

# The Olympics: Guns, thugs, luge, suicide etc.

In just a few days, the Winter Olympics begin. They promise to be just as exciting and memorable as the last winter Games, which were held in Butte, Mont., in 1975.

"Exciting" and "memorable" evoke images of the Olympics, but the best phrase to describe the Winter Games is "Are they over yet?" People do not go around saying, "That was a particularly fine Olympics" or "I was not overly fond of this year's Olympics." This is because the Olympics, lasting more than two weeks, are a profoundly long event that air on television, a medium for people with profoundly short attention spans.

Everyone but prison inmates, occupants of retirement homes and sportswriters won't have time or energy to follow all of the action. Unlike us Olympic cognoscenti, you may need help keeping up with what's going on. Here's a primer:

**Norway:** Home of the 1994 Olympic Games. Located on the Norwegian Sea, its leading industries include petroleum, fishing and mining. Interestingly enough, Norway also boasts one of the world's largest populations of Norwegians.

**Lillehammer:** Host city for the 1994 games.

**What does "Lillehammer" mean in Norwegian?** Perhaps a sentence would be illustrative: "Ya Olaf, you use de Lillehammer for de lillenail an' de biggehammer for de biggenail."

**Luge:** Like many sports in the Winter Games, luge is not real big in the United States. What's luge like? Imagine driving your car down an icy mountain road. Now imagine locking up your brakes



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in order to skid down the road with a minimum of control.

Now imagine that, instead of skidding down the icy road in your car, it's just you skidding down the icy road on a piece of metal about the size of your car's ashtray that's strapped to your butt. It's authentic competition at it's finest. Luge can be kind of cool to watch, though, if for no other reason than you can say "luge" all the time.

Luge is ubiquitous as a part of speech. It's a noun ("Luge is growing in popularity in America. More than five people in the United States compete in the sport every year."). It's a verb ("At the speeds those racers reach in turn three Bob, it would be all a normal human could do to hold on, and most of us would luge in our undershorts.").

**Ice hockey:** Breathtaking displays of power, grace, skill and speed that occasionally are marred by the violent antics of thugs with sticks.

**Women's figure skating:** See ICE HOCKEY.

**Ski jumping:** This involves flying off a cliff as fast as you can and falling a long way. The only difference between this and suicide is that you get to wear skis.

**Aerodynamics:** "Cheating the wind" is a recurring theme in events throughout the Games.

Poor aerodynamics can cost a skier or speed skaters the hundredths of seconds that can be the difference between victory and defeat.

To gain an aerodynamic edge, racers wear body-hugging, space-age fabrics developed with extensive research and modern technology with names like Lycra, Spandex, neoprene, polypropylene, vasolene and butane.

**Biathlon:** This combines two

great sports - cross-country skiing and discharging firearms. It's the only Olympic event that sounds like it was invented by an advertising firm for a light beer campaign: "Wouldn't it be great if you could go cross-country skiing, then when you get tired you could just lie down for a while and shoot things with a gun?"

**Athalon:** The National Rifle Association has been lobbying for this event for years. It's cross-

country skiing and target shooting without cross-country skiing. And instead of those wimpy rifles, the competitors fire those semi-automatic babies that are so popular with sport hunters.

One more important difference: Unlike other Olympic events, the winners get their medals with no waiting period.

Scott Simonson is a sports reporter for the Emerald.

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## Center suspended

Junior center Zach Sellers will join junior guard Brion Smith on the sidelines for Oregon's game with Oregon State Saturday after being suspended from the team, head coach Jerry Green announced Wednesday.

"I have suspended Zach for the Oregon State game for failure to meet the team's academic requirements," Green

said. "We'll miss him on Saturday. Smith remains indefinitely suspended after he was suspended last week for disciplinary reasons. Smith has not practiced with the team since he was suspended and will not make the trip to Corvallis with the team.

Sellers will make the trip to Corvallis, but will be in street clothes.

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