

# SPORTS

I moved here in anticipation of the future, and the future is here.

—Michelle Bartleman

# A g-force to be reckoned with

## Local woman on the fast track to 2010

KIRSTEN ANDREWS  
SPECIAL TO THE CHIEF

You might say that when Michelle Bartleman sets her mind to something she won't rest until she makes it so. At 28, she's already got her pilot's license, a degree in aviation and journalism, and is a talented web designer. And now, after only three official weeks in the sport, she is off to compete at Lake Placid in the America's Cup for women's skeleton as part of the Canadian team on the America's Cup circuit.

Can you say 2010?

Born in Montreal, Bartleman came to Squamish last month by way of Anchorage where she finished her schooling at the University of Alaska. There she chalked up flight time, coached gymnastics, ran track and field and was the managing editor of her school's newspaper.

So what brings such an accomplished young woman to a point where hurtling down an ice-encrusted track at breakneck speeds upwards of 120 km/h seems like a good idea?

"I am a big fan of the Olympics, and in 2006 I watched skeleton, and it looked fun – we did really well, too. I did some research and saw that there was an open recruitment," said Bartleman, adding she thought she'd be well suited to the sport with her background in competitive gymnastics and sprinting. "After doing the talent identification camp they invited me to a development camp in Calgary where we trained."

Skeleton, the forerunner to bobsleigh, originated in Switzerland as a modified toboggan race in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. It first became an Olympic sport in 1928, but it wasn't until 1986, with the opening of a track in Calgary prior to the '88 Olympics, that Canadians got seriously involved.

In October Bartleman completed "skeleton school" in Calgary and got her skeleton license. Considering the only ice track in Canada is in Alberta, it only made sense that this free-spirit decide to relocate to... Squamish?

"I know," she laughs, "it seems a bit funny now. But next year the Whistler track – built for the 2010 Olympics – will be open; it will be more advanced, more challenging. I moved here in anticipation of the future, and the future is here."

Interesting sentiment given that to date Bartleman has only been down the track two dozen times and her first skeleton race was just earlier this month. Despite this, Bartleman was recently invited to be a member of one of Canada's three national teams and will race in the



Michelle Bartleman in the sprint phase of her first run in the America's Cup at Calgary, Nov. 16.

SUBMITTED PHOTO

America's Cup circuit for the 2006-07 season. This is an honour that will set her back about \$10,000 for the year.

Her coach, Canadian skeleton veteran and 2006 gold medalist, Duff Gibson says Bartleman is a natural.

"She's definitely got raw talent," he said. "Michelle is a very focused individual and of all the women I am coaching that are new to sliding – four Canadians and six Australians – she has had the best results after two weeks. And in her second America's Cup race the ranking of her second run was ninth and that was among five other World Cup sliders. I was proud of her results."

Gibson adds that skeleton is a sport, like bobsleigh, where athletes with natural ability and

a track record of exceptional past performance are able to come in at a very high level with no prior experience.

"The first time down the track is nerve-racking, but after you do it once it's not so bad. You have your head down, it's not like you see trees whizzing by at 100 kilometres an hour," says Bartleman whose equipment tote regularly includes sandpaper, an Allen key and duct tape amongst her sled, helmet and runners. "The greatest challenge is taking the corners and dealing with the g-force. So far I've experienced 4 Gs – that's been something to get used to!"

Bartleman's dad, Bruce, says his daughter has been a "whirling dervish" from the time she was little. When asked if he's nervous about his daughter's newest pursuit he pauses.

"We're going to Lake Placid and we're anxious to see her do well, but I'm not scared that she'll hurt herself. I just wish she would pick a sport where we could watch her perform for more than four seconds!"

Bartleman's online blog ([www.milomac.com](http://www.milomac.com)) is headed by a phrase that pretty much sums up this energetic go-getter: "Moving to a town I've never been to, for a sport I've never done, on a track that doesn't exist. Makes sense to me."

So far she's made the move to Squamish, and started to seriously compete in a sport she's only attempted a handful of times. The track in Whistler is yet to be completed, but if she soon adds "win an Olympic medal" to that blogsite statement, no one should be surprised.



KIRSTEN ANDREWS/SPECIAL TO THE CHIEF  
Michelle Bartleman represents Canada at Lake Placid Dec. 2 - 3 in the America's Cup Circuit.

## SPORTS SHORTS



### Bonspiel bonanza

The Howe Sound Curling Club Ladies Bonspiel took place from Nov. 10 to 12 and saw six local and 8 out of town teams come together to throw some granite with the hopes of taking home the top prize of \$200 and more importantly, a weekend full of memories.

This year's event organizers were The Halvorson Rink, made up of Grace Halvorson, Hilary Fisher, Lea Fogerty, Linda Pietla. The team put together the entire Bonspiel, welcoming teams from as far away as Princeton – as well as the Lower Mainland and Gibsons – and secured sponsorship from area businesses to make it all possible.

"It was an amazing time this year, everyone just had a blast," Halvorson said. "We really do have to thank the club members for their support and the community for their many donations and door prize and raffles."

The winner of the "A Event" and the \$200 purse was Lawson Rink from the North Shore Winter Club (NSWC). It was sponsored by JKC Fraser Chartered Accountant.

- Other winners included:
- B Event – Habkirk Rink (NSWC), sponsored by Margie Newington, Remax Realtor
  - C Event – Fors Rink (Langley Curling Club), sponsored by Alta Lake Electric
  - D Event – Carmichael Rink (Abbotsford Curling Club), sponsored by Patricia Marini

Some teams have been taking part in the Bonspiel for decades, according to Halvorson.

"The Habkirk Rink from the NSWC has been coming for over 24 years. We have all been curling for years in Squamish – too many to count, collectively over 75!," says Halvorson, adding that every year a different team organizes the event, but that all the women lend their support.

The Bonspiel takes place every November and anyone is welcome to enter a team. For more info call the Howe Sound Curling Club at 604-898-5558.

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