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Women Can't Jump: The Uphill Battle to Include Women Ski Jumpers at the 2010 Winter Olympics

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[WOMEN CAN'T JUMP]

A Script for a Longform Television Piece Produced by Anna Bloom

May 5, 2010

[SEE]

Chairlift goes up hill at Utah Olympic Park, you get a wide shot of the ski jumps

Alissa Johnson, ski jumper, takes a jump

Lindsey comes down to sit on steps with her father at the top of the jump

Interview with Lindsey Van, U.S. ski jumper

Van's dad at top of jump

Van jump

Van at top of the hill -- close up of face, wide jump

Van jumps

Photo of Lindsey with American flag just after win

Van training

Interview with Alissa Johnson and Jessica Jerome, both U.S. ski jumpers

[HEAR]

music; sound of lift

music, the natural sound of the jump

Lindsey Van: My family's been behind me the whole time.

but you know they're also in the same position i am they're sick of it they don't, its like, they just want it to go away.

Which is probably why my dad didn't talk to you. It stresses him out, he gets angry and he really doesn't have anything good to say about it anymore.

LINDSEY VAN IS THE BEST WOMAN SKI JUMPER IN THE WORLD SHE CURRENTLY HOLDS THE DISTANCE RECORD FOR THE 90-METER HILL AT THE SITE OF THE 20-10 OLYMPIC GAMES FOR BOTH WOMEN AND MEN.

VAN TRAINS AND COMPETES 11 MONTHS A YEAR. SHE'S BEEN SKI JUMPING SINCE THE AGE OF SEVEN. BUT WHEN ATHLETES GATHER IN VANCOUVER FOR THE 2010 WINTER OLYMPICS, VAN WILL NOT BE THERE.

Jerome: You know as far as anybody else is concerned you know women's ski jumping not being in the olympics, we're at the same level as underwater basket weaving -- (Johnson: beer pong, really yeah) -- beer pong you know like, you know, what is it? um, you know, sitting in an

innertube behind a car and driving in the snow like, you know, while shotgunning.

Johnson: It makes it impossible to become serious -- a serious sport -- or be taken serious and do what you love without the olympics

VAN LEADS A GROUP OF AMERICAN WOMEN THAT FLIES HIGHER AND LONGER THAN ANY OTHER TEAM IN THE SPORT. AT 25, SHE MENTORS YOUNGER JUMPERS, INCLUDING 15-YEAR-OLD SARAH HENDRICKSON. TOGETHER, THEY HAVE SPENT THEIR YOUTH COMPETING IN SPITE OF A LACK OF RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO MALE JUMPERS WHO HAVE BEEN INVITED TO THE GAMES SINCE 1924.

Deedee Corradini: While the boys and the guys were all staying in nice hotels, our girls were staying in barns with leaky roofs and no hot water and no heat

you're above the cows because the cows, the heat goes up and that's what keeps you warm. That's where we stayed -- I'm not kidding.

IN FEBRUARY, 2009, THE INTERNATIONAL SKI FEDERATION MADE HISTORY BY HOSTING THE FIRST WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP FOR WOMEN'S SKI JUMPING.

Van: I didn't expect to win at all so when I did it was uh, a very gratifying feeling for sure, like I felt like I had done something with the sport

Corradini: She is the pioneer and she deserves to be the world champion. To have her win was just phenomenal

It's just been one of the most meaningful battles of my life to be able to help these women.

Van: Firth. Firth. I'm the Firth.

Friend: And they're sending another

Van: They're sending another pair exactly like this. Friend: Because they think it's absolutely correct.

BUT THE FIRST WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP WAS HARD-WON

Inside the lockerroom with team

Jerome leaves lockerroom

Interview with Deedee Corradini, president of Women's Ski Jumping USA

Van interview

Footage of Van winning the first World Championship in Liberec, Czech Republic.

Photo of Van jumping at the world championship

Photo of Lindsey with american flag just after win

Corradini interview.

Van holds skis with her name on them.

Photos of World Championship on Van's wall.

2006 FIS Vote footage -- wideshot of cards;
Close up of FIS President Gian Franco Kasper

Still: FIS President Gian Franco Kasper

Jerome/Johnson interview

Corradini interview

Corradini at desk answering a phone call.

Vic Method, vice president of Women's Ski
Jumping USA

Method in office; photos of women ski jumpers

Method interview.

