

#SPORTS NEWS

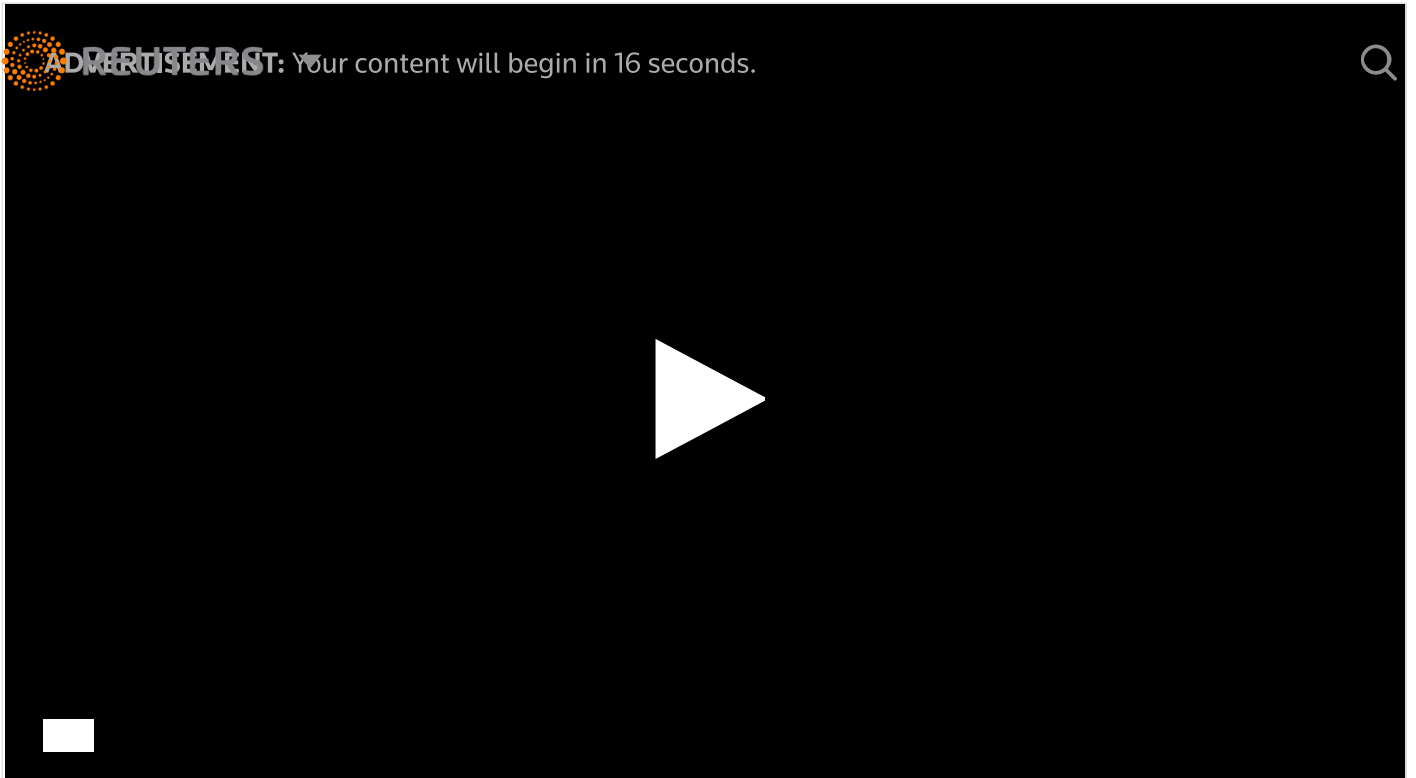
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## Alpine skiing - Vonn's stock is sky high in the risk business

Steve Keating



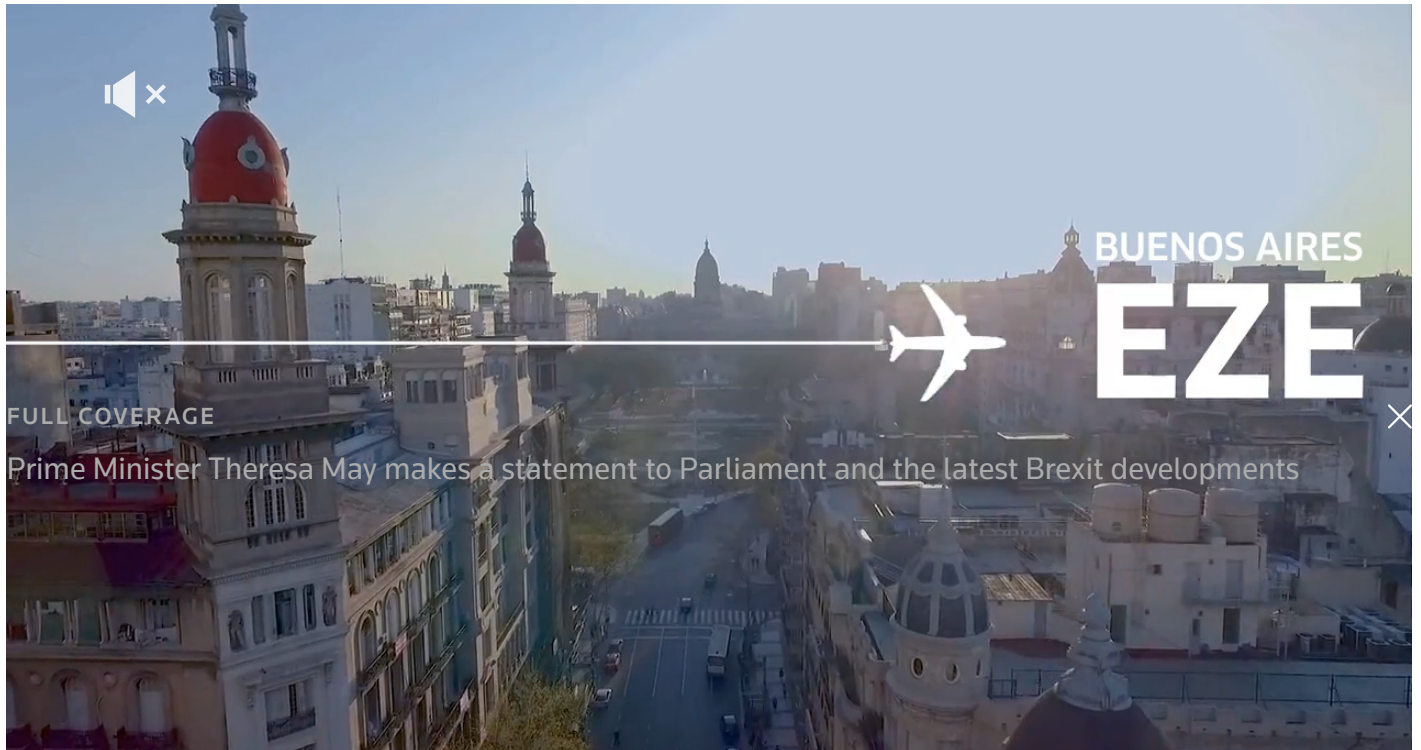
LAKE LOUISE, Alberta (Reuters) - The downhill is very much a high risk, high reward business and American speed queen Lindsey Vonn was reminded again of the price you pay for success on the alpine World Cup ski circuit.



