



Lindsey Van

This Park City, Utah, seventh-grader has soared farther than the length of a football field and is ranked fifth in the world among female ski jumpers. She lives a mile from the jumps built for the 2002 Winter Olympics and dreams about winning gold in her own backyard if women's jumping becomes an Olympic sport.

Born November 27, 1984 (age 13)

Vital stats 4'8" and 82 pounds; her skis are 220 cm; her longest jump is 101 meters.

Fly girl "When Lindsey was 7, she took a beginner course in jumping and went off the little jumps," says her father, Barry. "She came down after two hours, sprayed snow on her mother and me, and declared, 'This is what I want to do. I want to go to the Olympics.'"

Up, up and away "I like the rush of being in the air," says Lindsey. "I'm up there for 5 seconds when I go off the 120-meter jump."

Fear factor "I used to get scared when it was windy or I was standing at the top of a new jump for the first time. But I've gotten used to it. I've done more than 5,000 jumps, and I've only had two minor accidents."

Parental guidance "Other parents sometimes say, 'How can you let your kid go off that huge jump—that's dangerous,'" says Barry. "But we think it's safer than ski racing."

International flights "I've competed in Italy, Austria, Germany and Finland," says Lindsey. "I like traveling and I've become good friends with the jumpers from other countries."

The coach "Lindsey is a little firecracker," says her coach, Matt Terwillegar of the National Sports Foundation. "She's a natural and she really enjoys flying. You want to start ski jumpers young—before they realize what they're doing. Older jumpers can think too much and then there's paralysis by analysis." —Reade Bailey