Helmet cam footage of skier cross.

**JUST A YEAR BEFORE THE
INTERNATIONAL SKI FEDERATION
VOTED TO HOST THE WOMEN'S EVENT,
THE PRESIDENT OF THE
ORGANIZATION QUESTIONED
WHETHER IT WAS HEALTHY FOR
WOMEN TO JUMP AT ALL.**

Gian Franco Kasper on NPR Day To Day, 2005:
Don't forget it's like jumping down from let's say
two meters on the ground about 1,000 times a
year which seems not to be appropriate for ladies
from a medical point of view.

Jerome: I bet he kicks himself (Johnson: every
time he hears that, every time he hears that) And
it's and he knows it was probably a dumb thing to
say and with the way it was blown up, um, it
makes him look really stupid

Corradini: I mean, are our uteruses going to fall
out or something?

Corradini: I keep bumping up against the old
school attitude,

Method: Now, John Wooden, this is kind of
neat...

**VIC METHOD IS A SPOKESMAN FOR
THE WOMEN. HE SAYS THE TEAM WAS
CONFIDENT THAT WITH THE BACKING
OF THE SKI FEDERATION AND A
WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP, THE 20-10
OLYMPICS WOULD FOLLOW.**

Method: We got the world championship in 2009
and i remember thinking and deede thought this
and peter thought this there's no way the IOC's
not going to approve this. the tough one's the FIS.
and then, you know, six months later it's of
course voted down by the IOC.

**INSTEAD, THE OLYMPIC COMMITTEE
CHOSE TO ADD MEN'S AND WOMEN'S
SKIER CROSS-- A BRAND NEW SPORT.
THE IOC TOLD THE WOMEN THEY
WEREN'T READY. THERE WEREN'T
ENOUGH ELITE WOMEN JUMPERS AND
THEY DIDN'T MEET CERTAIN
TECHNICAL MERITS.**

Jerome/Johnson interview

Van interview

Interview with Dick Pound, member of the International Olympic Committee

Photos of Pound swimming; Pound now, walking down the hall.

Close up of Pound's book about doping and sports; Exterior shot of Pound's office building in Montreal

Downtown Montreal: A bus drives by, there's a Canadian flag blowing in the distance

Pound interview

Sunday market in Park City, Utah

Park City's Sunday market; Officer at Market watches acrobat suspended from bridge.

Women at the market

The reasons why we took the decision not to include women's ski jumping was made strictly on a technical basis, and absolutely not on gender grounds and was part of a process employed across all sports in the program. All we're asking for is why technically we're not allowed to compete in the olympics. and saying because technically you're not good enough is not technical.

Van: i think it's just a big phhhhheeeew (((waves hand))) screen, A nice smoke screen over what the real issue is because he never really addresses any real specific questions we ask.

Dick Pound: we can understand that it's disappointing, maybe infuriating to some people that the women's ski jumping event is not yet on the program but i mean, that's the way it is.

DICK POUND, WHO SWAM FOR CANADA IN THE 1960 GAMES, HAS BEEN A MEMBER OF THE OLYMPIC COMMITTEE FOR MORE THAN TWO DECADES

HE IS KNOWN AS AN OUTSPOKEN CRITIC OF CORRUPTION WITHIN THE OLYMPIC MOVEMENT ... AND FOR HIS EXPERTISE IN CANADIAN TAX LAW.

HE AFFIRMS THE COMMITTEE'S FINDINGS: THE VANCOUVER GAMES WOULD BE TOO SOON FOR THE WOMEN.

Pound: There are lots of sports. squash is not on the program, you know, rollerskating is not on the program -- they're disappointed as well and again, somebody has to decide.

FOLLOWING THE OLYMPIC COMMITTEE'S DECISION, THE AMERICAN WOMEN WERE DEALT ANOTHER SETBACK.

THE U.S. SKI AND SNOWBOARD ASSOCIATION ANNOUNCED IT WOULD DROP THEIR TEAM.

THE ORGANIZATION SAID IT COULD NO LONGER AFFORD TO SUPPORT ATHLETES THAT WOULD NOT BE GOING TO THE OLYMPICS.

Tilt: women in a tent

Donation box, people donating; close up of sign: "Implementing the principle of Equality of Men and Women" The Olympic Charter

Vic Method at the Market speaking to woman

Lindsey sitting cool at the market; reaction of woman at the market.

