



## Deidra Dionne

Sport: Freestyle skiing (aerials)

Born: February 1982

Birthplace: North Battleford, Saskatchewan

Residence: Red Deer, Alberta

I grew up in Red Deer and started skiing at a small ski hill there, Canyon Ski Area, which is just east of the city. I was also extremely fortunate because Red Deer has a water ramp and that's key to learning aerials jumps. A group of keen parents built the ramp themselves in the 1960s and without that facility I would not be doing aerials today!

Having the right facilities in your community is just part of what it takes to make an elite athlete. You also have to do three things: work hard, work hard and work hard. Talent only gets you so far and the rest happens with determination, preparation and hard work. Every day is important and training is a year-round activity.

The summers are the busiest for me. I get up at 6:30 a.m. and start my warm up by 7:45 a.m. By 8:30 a.m., I'm on the water ramp for two hours of technical training. We walk up the stairs carrying our skis and then ski off a (wet) wooden ramp and do our tricks (or routines) into a swimming pool.

I go home for lunch and go back to the ramp in the afternoon for another warm-up and two more hours of walking up the stairs and jumping into the pool. After technical training is completed for the day, my teammates and I do gym work for about an hour. Then it's home for dinner and a good night of sleep.

In the winter we have a lot of travel and competition. Our training, of course, moves to the snow, but we do less physical training and focus more on mental preparation.

The mental side of being an athlete is so important. In 2005, I had a bad injury and broke my neck at a competition in Australia. It was only five months until the Olympic Winter Games in Torino and I needed to heal and also get ready. This involved spinal surgery and grafting a piece of bone from my hip into my neck and having a titanium plate put into my neck. I was determined to make it back to the Olympics, after winning a bronze medal at the 2002 Winter Games in Salt Lake City.

With one week to go before the Torino Games, I still had to do the trick I hurt myself on in Australia so I could perform it in Torino. It was a really windy day in Lake Placid, N.Y. and it was our final day of training before taking the flight overseas. I was so nervous I was in tears through most of the day but I also knew I had to do it. I wanted to stop jumping because the weather was bad but my coach talked me into getting up there and doing the trick.

I found within myself a glimmer of fake confidence and continued to tell myself I could do this trick in my sleep. I turned my skis into the jump and went for it as best I could. I landed the jump and skied away. I was so proud to have overcome such a huge fear within myself.

I have always believed most athletes make good leaders. A key component of leadership is doing and I have always been a doer. It is one thing to say you are going to do things and a whole other thing to go through with what you say. As athletes, we learn to create and share our goals and we understand the hardwork that goes into attaining those goals. Leadership truly is leading by example.

The people who have inspired me the most, my heroes, are my parents. They have been married for 36 years and they have loved their three children and given us all every opportunity possible.


### More about Deidra Dionne

Family: parents Steve and Fay; older brother Curtis and younger brother Drew

Education: bachelor of arts from Athabasca University; plans to study international law

Other freestyle skiing milestones:

- Third at World Championships in Deer Valley, U.S.A. in 2003 and Blackcomb, B.C. in 2001
- 22<sup>nd</sup> in 2006 Torino Winter Games
- Holds four silver medals in World Cup competition: Moscow, Russia (2008); Mount Buller, Australia (2004); and Blackcomb, B.C. and Deer Valley, U.S.A. (2000)
- Won several Junior National Championships by the time she was 16
- Started skiing at the age of four and freestyle skiing at age of 13.

	<p>Silver medal at Canada Post Freestyle Ski Canadian Championships Mar/08</p> <p>Photo courtesy of Mike Ridgewood/CFSA</p>
	<p>Aerials training Jan/08</p> <p>Photo courtesy of Mike Ridgewood/CFSA</p>
	<p>Second Place – FIS Freestyle World Cup in Moscow Mar/08</p> <p>Photo courtesy of Mike Ridgewood / CSFA</p>
	<p>Photo courtesy of Mike Ridgewood</p>