



BOBSLEIGH



Origin

Bobsleigh was invented in Switzerland in the late 19th Century, the first race was held in St. Moritz in 1890. Bobsleigh soon became a craze of the upper classes during their extended stays in the famous ski resorts. Tracks

sprung up all over Europe, in Austria, Germany, Romania, Czechoslovakia and Poland, using existing roads or paths. With the inauguration of the first artificially refrigerated track at Koenigssee (Germany) in 1969, the sport of bobsleigh was no longer dependent on weather conditions. Today, just one natural track has survived, the one at St. Moritz. When Luge became an Olympic sport for the first time at Innsbruck in 1964, the tracks also changed to accommodate both sports. Today most artificial tracks are combined tracks for both

bobsleigh and luge. Since 1980, bobsleigh has become a truly worldwide sport, with such 'exotic' (for winter sports) countries like Jamaica, Virgin



*Robert H. Storey,
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Secretary General*



The bobsleigh track in Salt Lake City.



Islands, Mexico, Brazil or Samoa participating in international competitions. The governing body for bobsleigh and skeleton, the Federation Internationale de Bobsleigh et de Tobogganing (FIBT) created in 1923, now has 56 affiliated national federations from all five continents.

At the Olympic Games

Since the first Winter Olympics in Chamonix in 1924, bobsleigh has been a mainstay on the Olympic programme. In 1924, only one discipline was held, crews could consist of either four or five men. In 1928 a five-man competition was carried out. Since 1932 at Lake Placid, two disciplines have been held, a two-man (driver and brakeman) and a four-man (driver, two crewmen, brakeman) competition. Bobsleigh was not held

at Olympic Winter Games only once, when Squaw Valley refused to build a track in 1960.

Participation for the first time by women athletes and the return of the skeleton competition, after a 54-year absence, to the Olympic programme will highlight the FIBT participation in the Salt Lake 2002 Games. Both skeleton and women's bobsleigh demand the highest level of physical and mental ability. The public and the media will be fascinated by the dynamic action of skeleton riders precariously sliding head first, their chins just centimetres from the ice. Skeleton was contested in 1928 and 1948 Winter Games, both of which were held in St. Moritz, where skeleton was founded at the end of the 19th century. While only men's skeleton was contested in 1928 and 1948, men's

and women's events will be on the programme for Salt Lake. Women's bobsleigh, a two-person sport with a driver and a brakewoman, will be equally impressive with the top 15 teams in the world displaying world class athleticism.

Salt Lake City Olympic venue

The 15-curve Olympic bobsleigh track sits on the 389-acre Utah Olympic Park complex. The track is 1,335 m (4,380 ft) long and has a 118.5 m (389 ft) vertical drop. The Olympic luge and skeleton competition also will be held at the track. This venue could accommodate almost 12,500 spectators. Utah Olympic Park is about 28 miles (46 km) east of Salt Lake City - that's only 16 minutes for a bobsleigh travelling at 145 km/h (90 mph).