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Special Olympians bound for Austria

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Regina's Danny Cole hopes to do one thing on his upcoming trip to Austria — have fun.

If he's lucky, he may also bring home a medal or two.

Cole is one of nine Saskatchewan athletes who, along with three coaches and five officials, will be on the team representing Canada at the Special Olympics World Winter Games in Salzburg and Schladming, Austria, from March 20 to 27.

More than 1,600 athletes and 700 coaches and officials from 60 countries will attend the event. Cole and two other Regina athletes, Paul Lundlie (cross-country skiing) and Robbie Bonboir (speed skating), were introduced Tuesday at a Special Olympics media confer-

ence at the Saskatchewan Sports Hall of Fame.

Speed skating coaches Melinda Smith and Mike Lockert were also presented. The other six athletes from around the province were introduced in Saskatoon.



Cole

Cole, 31, will be competing in alpine skiing. In his 15 years as a Special Olympics athlete he has received more medals than he can count.

However, Austria has more to offer than just medals.

"I'll have a great time with everybody," he said. "Whether you win or lose, you're having loads of fun."

His carefree attitude is infectious. Lundlie, 23, and Bonboir, 29, feel the same way.



Lundlie

Winning isn't what is most important to them — participating in the games and meeting new people are larger attractions.

Lundlie admits he's nervous about the competition he will face in Austria. But he won't be devastated if he

doesn't come home with a medal.

"It won't be the end of the world if I don't win," he said. "I'll just try the best I can."

The nine Saskatchewan athletes each earned their spot on the 150-member Canadian team.

"Special Olympics have evolved to the point where the athletes qualify locally, provincially and nationally, and then go on to international competition," said Glenda Francis, executive director for the Saskatchewan



Bonboir

Special Olympics Society. "They truly are the best in Canada."

These athletes may not be the fastest or the strongest, but they have an eternal optimism in their corner that outweighs all other factors and fits the Special Olympics oath: Let me win; but if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt.

"It doesn't matter what hill it is, I'll go over it," said Cole. "This is my wish come true — it's the thrill of a lifetime."

Also representing Saskatchewan in Austria are: Gerry Anderson (speed skating, Nipawin); Jennifer Williams (speed skating,

Saskatoon); John Wickett (speed skating, Saskatoon); Rody Jansen (alpine skiing, Gronlid); Tyler Gilbert (alpine skiing, Saskatoon); and, Betty Zboril (figure skating, Outlook).