

Women's Ski Jumping USA
Visa Women's Ski Jumping Team
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Ski jumpers named to Junior Worlds and Nordic World Championship teams

PARK CITY, Utah – Eight Visa Women's Ski Jumping members were named this week to the 2011 World Junior and Nordic World Ski Championship teams.

Sarah Hendrickson, Nita Englund, Avery Ardovino and Nina Lussi will compete at the Junior World Championships Jan 27 and 29 in Otepaa, Estonia. In 2010, Hendrickson, 16, was a bronze medalist — the first American (male or female) to podium at a Junior Worlds.

Visa team members will train in Norway prior to the Junior Worlds where — for the first time — a women's ski jumping team event will take place.

“Coline Mattel (FRA) is jumping really well and she's definitely the one to beat. Japan has a really strong team and so do the Germans,” Hendrickson said. “It's awesome that we have a team event this time and I think our chances are really good. It's nice to be able to compete as a team for once and not just as individuals.”

The significance of the first Juniors team event for women is two-fold, said Women's Ski Jumping USA Executive and Team Director Jenny Holden.

“It's another step that shows how much women's ski jumping has grown internationally and how the teams have improved as a whole,” Holden said. “Plus, it emphasizes the importance of being there to represent your country and having teammates together to push each other toward a common goal.”

Hendrickson said she definitely feels the pressure to defend her medal and do even better, but is trying to concentrate on jumping her best – regardless of the outcome.

“With ski jumping, your results can go up or down from day to day. So, I'm working on being consistent, remaining calm and knowing that I'm capable of making the top six and even reaching the podium,” she said.

Hendrickson has reached the podium four times this Continental Cup season, including a win this summer in Bischofsgrun, Germany. She placed second in Vikersund, Norway, in December.

FIS 2011 Nordic World Ski Championship Team

Oslo, Norway is hosting the 2011 Nordic World Ski Championships Feb. 25 - March 5 and it marks only the second time a women's ski jumping event will be held at Worlds.

Current World Champion Lindsey Van, Jessica Jerome (6th-place in 2009 Worlds), Alissa Johnson, Abby Hughes and Sarah Hendrickson will be competing for the U.S. in Oslo. Because Van is the defending champion, the U.S. Ski and Snowboard Association was able to name five athletes to the team. There is no team event for women jumpers at World Championships.

The International Olympic Committee will be paying close attention to this year's Worlds. In October, the IOC Executive Board announced that it was "looking favorably" at adding a women's ski jumping event to the Sochi 2014 Olympic Winter Games program, but said it needed more time to consider the outcome of the sport's World Championships. IOC President Jacques Rogge will make the final decision by the end of April.

"I think we have a very strong team heading into Worlds, as all team members have been on the podium in the past and three have reached it this year," Van said. "The events have been more competitive over the last two years and all the comps are much closer in points than they were."

The Oslo World Championships will take place in one of the sport's most significant venues, the Holmenkollen Ski Stadium. The jumps were recently rebuilt in anticipation of the Worlds. Hundreds of thousands of spectators are expected to attend.

Jerome knows their event will be hugely watched and believes her and her fellow competitors will put on a great competition.

"New women are constantly showing up on the top of the results list on the COC and everyone on tour is jumping farther," she said. "It's awesome to see."

Jerome and Van are in third and fourth in the overall Continental Cup standings; Hendrickson is eighth, Hughes 13th and Johnson 15th. The women's ski jumping event takes place Friday, Feb. 25.

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The Visa Women's Ski Jumping Team is sponsored and organized by Women's Ski Jumping USA, a 501c3 nonprofit foundation. To learn more, go to www.wsjusa.com.