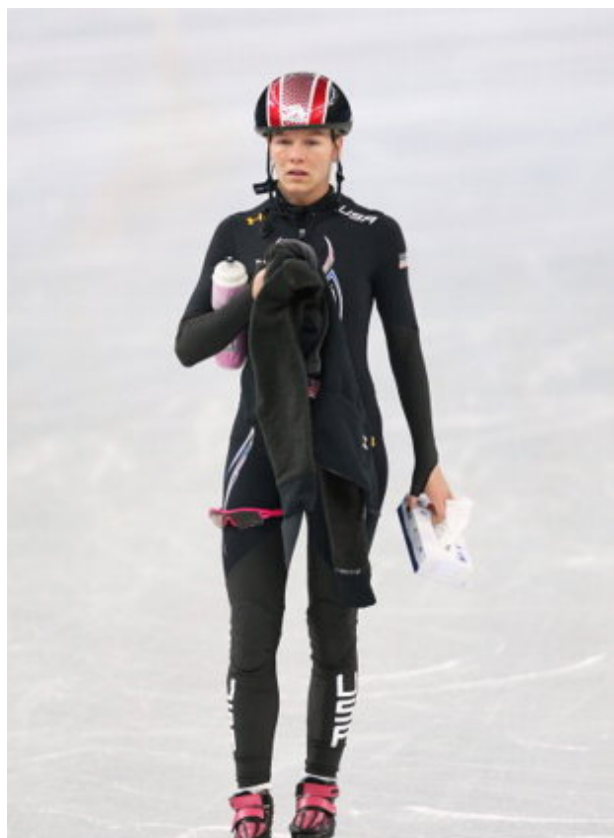


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## 5 Women We're Rooting for at the Olympics

By [Lizbeth Scordo](#), [Shine Staff](#) | [Healthy Living](#) – Thu, Feb 6, 2014 2:55 PM EST

Sure, you're all about [Team USA](#) now that the Olympics are kicking off, but how many of the American athletes – specifically, some of the amazing female athletes – do you know much about? (Considering [Lindsey Vonn is injured](#), [Gabby Douglas](#) is only allowed to compete in the [Summer Olympics](#), and there aren't a ton of household names yet, it's understandable if the answer is zero). To get you started, here are five women who've overcome plenty – from financial troubles to serious injuries – to make it to Sochi and make us proud. Check them out and cheer them on.



### Emily Scott

**Age:** 24

**Sport:** Speedskating

**Why We're Rooting for Her:** Hundreds of strangers helped her get here.

After Scott's monthly stipend from the U.S. Speedskating organization was cut from \$1,900 to \$650 last year, the Springfield, Missouri, native was forced to apply for food stamps, but she also got creative, turning to the crowdfunding site [Gofundme.com](#) to raise money to continue her training and hopefully make it all the way to Sochi. Mission accomplished. After the national media picked up [her story](#), hundreds logged on to donate. As of this week, she has raised nearly \$50,000 thanks to more than 700 donors.

"I got to a really low point where I thought my career was going to have to come to an end. People rallied together and helped keep my dream alive and I will forever be grateful," Scott tells Yahoo Shine, adding that she sent a personal thank you to every single donor. "So many people just wanted me to be able to fulfill my dream of going to the Olympics. No matter how much people donated, it all mattered so much to me and I wanted them to know that."

Scott actually started off her athletic career as a gymnast, and even made the Junior Olympic

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team and I followed," recounts Scott. The sisters were raised by their single dad, Craig, who will be with his daughter in Sochi, thanks, in part, to those donations. Says Scott of her dedicated father: "He is my greatest fan always."



