

Alpine Skier Lindsey Vonn's Olympic Training Regimen Isn't What You'd Expect

S self.com/algo.html



Damjan Zibert/NurPhoto via Getty Images

It's impossible not to get excited about Lindsey Vonn's upcoming appearance at the 2018 Winter Olympics. The Games will mark eight years since the American alpine skier made an appearance on the Olympic stage, thanks to an ACL injury that forced her to withdraw from Sochi in 2014. While she's healed and ready to compete again, Vonn tells SELF that her knee injury has forever changed the way she trains.

Prehab—strength and stability work that helps bolster your vulnerable joints and muscles against injury—has become a main focus for her. "Man, my warm-up is so much longer," Vonn says. "Every time I work out or I'm about to go out on the hill, either for training or racing, my warm-up is now like 40 to 45 minutes up from 15 to 20 minutes." She spends a lot of that time on the stationary bike and doing resistance band work (more on that later) to make sure her legs and glutes are strong enough to support her knee.

While this extended warm-up is new, Vonn's used to dedicating a lot of time to training. The

World Cup champion regularly spends about six hours in the gym, five to six days a week. “That’s what we do most of the summer—the prep,” she says. “I’ve skied so long that I don’t really need a ton of time on the hill anymore. It’s mostly just making sure I’m as strong as possible and making sure my knee feels good.”

Her most recent injury—she fractured the humerus bone in her right arm during a training run in Colorado last fall—left her with some nerve damage in her hand. But she’s trying not to let the thought of permanent damage derail her from her goals. To Vonn, the most successful American ski racer in history, the risk of injury is all just part of the job description. “Skiing is dangerous, but at the same time, you can’t live your life worrying about what could happen,” she says. “I’m as prepared as I can be and I love my sport and I want to continue doing it. If I crash, I’ll just get right back up.”

Training after an injury is always tough, but it's especially so when your end goal is the Olympics.

Vonn and her team set training goals and timelines, working backward from the date that she needs to be racing. “For example, at six weeks we need to be doing single-leg squats. There are always progressions and every day you just get a little bit stronger,” says Vonn. “Of course, I always try to push the limits and get to those benchmarks quicker, but Lindsey, my physical therapist, keeps me in line.” As anyone who’s suffered from a physical setback knows, each training day can be different—and your body may react differently from day to day, as well. “It happens often where it takes longer to hit those benchmarks, or you take big steps forward and then one day your knee flares up and you’re back a couple days,” says Vonn, who has learned that rehab is quite a give and take and requires a ton of patience.

Resistance band exercises play a huge role in Vonn's training.

Vonn says she incorporates resistance bands during her warm-ups to activate her glutes—which basically means prepping all the muscles, including the smaller ones, to contract and work efficiently during the rest of the workout. This type of prep work helps keep joints, like the knee, safe—when all the muscles in your butt do their job, they take on the brunt of the work like they’re supposed to.

Vonn typically loops a [TheraBand](#) above her knees for exercises like [skater walks](#) and [lateral walks](#). She also uses the bands during squat jumps—by pushing the band apart with her knees—to better work her glutes and the rotator muscles in her hips. ([Here are a few more great butt and hip moves you can do with a resistance band.](#))

The resistance bands even accompany her on the road. “Sometimes I’ll be in some remote pace in Europe, where they don’t even have televisions let alone a gym,” says Vonn, “so it’s good to keep [the bands] with me all the time, just in case I get into a bind.”

She's also developed certain lifestyle habits to help maximize her efforts in the gym.

Vonn's dedicated to do whatever it takes to perform her best. "It's not necessarily that I'm working harder, but I'm just making sure that all the details are taken care of," she says. For her, that also means making lifestyle changes, like avoiding alcohol and trading social time for rest. "I'm just making sure that everything is done as best as possible so I know when I'm standing in the starting gate that I've done everything I could.

She also takes daily hour to hour-and-a-half naps, and fits in a solid 10 hours of sleep each night. "When I can shut off completely, I feel so much better and so much more energized," she says. "When I don't get enough sleep, I really feel like my mind doesn't function at the same level." Plus, Vonn admits that now that she's older, her body seems to require more time to recover than it did when she was younger.

Staying healthy and strong is Vonn's immediate goal—but she wants more out of 2018 than just a gold medal.

Vonn is waiting to hear if the International Ski Federation (FIS) will honor her request to join in the men's World Cup downhill race next year. After training with the Norwegian men's team in 2012, Vonn noticed that she was able to hold her own with the number one and two downhill skiers in the world at that time, and that skiing with them helped her improve. "I ski so much better with them. I'm a visual learner, so when I see what they're doing and how dynamic and powerful they are, and what their line is, I try to emulate that, and it definitely shows in my speed and performance on the slopes," she says. "So I just want to see what I'm capable of, you know?"

We can't wait to be along for the ride as Vonn attempts to set more records and hopefully make even more history.