Cup sailing, to name just two.

But in terms of Winter Sports, their success stories are a little harder to come by. It wasn't until 1952 that they first had a Winter Olympic team - and their 1988 team was the first to include athletes competing in something other than alpine skiing.

One silver and two bronze - all won on the slopes - is their cumulative medal haul over all of the Winter Games they have participated in.

But two teenagers from Dunedin are looking to do something a little different.

Ella Cox and Hunter Burke are both competing in the singles luge at the Winter Youth Olympic Games (YOG) Lausanne 2020, with skills honed on the natural track in Naseby, South Island, New Zealand, the only ice luge track in the Southern Hemisphere.

Climate and distance means that the odds are stacked against this pair on a global stage. The track is only open for a number of weeks each season, meaning that much of their training must take place in Europe.

In addition, Cox was quick to point out the differences between natural and artificial tracks, and the challenges that adapting to those variations presents.

But with winter sports on the increase in their home country, both athletes are optimistic that good performances in St Moritz can inspire others to get involved.



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: Olympia Bobrun, St Moritz, Switzerland

00:00 Scenic shots of the area

00:18 Lausanne 2020 flags

00:17 Ella Cox, Team New Zealand luge

00:31 SOUNDBITE: Ella Cox, Team New Zealand luge (English Language).

"I started on the natural luge track in Naseby in New Zealand. My family has had a house there for a number of years and when I was seven years old, my mother put me into the training camp there and I just kept coming back. When I was 14, I was asked if I wanted to be on the New Zealand team and I said 'absolutely' and that December, I flew over to Innsbruck and started training on artificial ice."

00:56 Cox ahead of her training run

01:03 Cox at the start

01:15 SOUNDBITE: Ella Cox, Team New Zealand luge (English Language).

"There are actually two types of luge. There's artificial or Olympic luge, with the big corners that you see here, and then there's natural track which is more like a frozen road. The sleds are different, the way that you steer is different, but there's definitely quite a lot of transitioning, there are a lot of things that are the same that really help like the feeling of the sled and getting the lines. But it's a different sled, it's a different type of steering which is kind of the biggest difference there."

01:43 Cox getting onto luge in training run

01:57 Close up of Cox tapping the ice

02:03 SOUNDBITE: Ella Cox, Team New Zealand luge (English Language).

"It means the world really, to be able to slide on this track, it's such a special track and to be able to slide here at the Youth Olympics, it's just incredible. Everyday I wake up and I realise where I am and I just can't believe it."

02:17 Cox starting training run

02:24 Cox on the famous horseshoe bend

02:29 SOUNDBITE: Ella Cox, Team New Zealand luge (English Language).



"I just really hope that I'm doing a good job. I hope that people will be able to see me sliding at these Games and think 'I really want to try that' and that they'll be able to come to Naseby, meet me and meet my team and just really get into the sport. I really want it to grow in New Zealand because I think that too many people are missing out on such an amazing opportunity because the track we have in Naseby, it's the only one that we have in the Southern hemisphere and just the opportunities that you can get from that is incredible and I would love for more kids to be able to come there and do that."

03:00 Hunter Burke, Team New Zealand luge at the start of his practice run

03:14 Close up of Burke

02:18 SOUNDBITE: Hunter Burke, Team New Zealand Luge (English Language).

"We have no artificial tracks in the southern hemisphere, so the only time that I can train is when I'm over here. But we do have the track in Naseby which is a natural luge track and the best that I can do and it's a really small (training) window. In our winter we only get about two weeks of decent weather so it's only two weeks of training."

03:42 Close up of Burke in the starting gate

03:53 SOUNDBITE: Hunter Burke, Team New Zealand Luge (English Language).

"It's quite special (to be at the Youth Games) and it's a bonus that I like this track as well. It's so different to all of the other tracks that I've been to around Europe and that's quite special."

04:05 Burke on training run

04:15 SOUNDBITE: Hunter Burke, Team New Zealand Luge (English Language).

"Definitely a lot of people would be keen back home so hopefully results like these can encourage them to do the same."

-- ENDS --

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