Woman at market.

Method interview

Method interview
helmet cam footage of ski jumping, looking down at jump
helmet cam footage from behind, jerome's ponytail can be seen flapping in the wind as she jumps

Male jumper skis from behind

Male jumper skis from behind

Driving up the road to Whistler, the sign

Van's jump at Whistler

Van's jump at Whistler in 2008

Method Interview

Van's jump at Whistler in 2008 again but in slow motion.

Women wax skis

SO THE WOMEN SPEND A SIGNIFICANT AMOUNT OF TIME -- SOMETIMES 30 HOURS A WEEK --

RAISING MONEY ... AND RAISING AWARENESS ABOUT THEIR NON-PROFIT, WOMEN'S SKI JUMPING, USA.

That's Jessica Jerome -- She's the U.S. National Champion.

and that's Alissa Johnson. They're not allowed into the Olympics

because they're girls. Only event now in the Summer and Winter Olympics ... that does not allow women to compete is ski jumping.

Method: the European male has not wanted this to happen.

we've been told that to our face.

think about this: I go down an icy run at 55 miles an hour

and I propel myself the length of a football field through the air?

and that makes the European male kind of look bad, because this little girl just flew as far as i did?

AND SOMETIMES EVEN FARTHER. IN FACT, NOT SO LONG AGO, ONE LITTLE GIRL SET THE MEN'S RECORD FOR JUMPING ... ON THE COURSE WHERE THE OLYMPICS WILL BE HELD.

Announcer: And on course for the United States, Lindsey Van...

Vic Method: The men and women both started from the same starting point, and I'll be darned lindsey van jumps 106 and a half meters. she sets the record for the hill.

that record still stands and this coming February when the olympics are held, the television announcers will be talking about the hill record on the normal hill is held by world champion lindsey van and she can't be here because she's a girl.

Corradini: There are no standards. If you read the Olympic charter it's up to the IOC executive board to do whatever they want.

Corradini interview

We've had enough. I mean the time has come to fight and sometimes – often – women have to fight for everything.

Van interview

Van: the lawsuit is not something that I ever wanted to do I never wanted to go into court to fight for this, but it came to that point where we had played nice and played by all their rules and it was to the point that we didn't have any other options and that was the only option where we could keep fighting without being pushed around too much

Pan of Vancouver landscape, bridge, water mountains

IN APRIL 2009, 15 WOMEN SKI JUMPERS FROM AROUND THE WORLD SUED THE VANCOUVER OLYMPIC ORGANIZING COMMITTEE, KNOWN AS "VANOC" FOR DISCRIMINATION.

Newspaper clipping close up of Clark's quote: "VANOC is implementing a discriminatory decision"

THEY ARGUED HOSTING SKI JUMPING WITHOUT THE WOMEN WAS A VIOLATION OF CANADA'S LAWS OF EQUALITY.

Corradini interview

Corradini: the judge said to VANOC's lawyer, 'Now are you telling me that if the IOC said to you, VANOC, um, blacks, black athletes are not allowed to compete in vancouver 2010 that you would go along with that?' ... And there was this dead silence in the courtroom.

First page of Justice Fenlon's ruling in the British Columbia Supreme Court; Images from Montreal of statues of hockey players; canadian flags.

THE CANADIAN COURT DID FIND THE OLYMPIC COMMITTEE GUILTY OF DISCRIMINATION. BUT RULED VANOC HAD NO POWER TO CHANGE THE PROGRAM. IN OTHER WORDS, THE ACTIONS OF THE OLYMPIC COMMITTEE WERE NOT SUBJECT TO CANADIAN LAW.

Newspaper clip: 2014?; Women ski jumpers

Pound: Maybe someday they will maybe as early as 2014, but we'll have to wait and see how many countries, how many athletes, how good they are, and we'll decide again.

Pound interview

Pound: but if in the meantime you've you're uh making all kinds of allegations about the IOC and how it's discriminating on the basis of gender and so on the IOC in a very predictable human reaction might say oh yeah, I remember them, they're the ones that um, embarrassed us and

Canadian flags; Women on street corner

Girls on the street corner

Women walk to court

Shot of the reporters asking questions

Corradini outside courthouse

Close up of Van

Women to walk to court

CBC news footage -- graphic

CBC news footage -- woman anchor

CBC news footage -- reporter at the courts

CBC news footage -- Van at the courthouse

CBC news footage -- reporter at the courts

Van outside Vancouver courthouse post-decision
-- she breaks down, reporters flip over their
notebooks...

