



CANADA'S 1936 OLYMPIC WOMEN'S SKI TEAM

Left to right—Mrs. Gordon-Lennox, Mrs. Lois Butler, Miss Marion Miller, Mrs. Edward Chamier

## Canada's 1936 Olympic Women's Ski Team

*By Mrs. Lois Butler, Captain*

HERE happened to be four Canadians living in Europe who had some experience of racing in the Alps, and the C.A.S.A. allowed us to do our best to represent Canada as a team for the Ladies Ski Races at the Olympic Games. We had great hope that two or three women would be able to come over from Canada to make a choice for the team of four, but the difficulties, financial and otherwise, were too great, and it became apparent in November that we four would be the only ones to have the honor of skiing for Canada in the Ladies' Races at Garmisch; Mrs. Edward Chamier, Mrs. Gordon-Lennox, Miss Marion Miller and myself.

We started early training at Grindelwald in Switzerland. The conditions all over the Alps were terribly bad; it rained, thawed, froze, or blew a gale of wind almost every day for weeks, but it never seemed to snow. Old men went about murmuring "the worst season for fifty years." There had been a good snowfall early in December, so we skied on patches of what remained, practicing slaloms between rocks and bushes. It was the same for all the teams in training, but later our own particular run of bad luck started. Mrs. Chamier cracked a bone in her foot; Mrs. Gordon-Lennox broke two bones in her hand, and Miss Miller developed a bad attack of bronchitis. It certainly did not look as though we would ever reach the start at Garmisch.

We were tremendously encouraged by a visit from Mr. Harry Pangman and Mr. Sam Cliff who came to see us in the Oberland, and after several talks with them the injured members of the team decided that they were going to race if they could ski at all. We reached Garmisch-Partenkirchen about January 25 and found it full of people of every nationality. There were thousands of flags, and all the different rumors and excitements that go with a huge international competition. Mr. Pangman gave us our Canadian badges and racing sweaters, which we were delighted to have. The badge was so attractive that all my ski racing friends wanted it and I had difficulty in keeping it throughout the games. Mr. Pangman was a splendid team manager and we were more than grateful for his kindness and efficiency.

The skiing at Garmisch is all steep, through narrow glades in the trees, and very bumpy. We practiced our downhill running and slalom day after day in rain or fog, always hoping for better snow and sunshine as the races drew nearer. We used various courses near the actual Olympic course which was not open until three days before the competition. There was great excitement when we were allowed on the real course, and we found it quite worthy to be used as an Olympic test of ski racing.

The start for the women competitors was a few hundred feet below the men's start, then

followed the same as the men's to the finish. We began on a harmless looking knoll in an open glade, then plunged steeply down through the fir trees; all the way from start to finish it was full of incident, never a dull moment. My first run down seemed more like a ride on a scenic railway in an amusement park than a ski course. It was full of sharp drops, corners, huge bumps, narrow steep glades, everything came into view with such unexpected suddenness. It was great fun and we stopped at the most difficult part known as the "Steep Hang" and watched our friends of the different nationalities trying every sort of method to remain on their skis down the icy slope. Anton Seelos, the famous Austrian ski teacher who has the most perfect style of any skier in Europe, skied down the ice as though it was easy; he did swinging turns, and was in perfect control of his speed all the time. Herman Sturi, the Swiss, winner of the Arlberg Kandahar Slalom in Murren in 1935, also came down beautifully, but all the others I watched either got out of control and fell or shot down at high speed with their skis parallel to each other, but sideways to the mountain; then, as they saw an opportunity, turned downhill to dash through the control and down the next drop across a bridge and over some bumps. This was the "pièce de resistance" of a difficult course.

Herr Hitler opened the Games during a heavy snowstorm the day before our race. It was a wonderfully organized ceremony. All the teams of the nations marched past him in the stadium below the big ski jump and it was most impressive as the standard bearers of the countries dipped their flags and the Olympic Oath was read while the competitors stood with their hand raised to take the oath.

We skiers were thinking of what was happening to our downhill course for it was snowing at last as though it would never stop. Would the new snow stay on top of the ice, or would it slip away as people did their check turns? Would it be still snowing tomorrow? Would it be impossibly difficult to get down that course, or would it be easier than before, and what sort of wax should we use? Conditions had so entirely changed.

We were called in the dark next morning for the competitors' trains went up fairly early, and when we got to the top it was a grey day, snowing slightly and very cold.

I think I become another person in another

world before the start of a big downhill ski race! It is exciting beyond description and I imagine every racer has his own world of reactions and feelings. I looked at my team and I felt that Mrs. Chamier with her injured foot bandaged and Diana Gordon-Lennox with her broken fingers were very brave to start at all. Marion Miller looked so young and rather pale from her recent illness. I wished we were at the bottom of the mountain as it seemed miles away.

We had to ski about ten minutes across country to the start. Mr. Pangman came with us, full of encouragement. The actual moment came and I was off, starting seventh of the fifty racers. It felt better to be skiing, the new snow had stayed on the slopes and except for occasional patches of ice the course was lovely. After two falls, and many uncertain moments, and what seemed to be a tremendous amount of hard work, I found myself over the finish line. Next of our team to start was Mrs. Chamier. She arrived having done well in spite of her bad foot; then Marion Miller arrived safely, saying how glad she was to ski on some snow instead of all ice. Last Diana arrived, greeted with cheers, because with her broken arm in plaster, her eye-glass, her fluent Viennese German, and her enormous sense of humour, she was quite the most popular skier in Garmisch.

The Slalom was held the next day on a long steep course near the ski jump. It was most cleverly set, full of tricky turns and fast runs between. At this low altitude at the foot of the mountain the new snow soon wore away from the turns and they were icy and difficult and remarkably hard when one sat unexpectedly. Chriftl Cranz, the German girl, skied superbly and won the Combined Result for Germany. Of our team, Mrs. Chamier had to retire, the sharp turns being extremely painful for her foot. The other two finished the difficult course and Diana received almost as great a cheer as Chriftl Cranz, in fact, Mr. Arnold Lunn, the originator of downhill racing, who was taking no notice of her run down, as he really did not expect her to win, paused for a moment in his discourse on Einstein to say "What's the matter, Diana, have you won?"

The sun was shining and our part of the Olympic Winter Games was over. We were very happy, although we would have all liked to have skied a little better than Chriftl Cranz.

### *New Developments in the Laurentians*

At Mont Tremblant a new Slalom hill on the west side of the Lake has been cleared. This hill will be used particularly for the Quebec-Kandahar Slalom. On Baldy, to the west of the present run, a Slalom and practice hill is now ready.

Emile Cochand has cleared a new Slalom hill near the speedway and his jumping hill has been much improved.

A new ski trail is planned from St. Margaret Station to the new development at Lac Masson, and two practice hills at the Lake.

*Ski Tows*—There is in prospect ski tows on the Big Hill at Shawbridge, on Hill 70 at St. Sauveur and on Baldy at St. Margarets.