OF WHICH WE'VE GOT STRONG EVIDENCE.

The next she is lying in a tangled heap having careered through three sets of safety netting following a nasty crash during the first downhill of the World Cup season.

SPONSORED



This time, Vonn escaped unscathed.

That, however, has not always been the case for the 33-year-old who has become the most successful women's ski racer of all-time, amassing a record 77 victories between multiple broken bones, surgeries and gruelling rehabilitations.

"I understand the risk, I understand I am putting my life at risk every time I am skiing down the mountain but I love what I do," Vonn told Reuters while sitting on a couch surrounded by mannequins wearing her collection

”If something happens, that’s life, that’s what is meant to be.

“You fall you get back up, you put it behind you.”

ADVERTISING



It is that defiance and fearless resilience that has become the trademark of the Vonn brand and attracted a portfolio of sponsors that includes Under Armour, Red Bull and Head skies.

Each of the pieces in the Vonn collection is named for a milestone win in her career but could have just as easily recalled a devastating crash.

According to designer Nick Cienski, Vonn had considerable input into the look of the line but the most revealing item may have been the simplest, a black camo long sleeve shirt with the message, “The Rise. The Fall. The Comeback” stencilled across the back.

”She is a marketer’s dream,” Robert Prazmark, a former consultant with the IOC and USOC

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FILE PHOTO - Athlete Lindsey Vonn arrives for the Time 100 Gala in the Manhattan borough of New York, New York, U.S. April 25, 2017. REUTERS/Carlo Allegri/File Photo

”That is one of the reasons Red Bull likes the association because she is living on the edge.

“Lindsey Vonn is an established star, she’s managed her brand extremely well, she’s stayed out of trouble, she’s got celebrity status, all over social media and she straddles sports and entertainment.”

As recognisable on the red carpet as she is on the ski hill it is that crossover appeal that has made Vonn her sport’s most popular athlete and left her poised to challenge for a podium place

That list, topped last year by Serena Williams with an income of \$27 million, is dominated by tennis players, who occupy eight of the top 10 spots, the other two places going to mixed martial arts star Ronda Rousey and motor racing driver Danica Patrick.

Slideshow (2 Images)

Vonn, who did not compete in the Sochi Games because of injury, was ranked as the third highest earning athlete at the 2010 Vancouver Olympics, pulling in \$3 million.

Eight years later, Vonn will once again head to an Olympics as the face of the U.S. team, the athlete broadcaster NBC and other media outlets will build and promote their coverage

Paul Dudenhausen who is a staff editor at Forbes Media and editor of Forbes Highest Paid Athletes list.

“Vonn has reached the top of her sport, but there is much more money to be made in tennis than skiing with apparel companies paying out lucrative bonuses for top rankings and grand slam titles.

”Although, the Olympics and her new Under Armour line give Vonn a chance to rank among the top five highest-paid female athletes.”

Vonn’s biggest challenge for another Olympic gold and the marketing spotlight may well come from inside the U.S. ski team from rising star 22-year-old Mikaela Shiffrin, who recently collected her 33rd World Cup win. At the same age Vonn had seven World Cup wins.

Shiffrin may well leave Pyeongchang as the Games Golden Girl but going in it is Vonn wearing the crown.

Even after the Olympics Vonn’s marketing potential looks set to skyrocket as she targets Ingemar Stenmark’s all-time World Cup record of 86 wins with an intriguing Battle of Sexes on the horizon if the International Ski Federation gives her the all clear to compete against men in a World Cup race next season.

“If I continue to have success, if I continue to have a good support system around me to make sure I can do everything I need to do I think I could potentially ski longer,” Vonn said.

“It’s just depends basically on my knee, that’s really the tipping point and right now it is holding up well but in two years I’m not sure how it will be.”

Editing by Ed Osmond

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