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## Buying into a 'luge-specific' fit

By [MIKE GANTER](#), SUN MEDIA

For a sport that is all about going down, there's plenty on the way up for Canadian lugers to talk about these days.

Canada has never won an Olympic medal in luge, a point both Regan Lauscher and Jeff Christie, Canada's top female and male luge medal hopes, respectively, heading into the 2010 Games in Vancouver are well aware of.

But for the first time heading into an Olympics, there is a real possibility that will no longer be the case.

A big part of the reason is the arrival of coach Wolfgang Staudinger, who comes to Canada from a German program that has dominated luge competitions for years. He signed a seven-year contract last October and has been changing the way our lugers train and compete.

Where once Canadians would go to a World Cup event and get in maybe four practice runs, now it's 10 or even 15.

"By the end of it, we didn't even have the strength to hold up our heads through the breaking curve," Lauscher, from Saskatoon, said on a media blitz recently. "But it has already paid off."

Those extra runs have seen career-best finishes for younger national team members Meaghan Simister and Sam Edney, who both finished ninth in the '08 worlds.

Staudinger's training methods, race preparation and strategy are all tried and true methods. So when he tells his new charges to get down on a wheeled sled on an outdoor track and paddle themselves around the circuit until they can't raise their arms any more, no one raises an eyebrow, let alone an objection.

### ALWAYS WONDERING

"You know it works," the Vancouver-born Christie said. "Before, you were working hard but there was always that question of: 'Am I working hard the right way?' Now, you know you are working hard the right way. We've always been strong and fit. We just haven't been luge-specific fit."

Lauscher, who underwent surgery on both shoulders earlier this year, just got the go-ahead to resume training.

"It was a compounding injury over the last three or four years," she said. "Genetically, my joints are hyper-mobile. I was pre-disposed to deal with that anyway, but the way we train and the stress on my shoulders just added to it."

Lauscher has yet to feel the full effects of Staudinger's methods because of the operations, but she is buying in.

"It's a confidence thing knowing we decided to go in one direction that we believed in," she said, "and when we get into the start handles on our Olympic race day in 2010 we are in the best position we can possibly be."