Resi Stiegler (Getty Images)

### Resi Stiegler

**Age:** 28

**Sport:** Alpine Ski Racing

**Why We're Rooting for Her:** A serious accident kept her out of the last Olympics.

Just a few months before the 2010 Winter Games in Vancouver, Stiegler **crashed on a training course** and broke her leg in two places. While she was, of course, disappointed she wasn't going to be able to ski in what would have been her second Olympics (she had competed, but not medaled, in Turin in 2006), she had other things on her mind. "At the time, I was more concerned about walking than anything else. It's interesting how that works out," she tells Yahoo Shine. "I was on crutches for 18 weeks so I was just happy to be able to start moving."

Still, she traveled to Vancouver to support fellow skiers. "To get to watch Johnny Spillane and Billy Demong get their medals, and see the happiness of all the hard work I had seen them go through, was rewarding in another way. But it made me hungry to come back, that's for sure."

Though her father is **gold medalist Pepi Stiegler**, who won both a bronze and gold medal for Austria in the 1964 Winter Olympics, it was actually her mother who encouraged her in the sport. "I think my father would have been happy with anything I did as long as I was happy. But it's good my mom saw that I had talent and loved to ski; she was the real motivator," says Stiegler. "I was not forced to ski and I think that's why I love it so much. It was always just what I wanted to do."

Besides the fact the sport is in her genes, growing up in the ski mecca of Jackson Hole, Wyoming, where her father worked, didn't hurt. "I would ski around with my brother and friends and ski school employees would check on me," she adds. "It was more like daycare."



### Julie Chu



Julie Chu (Getty Images)

**Why We're Rooting for Her:** She wants to show girls that ice hockey isn't just for boys.

Quick, close your eyes and picture an ice hockey team. Chances are you didn't imagine a team of women. Well, Julie Chu wants to change that. As an 8-year-old in Connecticut, her parents signed her up for figure skating lessons at the same rink where her older brother played ice hockey, but she wasn't interested in that kind of skating. "I was so drawn to watching my brother play hockey and wanting to be on a team," she tells Yahoo Shine, adding that she considers herself lucky that her parents were open-minded and said yes to her request to join the boys. "The next thing I knew I was in love with hockey."

Back then, in 1990, girls didn't play hockey and the world was still several years away from women's ice hockey becoming an Olympic sport (which happened in 1998). Now, nearly 70,000 American girls play the sport in the United States, a testament, Chu says, to her team being part of the Olympic Games (and winning two silvers and a bronze in the last three games). "Definitely there's not as much exposure as the men's hockey, but we're doing the best we can to continue to push the envelope," she says. "The growth is definitely increasing every year, along with the popularity of the game and the exposure our team has had. It's definitely something we'd love to continue by getting out into the communities." Last month, Chu teamed up with the Citi **Every Step of the Way** program, which donated \$50,000 to the USA Hockey Foundation's **Try Hockey for Free**

initiative. Since buying all the requisite gear can be a hefty investment for most families, the program allows both boys and girls, ages 4 to 9, to gear up and try out the sport to see if they like it first.

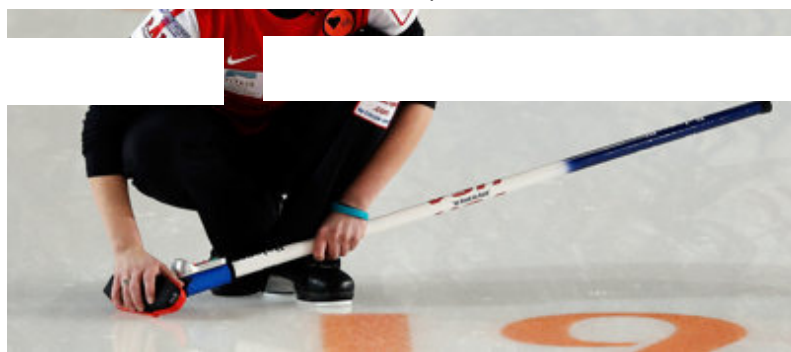
At the ripe old age of 31, Chu has the honor of being the team's eldest member. There's the good that goes along with that, like maturity. "I know what to expect a little bit more. I can bring a little bit of the calm to balance the energy of our younger players," she says. And the bad, like frustrating off-the-ice movie talk: "Some of the younger girls said they've never seen 'Pretty Woman.' I was like, 'What? That's not right!'"



