

U.S. skier fighting to open last Winter Olympic sport to women

BY DEREK GATOPOULOS
ASSOCIATED PRESS

MILAN, Italy — Annika Malacinski remembers the moment the door to the Milan Cortina Winter Olympics was slammed shut.

On a flight from Munich to Denver, she bought airplane Wi-Fi to join a conference call with the International Olympic Committee, certain that Nordic combined competition would at last be opened up to female athletes.

"Then the decision came: 'no.' No explanation, no discussion. Just 'no,' and then they moved on to the next topic," she told The Associated Press from her training base in Norway. "I cried for eight hours straight on that flight. When I arrived in Denver, my eyes were swollen shut. It felt like my world had crashed."

That was in June, 2022. And despite an ongoing campaign led by Malacinski, an athlete from Colorado now aged 24, her sport remains the last to exclude women — even as Milan Cortina is showcasing the highest level of female participation in Winter Games history at 47%.

LEFT OUT AT THE ELITE LEVEL

Malacinski is a frequent top-10 finisher at elite competitions in the sport that combines ski jumping and cross-country skiing and demands rigorous year-round training.

Her younger brother, Niklas, will compete in the men's event for the United States and she plans to travel

to northern Italy to cheer him on. "It's bittersweet. I know how hard he works, and he absolutely deserves it," Malacinski said. "I do the same sport as him. I jump the same ski jumps and ski the same courses. The only difference is that I'm a woman."

Female skiers racing in Seefeld, Austria, last weekend protested the exclusion by raising their poles overhead to form an X.

Men have competed in the Nordic combined since the first Winter Games more than a century ago, at Chamonix, France in 1924.

The sport is now at risk of being removed from the program at the next Winter Olympics in 2030. The IOC says Nordic combined has struggled to attract participation from enough countries and draws a limited television audience.

A LONG CLIMB TOWARD PARTICIPATION AND PARITY

Women were excluded entirely from the first modern Olympics in 1896. When they were allowed to compete in Paris four years later, participation was limited to a handful of sports, including tennis, archery and croquet.

Track and field opened to women only in 1928, at the Amsterdam Games — but restrictions were imposed around beliefs of female fragility. Although the 800 meters was originally included, it was later withdrawn for more than three decades.

The first women's Olympic marathon did not take place until 1984 in Los

Angeles — 88 years after the race inspired by an ancient Greek battle debuted.

Nearly all differences have since been eliminated, though some disparities remain. At the Summer Olympics, women compete in the seven-event heptathlon, while men contest the 10-event decathlon.

WINTER OLYMPICS CHANGES AT A GLACIAL PACE

At the Winter Games, progress arrived even later. Ski jumping was off-limits to women as recently as the 2010 Vancouver Olympics and was introduced four years later at Sochi.

Cross-country skiing's distance overhaul is the most recent and sweeping change. At Milan Cortina, men and women will race the same distances across all events for the first time in Olympic history.

Previously, the longest women's race topped out at 30 kilometers, compared with 50 for men. Both will now have 50-kilometer mass start races — like at Nordic Ski World Championships last year.

Malacinski says she will continue her campaign for inclusion, now focused on 2030 Winter Games in the French Alps.

"I'm a very gritty person," she said. "If I put my mind to something, I know I can do it."

"That just fuels the fire for me," she said. "We deserve to be there, and I'll fight until 2030 because that's our rightful place."

Milan Cortina Winter Olympics are ready to go

BY ANDREW DAMPF
AP SPORTS WRITER

CORTINA D'AMPEZZO, Italy — Will there be an Olympic spirit or will it seem like a bunch of individual world championships? Will a complicated transport network connecting far-flung venues run smoothly?

Will crowds fill the arenas, rinks and stadiums despite sluggish advance ticket sales? Will the controversial sliding venue and main hockey arena feel finished following construction delays? Will the locals remain more interested in soccer than snow and ice sports?

The answers to these and many other questions that shadowed the preparation of the Milan Cortina Olympics are about to be answered.

When the XXV Winter Games kick off with the opening ceremony at the San Siro soccer stadium on Friday, it won't just be the athletes who are going to be tested. It's a new era for the entire Olympic movement.

Spread out over a vast swath of northern Italy, these Olympics are the first to truly embrace the International Olympic Committee's reform plan of using existing venues no matter how far apart they are.

Skating sports — including the return of NHL hockey players to the Olympics after more than a decade — will be held in Milan; women's Alpine skiing, sliding and curling in Cortina d'Ampezzo; Nordic sports in Val di Fiemme; men's Alpine skiing and ski mountaineering in Bormio; snowboarding and freestyle in Livigno; and biathlon in Anterselva.

