



Kimiko Zakreski

Sport: Snowboard

Born: December 1983

Birthplace: St. Albert, Alberta

Residence: Calgary, Alberta

The dedication that Alberta puts into its athletes shows in our Olympic team.

Off-season

In the off-season, when I am at home, I spend most of my time working on my physical fitness and strength. I can't start a day without a big bowl of my favorite cereal with almonds and whatever berries are in season. If I have more time, I cook myself some eggs—I love eggs.

It might sound funny, but food is a big focus throughout my day. The correct nourishment for the day is very important.

After I get some good fuel in my body, I head to the gym about 10:00. I go five days a week, sometimes twice a day. On Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, I lift weights in the morning and do a second cardio workout either right after or in the afternoons.

On Tuesdays and Thursdays, I do a conditioning workout and recovery routine. On Saturday or Sunday I try to ride a bike or do something active and fun. I meet my trainer two to three times a week to make sure I am getting the most out of my workouts. I also do yoga at least once a week.

When I'm not at home in the summer, I am at some kind of on-snow training camp snowboarding. We do about five training camps a summer in Cypress B.C., Mammoth Calif., Whistler, B.C., Mt. Hood, Oregon and Farnham, B.C.

People always think the off-season is time to relax, but as an elite athlete, I am always training to get better, and the summers are the most important time for improving and getting faster.

In-season

During the season is a totally different experience. From November to April, my teammates and I are on the World Cup circuit. For the most part, we are chasing snow all over the world: Holland, Austria, Germany, Japan, Korea, Italy, Switzerland, America and Canada.

We spend so much time on airplanes and buses and we are always battling jet lag.

We normally have three or four days of training on the race hill before we compete, then we move on to the next venue. Taking care of our bodies, finding gyms and getting the proper nutrition in different countries is not always easy and is always a full time job. We have coaches, physiotherapists, doctors, equipment techs and a videographer with us most of the season to help.

Training on snow takes up most of our day. We normally also do some kind of workout or spin on the bike. Physiotherapy is always a part of everyone's day to make sure our bodies are happy. In the evening, we do video analysis of our training.

When you get the time, you look over your equipment and make sure everything is in working order. Equipment breaks all the time and keeping on top of it is very important. There is rarely much free time and when you do get it, it normally results in a nap!

More >> growing up in Alberta

I grew up in Calgary, Alberta, and my first taste of the Olympic spirit was at the 1988 Calgary Olympic Winter Games. They inspired me to pursue sport and become the person that I am today. Being in Calgary during the Games had a real impact on me; the '88 Games also left a number invaluable sport facilities and programs for Albertans.

Without these facilities, many of 2010's Olympic hopefuls would not exist, me included. Canada Olympic Park is where I got my start at snowboarding and Nakiska is where I started racing and competing. I spend most of my days home at either the Bob Niven Training Centre, the Olympic Oval, or the Talisman Centre. All are a result of the '88 Olympics and the benefit of living in Alberta.

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More >> my proudest moment

My proudest moment was my first time on the podium at a World Cup race. I won a silver medal in the parallel giant slalom event in Limone Piemonte, Italy. When I stood in front of the Canada flag and my teammates cheered me on it was like nothing I had experienced before. It was a surreal moment—snowing so hard that it felt like a dream. It was the first time all my hard work and dedication really translated into a world class results.

More >> leadership

Sport has given me so many life tools at a young age. Some people never get to learn in a lifetime. Leadership is one of those tools. Working, training, competing, traveling, and living with a unisex team year-round poses many challenges.

Teamwork is a number one priority on our team and with it comes leadership. When you are a part of a team, you must understand that the team has a common goal, and at the same time, you must understand the different needs of everyone involved. Working together can be a very difficult task and whether we are following a coach's direction or listening to a teammate's guidance, leadership always has a place.

More >> encouraging others

The biggest thing that has allowed me to achieve my goals has been perseverance, determination and dedication. It isn't always about just having talent or natural athletic ability. I came from a somewhat non-athletic family.

There are recipes for success in almost anything you do and if someone gives you the tools to achieve something and you do that with full determination and dedication then you will achieve your goal.

No matter what your goal or what you are trying to achieve, you need a plan on how to get there. If you have experts telling you how to get there, you can take that information and use it to the fullest. If all the pieces of the puzzle are taken care of, it should come together.

My hero is Elizabeth Manley, who won a silver medal in women's figure skating at the 1988 Olympics. I was only four years old then but she left a lasting impression on me. Manley's athleticism, sportsmanship, and charisma were hard to forget. I always strive to be a positive role model like her.



More about Kimiko Zakreski

Other pursuits: yoga, golf, walking her dog, cafeteria-tray sliding, wakeboarding and road biking

Other Sport Highlights:

- Fifth at World Cup (parallel slalom) in Arosa, Switzerland in December 2008
- Fifth at World Cup (parallel giant slalom) in Sungwoo, Korea in February 2007
- Third in 2004 Canadian National Championships (parallel slalom)
- Snowboarding since 1997; competing since 1998