



Jennifer Heil

Sport: Freestyle (moguls)

Born: April 1983

Hometown: Spruce Grove, Alberta

Every athlete has a proudest moment and I'm no different. I won a gold medal at the 2006 Olympic Winter Games in Torino, Italy and, it's pretty obvious that that would be a proud moment. But I think back and I remember I was proudest before my run. I was at the top of the hill and I was really proud that I had done everything I could to be prepared—I had done so much training and I was completely ready.

I thought about the incredible team I had behind me and how my parents had driven me for eight hours every weekend for years from Edmonton to the mountains and back again. I thought about how much my sponsor had helped me. Then I did my run and I looked up on the scoreboard and saw my name, Jennifer Heil, in first place. I had a complete burst of emotion and realized that my dream had come true.

Winning that gold medal took a tremendous amount of work and when I look back at it, I realize how important every bit of it was. I had really challenged myself as an athlete and had had access to a lot of support from people across the country.

Really, the younger years of an athlete's life are crucial and are when you develop the skills you need to progress. In Alberta, the freestyle team is one of the best supported teams in Canada—we have fantastic coaches and resources. That support was defining for me; I was so embraced by everyone in my community in Spruce Grove and Edmonton. My high school made it possible for me to keep going to school and live at home and go after my dream. I was able to reach my academic goal of making honours and that was really important for me.

I'm still working hard as an athlete and I chase snow year round to train and compete. I train in blocks of time whether I have snow or not. Right now (in the summer of 2009), I'm in a dryland phase and I have two workouts a day, which pretty much take up half the day. The other half of the day I spend with my support team: a sport psychologist, a nutritionist and an osteopathologist. I also do yoga and pilates for flexibility and to balance out the heavy training. I believe in training to prepare for on snow later this summer in South America, Europe and B.C. I'm also doing a lot of stuff with sponsors.

Being an athlete is all about believing. For me it started when I saw an issue of *Sports Illustrated* when I was young. At that moment my dream to become an athlete began. For years, I've held on to the belief that it could happen. Today, the message I tell people is: believe in yourself and dare to dream. I was nine years old when I dared to dream. I didn't really know if I could do it, but I kept at it.

I've been inspired by a lot of people—heroes—along the way. My biggest hero in sport would be golfer Tiger Woods. He's so mentally tough and he's so consistently successful. He takes big risks to get better and I admire that. Another person I admire is speedskater Katrina Lemay-Doan. She is such an amazing competitor and she was so strong through her entire speedskating career. I liked the way she defended her medals and how she always worked off her inspiration.

More about Jenn Heil

Education: Studying commerce at McGill University

Website: www.jenniferheil.com

Other Sport Highlights:

- Gold medal in 2006 Olympic Winter Games in Torino; first-ever gold medal in moguls for a Canadian woman
- 21 World Cup victories; finished in top three (“on the podium”) in World Cup events
- Helped form B2ten, a program created with the backing of business leaders to support amateur athletes
- Competed in 2002 Olympic Winter Games in Salt Lake City
- Returned to World Cup circuit in 2008/2009 after 20-month knee injury
- Has won more than [number] World Cups



World Cup Tignes, France Dec/05
Photo courtesy of Mike Ridgewood



Photo courtesy of Mike Ridgewood



FIS Freestyle World Cup Overall Woman Trophy in Italy/07
Photo courtesy of Mike Ridgewood