In all, this Olympic footprint covers an area of more than 22,000 square kilometres (nearly 10,000 square miles). That's about the size of the state of Massachusetts.

"I do believe that we took the right decision in having a more dispersed games," new IOC President Kirsty Coventry said. "But it has — and I think we can all say very openly and honestly — it has added additional complexities."



JULIA DEMAREE NIKHINSON/Associated Press

Italy's Giovanni Franzoni starts an alpine ski, men's downhill official training, at the Winter Olympics, in Bormio, Italy, Thursday.

Complexities that Olympic organizers are going to have to get used to because this is the first of several Winter Games arranged with the same model.

The 2030 French Alps Games don't even have a host city in its name. Same for Utah in 2034; and probably for a Switzerland bid — the only candidate — for 2038, too.

"It's a much greater conversation," Coventry said of assessing pros and cons of the new model. "I think initially, we all thought, 'Oh, well, we'll just have it be a little bit more dispersed, because that's more sustainable.'"

OPENING CEREMONY ALSO TO BE SPREAD AROUND DIFFERENT AREAS

Adapting to the new model extends beyond the competition.

The opening ceremony will also be spread over multiple locations, with athlete parades held simultaneously in Milan, Cortina, Livigno and Val di Fiemme. There will be two cauldrons lit, one in Milan and another in Cortina.

Former Olympic champion skiers Alberto Tomba and Deborah Compagnoni are the favorites to light the cauldrons in Milan and Cortina,

respectively.

LINDSEY VONN: 'IT WOULD HAVE BEEN MORE FUN IF WE WERE ALL CLOSER'

American skiing standout Lindsey Vonn, competing in her fifth Olympics, has mixed feelings about the new formula.

"I mean, I'm in Cortina, so there's really nothing to complain about. I'm very happy being here. It's one of the most beautiful places in the world. But it is sad to not be closer to more of your teammates, not just in ski racing, but in any sport," said Vonn, who plans to race despite a torn ACL in her left knee.

"Salt Lake City was my favorite Olympics because we were all so close to each other. Almost everyone was in the Olympic Village in Salt Lake and this is quite different," said Vonn, referring to the 2002 Games. "A lot of the girls (teammates) were talking about wanting to watch hockey, but it's difficult. ... Obviously you can't choose that geography and where the mountains are, but I think it would have been more fun if we were all closer."

CONSTRUCTION GOES DOWN TO THE WIRE

The sliding center in Cortina was rebuilt against

the wishes of the IOC, which preferred using an existing venue for bobsled, luge and skeleton in nearby Switzerland or Austria.

The sliding track itself is finished, tested and ready. But surrounding areas of the track are still under construction. Fortunately for organizers, it has snowed all week in Cortina.

"Obviously outside (the track) there are still some little things," Italian luger Dominik Fischnaller said. "But the snow will cover it, so we're good for the Games."

A gondola lift to the Alpine skiing center in Cortina also remains unfinished, which will slow the access of spectators to the races.

Construction of the main hockey arena in Milan — which features a smaller sheet of ice than usual — went right down to the final hours (hockey began play Thursday) and there is still much work to be done.

"Understanding that the Olympics is a massive event that kind of pops up for a very finite amount of time, there's going to be different challenges you have to overcome," U.S. women's hockey captain Hilary Knight said. "So whether the ice is perfect or not, we're here, we're ready to play."

Vance: Olympics 'one of few things' that unite Americans

BY MICHELLE L. PRICE
ASSOCIATED PRESS

MILAN — U.S. Vice President JD Vance arrived in Milan with his family Thursday, telling U.S. athletes competing in the Milan Cortina Winter Games that the competition "is one of the few things that unites the entire country" before taking his family to see a hockey game.

It's the first stop for Vance on a trip combining diplomacy and sports. He is leading U.S. President Donald Trump's delegation to the 2026 Winter Olympics and later stopping in Armenia and Azerbaijan in a show of support for a peace agreement brokered by the White House last year.

Vance stood to applaud goals scored by the U.S. women's hockey team, which beat the Czech Republic 5-1 in the preliminary round game at the Milano Rho Ice Hockey Arena.

The vice president earlier told athletes the trip is a highlight of his time in office. "The whole country — Democrat, Republican, independent — we're all rooting for you and we're cheering for you," Vance said.

The weeklong trip may be one of only a few international trips Vance makes this year. Trump and his Cabinet members are taking a tighter focus on domestic issues — and domestic travel — heading into the November midterm elections, White House Chief of Staff Susie Wiles said last month.