Van interview outside the courthouse
Van outside Vancouver courthouse post-decision
-- she breaks down, reporters flip over their
notebooks...

Van interview outside the courthouse
Van interview outside the courthouse

caused us a lot of trouble in Vancouver, maybe they should wait another four years ... or eight years. Or whatever it may be.

WITH LESS THAN 100 DAYS UNTIL THE VANCOUVER GAMES, THE WOMEN'S LAST CHANCE FOR 20-10 WAS TO APPEAL THE SUPREME COURT'S DECISION.

Jerome: Why is everybody getting all antsy, like there's not a decision today.

Van: You don't know that. You don't know anything Jessica...negative nancy over here.

Reporter: Are they listening? What is your interpretation?

Corradini: I feel very good about the judges I think we're feeling like we're getting a very good and fair trial

THE JUDGES' DECISION WAS UNANIMOUS AND ARRIVED SOONER THAN EXPECTED.

CBC News: CBC News Vancouver at 6 --

CBC Anchor: There will be no gold medal and no appearance in the Olympics for a group of dissappointed young ski jumpers.

CBC Reporter: They pretty much dashed any hopes that these women had for competing at the 2010 Games.

Van on CBC: You know, it's 2009 and the Canadian courts can't even uphold their own laws about discrimination and equality -- it's kind of, from my point of view, it's pathetic and a little bit sad.

SOT: sound of reporter's notebooks opening.

Van: it's embarrassing to cry, always,

and then you're crying in front of 20 cameras and a bunch of reporters asking you how you feel -- i'd almost rather get kicked in the face.

Reporter: Is there anything that could possibly happen now that would allow you guys to jump at this point?

Van: No.

Van outside Vancouver courthouse post-decision
-- she breaks down, reporters flip over their
notebooks...

Johnson/Jerome interview

Newspaper clippings: "Ski jumpers fight on";
lead photo of van on courthouse steps.

Van takes off skis at bottom of hill

Van takes off skis at bottom of hill

Van interview

In locker room, Hendrickson and older ski
jumper talk

In locker room, Hendrickson and older ski
jumper talk; ski boots

In locker room, Hendrickson and older ski
jumper talk

Hendrickson interview.

Hendrickson's jump on Lillehammer's big hill

Photos of Hendrickson and brother;

Hendrickson's brother rubs her head as she's on
computer

Hendrickson interview

Reporter: Is this a done deal?

Van: Yeah, it's done.

Reporter: Should we have a revolution?

Van: Have at it.

Johnson: after 2006 they said the exact same
thing to us. you'll be there in 2010.

Jerome: After 2002 they said that too

Johnson: It's like it's a broken record and i'm sick
and sick of hearing it it's ---

Jerome: it's just empty promises.

**THE WOMEN ASKED FOR A SECOND
APPEAL, BUT CANADA'S SUPREME
COURT REFUSED TO HEAR THEIR CASE.
VAN FEARS THIS MAY MARK THE END
OF HER CAREER.**

Van: I'm feeling a little bit guilty about being 24
almost 25

Van: and not finish my undergrad yet and i dunno
it feels almost time to move on.

Van: i mean i care about being in the olympics
but personally i'm kind of over it. i more care for
the sport moving forward so it doesn't die. if
there's not olympics people don't have sponsors,
people quit.

Older ski jumper: Hey munchkin.

**BUT NOT SARAH HENDRICKSON. IN
20-14 WHEN THE OLYMPICS ARE HELD
AGAIN, SHE'LL ONLY BE 19.**

Older Ski jumper: How's school

Hendrickson: School's great.

Hendrickson: um the longest i've jumped is 142
meters on Lillehammer's big hill in Norway.

Hendrickson: I could definitely tell that it was
going to be farther than the rest.

Coach on tape: Yo yo yo yo yo!

it's definitely discrimination

and like it's not fair for any of us, but I mean we
just have to keep going and keep trying for
people behind us

and that's what lindsey and jessica are trying to
help us do is that if they don't get in because
they're a little bit too old,

