

OLYMPICS 2002

# Who'll Win

**Can Jean Racine and Gea Johnson overcome controversy to take the first women's bobsledding gold? Will there be any big surprises? Here are SI's fearless medal picks**

**By Brian Cazeneuve**



PHOTOGRAPH BY GERARD RANCINAN



**4 × 7.5K RELAY**

- Germany
- France
- Norway

Even the great Forsberg can't beat Germany, with five of the world's top nine sprinters

**BOBSLED**

**MEN**

**TWO MAN**

- Langen/Zimmermann, Germany
- Hays/Hines, U.S.

● Annen/Hefti, Switzerland  
Seven-time world champ Christoph Langen is still going strong at age 39

**FOUR MAN**

- Germany (driver: Andre Lange)
- Germany (driver: Christoph Langen)
- U.S. (driver: Todd Hays)

Hays is a former University of Tulsa linebacker and Ultimate Fighting champ

**WOMEN**

**TWO WOMAN**

- Prokoff/Holzner, Germany
- Erdmann/Herschmann, Germany
- Racine/Johnson, U.S.

Susi Erdmann won bronze in Albertville and silver in Lillehammer—in luge

**CROSS-COUNTRY SKIING**

**MEN**

**1.5K SPRINT FREESTYLE**

- Tor Arne Hetland, Norway
- Cristian Zorzi, Italy
- Trond Iversen, Norway

Olympic debut for sport's shortest race, which lasts just over three minutes

**15K CLASSICAL**

- Erling Jevne, Norway
- Per Eloffsson, Sweden
- Anders Aukland, Norway

In August 1999, Jevne's four-year-old son, Erich Iver, was killed by a car as the two walked along a road in Norway

**COMBINED PURSUIT**

- Per Eloffsson, Sweden
  - Anders Aukland, Norway
  - Thomas Alsgaard, Norway
- Starting 24 seconds back, Alsgaard sprinted past his legendary countryman Bjørn Dæhlie with 50 meters to go to win gold by 1.1 seconds in Nagano



**She's a Driving Force**

SINCE SHE was barely legal behind the wheel of a car, **Jean Racine** has spent two hours of nearly every day negotiating the sinuous curves of bobsled tracks. But just a month before

the first women's Olympic bobsled competition, Racine, the U.S.'s No. 1 driver, was focused on cheeseburgers and protein shakes. "I weigh 127, and my goal is 132," said the 5' 4" Racine. "I'm looking for a little more bulk, a little more explosion."

To that end Racine, 23, had already made a weighty decision: On Dec. 13 she replaced brakeman Jen Davidson, her sled partner of three years and best friend, with former NCAA heptathlon champion Gea Johnson, who'd been on the No. 3 U.S. sled. Though Racine and Davidson won the World Cup points title a year ago, their sluggish start times had kept them winless this season. Johnson, meanwhile, had turned in superior push times at team practices. On Dec. 22, only nine days after Racine and Johnson teamed up, they set a track record (48.92 seconds) at the U.S. trials at Utah Olympic Park. "Gea has given Jean the start she needs to win [the gold medal]," says U.S. women's coach Bill Tavares.

Although drivers drop brakemen routinely, Davidson blasted Racine for replacing her and filed grievances with the U.S. bobsled federation and the USOC. Racine stood by her decision—"What quarterback would throw to his best friend if he couldn't catch the ball?" she said—and after a two-day hearing last week an arbitrator concluded that Davidson had no case. Davidson withdrew her grievance and even gave Racine an apologetic hug.

Racine is inspired by the memory of her mother, Cathy, who died last May of scleroderma, a rare connective-tissue disorder. "I'd visit her in the hospital, and she'd say, 'Why aren't you on the ice?'" says Racine, who five years ago switched from luge, in which she excelled while growing up in Michigan, to bobsled, a sport she considered more tactically compelling. "I want to win the gold for myself, for my country, but most of all for my mom. I promised her that I'd keep striving." —Kelley King

**30K FREESTYLE**

- Per Eloffsson, Sweden
  - Christian Hoffmann, Austria
  - Anders Aukland, Norway
- Eloffsson has a shot to be first skier to win more than three golds at one Games

**50K CLASSICAL**

- Johann Mühlegg, Spain
  - Per Eloffsson, Sweden
  - Vitaly Denisov, Russia
- Mühlegg skied in three Olympics for Germany before a dispute with top brass

**4 × 10K RELAY**

- Norway
  - Italy
  - Sweden
- Italy beat Norway by .4 seconds in 1994; Norway edged Italy by .2 seconds in '98

**WOMEN**

**1.5K SPRINT FREESTYLE**

- Katěriná Neumannova, Czech Rep.
  - Hilde Pedersen, Norway
  - Maj Helen Sorkmo, Norway
- Neumannova finished 18th in mountain biking at the '96 Summer Games

**10K CLASSICAL**

- Bente Skari, Norway
  - Olga Danilova, Russia
  - Julija Tchepalova, Russia
- Skari's father, Odd Martinsen, won gold in the 4 × 10K relay in 1968 in Grenoble

**COMBINED PURSUIT**

- Larissa Lazutina, Russia
  - Olga Danilova, Russia
  - Bente Skari, Norway
- Lazutina took home five medals in '98

**15K FREESTYLE**

- Stefania Belmondo, Italy
  - Larissa Lazutina, Russia
  - Julija Tchepalova, Russia
- Belmondo ranks eighth in Winter Olympic history, with seven medals

**30K CLASSICAL**

- Olga Danilova, Russia
  - Julija Tchepalova, Russia
  - Larissa Lazutina, Russia
- Top contender Kristina Šmigun of Estonia failed preliminary drug test

**4 × 5K RELAY**

- Norway
  - Russia
  - Italy
- Order of finish in last three Games: Russia, Norway and Italy