**Jessica Schultz**  
**Age:** 29  
**Sport:** Curling

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Jessica Schultz (Getty Images)

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the case of Schultz, who grew up in Alaska, it all started when she was 13, on a "family night out" at the Anchorage Curling Club. Not long after that, she joined a junior women's team and traveled with them to the nationals. "I got a little taste of the competition and after that I was kind of hooked," Schultz recalls.

After finishing high school in Anchorage, she moved to Minnesota (which happens to be a hot bed for the curling world, who knew?). Her parents, however, weren't so sure about her decision to move somewhere she'd never been, for a sport most

people had never heard of. "They were kind of shocked and they said, 'Well good luck. You're on your own if you're making this decision.' I worked two jobs and went to school and curled. That's kind of how I made my way."

If anyone is ready for a medal, it's Schultz. Though she and her teammates were predicted to win a medal in Turin in 2006, their performance fell flat. Four years later Schultz didn't qualify for the games, losing the trials to one of her now-teammates, Debbie McCormick. Now, says Schultz, "She and I have now joined forces with Ann [Swisshelm] and Erika [Brown] to form the superstar, **all-star team**. I think we definitely have a shot at medaling."

Schultz only found out she qualified for this year's Olympics two months ago. With so little lead time, the news has turned her life upside-down. "The hardest part was trying to adjust to that, squeeze in all the media, all the training, everything, and the mental preparation into two months."

Not that her life was low-key before: In addition to her training regimen, Schultz had been working a full-time job as a physical therapy assistant. "Leading up to the trials I was working 40 hours a week, training in the gym, and practicing," she shares. "I'd start work in the morning at 6:30, go straight to the gym and then to the rink, or vice versa, but I'd get both of them in. I was eating in my car a lot." Not to worry, her boss has been understanding, and has granted her a leave of absence to compete in Sochi. "They just expect me to be back March 3."



**Kate Hansen**

**Age:** 21

**Sport:** Luge

**Why We're Rooting for Her:** She's been training, competing – and winning! – with a broken foot.

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Kate Hansen (Getty Images)

sled Friday, then raced Saturday and I ended up winning the race. It was a miracle," she tells Yahoo Shine. Hansen was required to wear a boot and use crutches for six weeks, which happened to be while she and her teammates were traveling through Europe "It was miserable to say the least and it changed a lot of things for me. I couldn't lift so I lost about 10 pounds during the whole process," she recalls. "I wore a small cast on the outside of my foot when I slid. It was definitely sketchy but you'll do anything for the Olympics, right?"

Though her foot is still "a little sore," Hansen says she's still able to do everything she needs to do to train and compete – which included becoming the first American to [win a World Cup singles luge race](#) when she competed in Latvia last month.

Hansen's first go-round at the Olympic trials was more than four years ago, when she landed a spot with the 2010 team. This time around, she feels more prepared — broken foot or not. "When I was 17, to be honest, I was not ready mentally or emotionally and it was hard to come back from it. I made it to the end of the trials and I had those Olympic rings in my eyes and then my world shattered. I just wasn't prepared, but the only way to be ready is to go through the process," she admits. This time, Hansen says she is more focused on the sport, rather than the hype around it. "There's always a lot of hype during trials with reporters, articles, lots of media and this time around I didn't let myself read anything or even look at anything that had to do with the Games. I got really caught up in it all in 2010."

In a sport that depends on speed, Hansen has dealt with her share of sexism. "I think when I was younger I was treated differently only because boys hated it when I was faster than them. Being treated differently always fueled my fire because I loved beating the boys," she says. She's still got an competitive edge, but her perspective has changed with maturity. "Now as I'm older, I think there is a mutual respect among all sliding athletes, because we are all equally putting our lives on the line to do this crazy sport."



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