

Olympic Lesson:
IF YOU'RE IN IT, YOU CAN WIN IT!



Comeback Kid: Ligety Goes From 32nd to Gold!

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SESTRIERE, Italy — There was something about the way Ted Ligety created speed on skis, something about the way he always chose the most daring and potentially fastest path down a race course. By last fall, Ligety, 21, was regularly beating Bode Miller in slalom practice, even when Miller was at his best. "We knew we had another bull on the farm," said Phil McNichol, the men's coach for the United States ski team. On the biggest skiing stage possible, Ligety threw aside the comparison for good Tuesday by creating a place in American Olympic skiing history that will be defined by his stunning comeback victory. Ligety became the first American gold medal winner in the Olympic men's combined with two blistering slalom runs that vaulted him from 32nd place to the top of the medal podium. On a team stacked with big-name stars, it was Ligety, in his second year of international skiing, who earned the first Alpine medal for the United States at the 2006 Winter Games.

It was the first major international victory for Ligety, who four months ago began his ski season so under the radar that he did not have an individual commercial sponsor. On his helmet, in the space above his eyes, he taped a message to the only sponsors he could think of: Mom and Dad.

After Tuesday's race, Bill Ligety, Ted's father, said that his son was never a star, even as a youth racer. "He never stood out," Bill Ligety said. "Even today, we were hoping maybe for a Top-10 finish. We were telling Ted to be realistic." Ted wasn't listening.

"I treated it like any other World Cup race," he said. "And I figure it's possible I can win any World Cup race." Though Ligety was far back after the afternoon downhill run, he was not disheartened. He thought, "If you're in it, you can win it." And, despite what he rest of the world thought, he did just that!