

Luge Changes Stir up Complaints at Vancouver Olympics



Vancouver Olympics 2010

Complaints can be heard over the luge track changes as German lugers finished one-two Sunday after three runs and are poised to win the men's luge at the Vancouver Olympics on Sunday.

To veteran sledder Ruben Gonzalez, the decision to lower the start for the men's luge event changed the complexion of the Olympic race and cleared the way for a German to win gold.

Officials lowered the start position for all luge races, a decision they said was made because of the "emotional" impact of Friday's death of Nodar Kumaritashvili, a Georgian competitor who crashed in training.

Coming into the Games, most predicted Italy's Armin Zoeggeler would win gold, but he is in third place after three runs completed. Zoeggeler, 36, won gold both in Turin in 2006 and in Salt Lake City in 2002.

"The Germans got it," Gonzalez said. "It totally changed the whole race. It used to be Armin Zoeggeler of Italy and Albert Demtschenko of Russia. It was the two them two. But now it's a German race."



Four-time Olympian Ruben Gonzalez is one of the country's leading keynote speakers.

Gonzalez is 47-years-old and is the first person to compete in four Winter Olympics, each in a different decade -- 1988, 1992, 2002 and now 2010.



He suggested there was no need to move the starting location after officials built up the barrier wall where Kumaritashvili crashed.

The track modification move has not gone down well also among some female athletes, with some labeling the changes a step into the unknown, with others feeling their pursuit of success is being undermined.

Germany's Natalie Geisenberger, the 2008 European champion, has claimed the new track is "not fun" and added that "the changes needed to be made a year earlier, not when one is dead."

Canadians were unhappy with the changes, in which cut their home advantage and edge. The podium scheme for hosts limited non-Canadians to the minimum permitted amount of training in Whistler.

Home slider Regan Lauscher has accrued considerably more time on the ice than her competitors.

"That home-track advantage? It's basically gone," she said.

While compatriot Meaghan Simister added: "It certainly doesn't help me. I haven't taken one run from down there until today.

"I trained for two years from the ladies' start. The best part of luge for me is the start and that has been taken away from me. "It's tough, but everyone has to do it."

“Every success you’ve ever had or will ever have is the product of your courage to act and the courage to endure.”

- Ruben Gonzalez

To watch a video filled with highlights of Ruben’s most popular presentation visit:

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