



Hello, everyone. We still have a little bit of winter left, but for the time being, it seems like we're done with the relentless snow storms of late. I hope you're all doing well.

Recently, pop culture has been fixating on the Winter Olympics. Did you watch any of it? I'm really happy for Yuzuru Hanyu, gold medaling twice in a row is amazing. One thing I get asked a lot is whether I'm rooting for America or Japan, but in all honesty, I'm not particularly rooting for either country. When I watch sports, more than rooting for one particular team, I really just want to see a good game where both teams give their all. If one team gets wrecked right from the get-go, that doesn't make for an interesting game. Rather than a game that gets decided from the beginning, I like to watch games that are back-and-forth, exciting right to the end. That being said, I do also like to see a big comeback from an early deficit. I feel this same way about the Olympics. I want all the athletes to be fully utilize the training they've undergone and give the best performance they can, so whichever country wins is not a big concern for me.

...that being said, I do like seeing America win.

From the beginnings of the Olympics in 776 B.C. Greece to today, the elite athletes of the world have trained their bodies day after day in order to compete. However, this year's winter Olympics saw the rise to stardom of not an elite athlete, not even a mediocre athlete, but, by all accounts, a completely average person. Did you hear about Elizabeth Swaney, the representative of Hungary in the half-pipe ski event? In the half-pipe, athletes will slide down a U-shaped pipe back and forth from left to right, doing tricks when they reach the top of the side walls, but Elizabeth never landed a single trick. In fact, she never even tried to! She just glided down the hill, with no jumps or tricks, because *she couldn't do any tricks*.



So, how did this person who couldn't do any tricks find her way into the Olympics? She expertly played the rule book. First, she knew she wouldn't have a chance in the highly-competitive American sports world, so she used her maternal grandmother's Hungarian citizenship to compete for Hungary, a country that wasn't planning to send any athletes for this event. Her next problem was that in order to compete at the Olympics, you have to finish in the top 30 a certain number of times at smaller tournaments. Knowing this, she intentionally entered tournaments that had less than 30 people attending. Once she hit the required number of top-30 finishes, she was able to compete in the Olympics.

Here is where both commentators and viewers have drastically differing opinions. One group says that she should be applauded for her clever navigation of the rules, while the other says that what she did was an insult to the integrity of sports. As for me, I say that since she didn't bump anyone else out of the competition, and followed the rules, there was no harm done, but rather by injecting a bit of humor into the typically-serious Olympics, she did everyone a favor. What do you think? Until next time,

- Jeff

塾のコンビニ!英語塾 Agano City B.O.E.
Phone 0250-62-2790 e-mail gakkokyoiku@city.agano.niigata.jp