At the opening ceremony for the Games on Friday, the vice president will lead a U.S. delegation that includes his wife, second lady Usha Vance, Secretary of State Marco Rubio and U.S. Ambassador to Italy Tilman Fertitta. Former Olympic gold medalists will also be in the delegation, including hockey player sisters Jocelyne Lamoureux-Davidson and Monique Lamoureux-Morando; speedskater Apolo Ohno and figure skater Evan Lysacek.

Vance said his wife "is not a sports fan" but "obsessively makes us watch the Olympics" every two years, citing that as evidence of the way the competition "really brings the country together. Everybody is rooting for you guys and everybody's cheering for you."

Vance is following in the footsteps of former vice presidents Joe Biden who attended the Winter Olympics in Vancouver in 2010 and Mike Pence who traveled to Pyeongchang, Korea, in 2018. Former Vice President Kamala Harris did not attend the 2022 Winter Olympics in Beijing because the Biden administration did not send any diplomatic officials as a boycott over human rights concerns.

AFTER THE OLYMPICS: ARMENIA AND AZERBAIJAN

After Italy, Vance plans to head to Armenia and Azerbaijan, where Trump has tasked him with building on a deal aimed at ending four decades of conflict between the two countries.

The peace agreement boosts the position of the U.S. in the region at a time when Russia's influence is declining. The two former Soviet republics, Armenia and Azerbaijan, agreed under the deal to reopen key transportation routes and bolster cooperation with the United States in energy, technology and the economy.

The deal also calls for the creation of a major transit corridor dubbed the Trump Route for International Peace and Prosperity. It is expected to connect Azerbaijan and its autonomous Nakhchivan exclave, which are separated by a 32-kilometer-wide patch of Armenian territory.

Vance's mission on the trip to further the peace effort is similar to an assignment he took on in October, when he traveled to Israel weeks after a ceasefire was negotiated in its war with Hamas in Gaza, reiterating the Trump administration's commitment to the effort.

In addition to the Israel stop last year, Vance made trips to France, Germany, Greenland, India and the U.K. He twice visited Italy, meeting Pope Francis before his death, and later, his successor Pope Leo XIV.

VICE PRESIDENTS SOMETIMES TAKE THE ROAD LESS TRAVELED

While presidents focus their foreign travel on meetings with some of the U.S.'s biggest allies, vice presidents often are called on to make trips a little off the beaten path. Biden, for example, went to Mongolia in 2011, where he tried some archery and was gifted a horse. In 2017, Pence visited Estonia, Georgia and Montenegro, where he affirmed support for NATO, along with participating in symbolic diplomacy with the planting of an oak tree.



SUMMARY OF ORDINANCE AMENDING THE ZONING MAP OF THE CITY OF VINE GROVE, KENTUCKY

The City of Vine Grove Planning Commission conducted a public hearing December 1, 2025 to consider a zone map amendment request for approximately 1,130 acres owned by THE ESTATE OF EDWARD PAUL HAWKINS, located at 504 Highland Avenue, Vine Grove, Kentucky and currently designated as Hardin County PVA MAP ID Number 140-20-01-014 (see Hardin County Deed Book 1383, Page 657; and Hardin County Will Book 76, Page 697). The request was an amendment from Commercial-3 (Highway Commercial) Zone to Residential-2 (Single-Family Residential) Zone. The Planning Commission recommended the zone map amendment request be granted as it was found to be in agreement with the City's Comprehensive Plan, the evidence of record, and applicable law, and the City Council is now enacting an ordinance to change the property's zoning. Please find the full ordinance on the website www.vinegrove.org or by contacting jessica@vinegrove.org by email.

Read at a meeting of the Vine Grove City Council on the 5th day of January, 2026; a second reading was held on the 2nd day of February, 2026, and said ordinance was passed and approved on the 2nd day of February, 2026.

/s/ Pam Ogden

PAM OGDEN, MAYOR
CITY OF VINE GROVE,
KENTUCKY

ATTESTED BY:
/s/ Jessica Irwin
JESSICA IRWIN
CITY CLERK

CERTIFICATION

I, Michael A. Pike, hereby certify pursuant to KRS 83A.060 that I am an attorney licensed to practice law in the Commonwealth of Kentucky with the law firm of Pike Law, P.S.C., 1000 Johnstown Road, Suite 100, Elizabethtown, Kentucky; that I prepared the foregoing Summary of Ordinance of the City of Vine Grove, Kentucky; and that the foregoing is a true and accurate summary of the contents of said Ordinance. Said Ordinance can be examined in its entirety at Vine Grove City Hall, Vine Grove, Kentucky.

/MICHAEL A. PIKE/

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