



Salt Lake City: ready for the Games



he world's 12th internationally-certified bobsleigh and luge track, which will be the venue of the XIX Olympic Winter Games competition in

2002, was officially opened by a bobsleigh ridden by Utah Governor Michael Leavitt and Utah Sports Authority chairman Randy Dryer, who sat between pilot Bruce Roselli, a former US Olympic competitor, and Steve Macklyn, a local bobsleigh club member, who was brakeman. The first luge to zip down the 1,335-metre track was driven by Robert Pipkins, a 1992 and 1994 US Olympian (Winter Games), who tore through the "grand opening" sign at the starting gate and was clocked at 79 mph despite steadily falling snow. Built by the Utah Sports Authority, an agency of the state of Utah,

the track accommodates both luge and bobsleigh and has five different start areas: men's bobsleigh, men's luge, women's and doubles luge, junior and public.

"No doubt, this park and this track will be the crown jewels of the 2002 Olympic venues", beamed Tom Welch, president and chief executive officer of SLOC, after taking a ceremonial ride. "After feeling the excitement and the speed this track can generate, I am confident the world's finest athletes will have the opportunity here to test their skills to the fullest degree." Welch said the track, which drops in elevation from start to finish the equivalent of a 30-story building, was designed to be "fast, demanding, technical and safe". In addition, Welch said the park and the track are destined to be

part of an Olympic legacy as well as a world-class training facility for the development of luge and bobsleigh athletes. The 380-acre park also will be the venue for the ski jumping and Nordic combined competitions during the 2002 Olympic Winter Games. US Olympic Committee Executive Director Dick Schultz, who also joined the Olympic, sports, community and political leaders to ride in the procession



The first bobsleigh to test the track.

of ceremonial bobsleighs, said the track will be "a real asset" for America's training programme. In recognition of Salt Lake City's commitment to winter sports, Schultz said the Utah capital is one of three cities the USOC has chosen to host a US \$3 million pilot programme on community winter sport development.

Dave Johnson, SLOC senior vice president for Games operations, said "with the quality of our skiing and the opening of other Olympic venues, this facility will help us reach our goal of becoming a winter sports training centre".

Because of its steepness at the top and other design features, top speed on the track is estimated to be in the range of 85 mph.

The park will become the property of SLOC in 1999, which will prepare it for Olympic competition and spectators, including by constructing a 120-metre Nordic jumping hill. The park will revert back to the citizens of the state of Utah after the 2002 Olympic Winter Games in order to contribute to the development of winter sports.



The winter sports park in Utah.