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WFG Sponsored USA Luge Invades Sigulda, Latvia for Second World Cup Event
U.S.' Courtney Zablocki Returns To Action

SIGULDA, LATVIA – The second event of the 2008-09 Viessmann Luge World Cup Series will see a familiar face, but one that hasn't competed in over a year. The [World Financial Group](#) Sponsored USA Luge's Courtney Zablocki (Highlands Ranch, CO.) will return to competition this weekend.

"It feels really good to be traveling again and getting ready for my first World Cup in over a year," Zablocki said. "There's been a lot to do and it's been stressful, but it's also been fun getting back into it all."

Ironically, Zablocki, the fourth place finisher at the 2006 Olympic Winter Games, who struggled last year due to injuries, will now take the place of injured Kate Hansen for at least the next two races. The 4th place finish in Torino, Italy is the highest by any women in Olympic history for the United States.

The U.S. will also bring last week's fourth place finisher – Erin Hamlin (Remsen, N.Y.) – to the starting line. Hamlin's fourth place finish last week was a career-best finish in World Cup competition. She hopes to continue her good fortunes this weekend, as she has enjoyed recent gains on this track. She has improved each time on this track over the past two seasons – improving from 20th to 10th place.

The German women's team remains the group to beat. Tatjana Hufner currently sits in first place in the overall standings after one event. Countrywomen Natalie Geisenberger and Anke Wischnewski come into this weekend in second and third place respectively.

As for the men's division, Bengt Walden (Westborough, Mass. and Lake Placid, N.Y.) and Tony Benshoof (White Bear Lake, Minn.) look to close the gap between themselves and the standing's leader, German Andi Langenhan, and Sigulda may be the place to do it. Langenhan hasn't enjoyed much success in Sigulda, placing ninth and 21st in the two races last season.

Over the past five seasons, the 33-year-old and two-time Olympian, Benshoof, has averaged an eighth place finish, highlighted by a silver medal result in 2005-06. With his speed returning during training this week, he is looking to be a threat. Last season he finished eighth and 16th in the back-to-back events that concluded the season.

Likewise, 2002 Olympian Walden has shown improvement on this track the past two seasons. After a 29th place finish in 2006-07, he finished 15th in the first event last year.

German David Moller will also be trying to catch countryman Langenhan for the overall leader. His second place finish last week has him 15 points back of Langenhan's leading 100 points.

In the double's division, the U.S.' Mark Grimmette (Muskegon, Mich. and Lake Placid, N.Y.) and Brian Martin (Palo Alto, Calif. and Lake Placid, N.Y.) have posted some fast times in training this week. After an 11th place finish last week, they hope the new-found speed will allow them to climb the leader board and close in on the currently first-place Italian tandem of Gerhard Plankensteiner and Oswald Haselrieder.

The U.S. is also relying on Christian Niccum (Woodinville, Wash.) and Dan Joye (Carmel, N.Y.) to finish well. Their eighth and seventh place finishes last year in Sigulda and last week's 12th place finish, despite a serious error on the second run that dropped them down from 6th place, are promising for good results this weekend.

The U.S. will also be represented in the weekend's competitions by Ashley Walden (Westborough, Mass. and Lake Placid, N.Y.) and Julia Clukey (Augusta, Maine) in women's singles; Chris Mazdzer (Saranac Lake, N.Y.) and Robby Huerbin (Pittsburgh, Pa.) in men's singles; and the doubles tandem of Mazdzer and Jayson Terdiman (Berwick, Pa.)

The event will be aired live online at www.universalsports.com, but coverage will be On-Demand as racing will generally occur during the overnight hours east coast time.

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