



Preview 4th EBERSPAECHER Luge World Cup, Sigulda (LAT): Sporty start to the Olympic year in Sigulda

Sigulda (FIL/30 Dec 2025) After the first three World Cups and the short but well-deserved Christmas break, the best lugers are kicking off the Olympic year this weekend. As in the previous year, the 4th EBERSPAECHER Luge World Cup will be held from January 2 to 4, 2026, on the bobsleigh and luge track in Sigulda (LAT). A total of 114 sleds from 22 nations have registered for the World Cup, with 37 women and 42 men competing in the singles and 15 women and 20 men in the doubles. In addition to the World Cup races in doubles and singles, the third of six team relays as part of the EBERSPAECHER Team Relay World Cup presented by BMW is scheduled for Sunday. Furthermore, this World Cup weekend, as well as the next one in Winterberg, still counts towards qualification for the Olympic Winter Games Milano Cortina 2026.

Even though it appears as though Germany and Austria are engaged in their usual duel, the world's top athletes in all disciplines have closed the gap. Despite not competing in the opening event in Winterberg, athletes from Italy and the USA showed in Park City and Lake Placid (both USA) that they will be contenders in this Olympic year. For example, 31-year-old Summer Britcher claimed her sixth World Cup victory at the same venue in Park City, exactly ten years after her first World Cup win. And the young, up-and-coming US men's doubles team of Marcus Mueller and Ansel Haugsjaa recently celebrated their first World Cup victory in Lake Placid.

It remains to be seen whether there will be another Latvian festival on the technically demanding track in Sigulda in front of a home crowd at the start of the Olympic year. Elina Ieva Bota won last season, while Kristers Aparjods and Martins Bots/Roberts Plume took second place and the women's doubles team of Marta Robezniece/Kitija Bogdanova took third place.

Fraebel, Prock, Loch, Egle/Kipp, and Eggert/Mueller lead the overall World Cup standings

After three of nine World Cup races in the Olympic winter, it is worth taking a first look at the overall World Cup standings. Tied on points, Merle Fraebel (GER) and Hannah Prock (AUT), Felix Loch (GER), Selina Egle and Lara Kipp, and Toni Eggert and Florian Mueller (GER) lead the World Cup standings at the start of the year.

Three races, three different winners: If Summer Britcher hadn't missed the opening race in Winterberg, she would probably be at the top of the overall standings now with one win and one third place. Instead, Winterberg winner Hannah Prock (AUT) and Germany's Merle Fraebel share the lead with 185 points each, ahead of Dorothea Schwarz (AUT, 176 points), Lake Placid winner Julia Taubitz (GER, 174 points), and Park City winner Summer Britcher (USA, 170 points).





In the men's competition, Felix Loch (GER, 246 points) and Jonas Mueller (AUT, 245 points) are fighting neck and neck, closely followed by defending champion Max Langenhan (GER, 240 points), who is the only one to have finished on the podium in all three races. Wolfgang Kindl (AUT, 159 points), Nico Gleirscher (AUT, 152 points), and Kristers Aparjods (LAT, 135 points) follow in fourth to sixth place. Three-time Olympic champion Felix Loch, in particular, is gaining momentum in the EBERSPÄCHER Luge World Cup. In Lake Placid, the 36-year-old secured his second victory of the season, the 54th of his career.

In women's doubles, the Austrian pair Egle/Kipp celebrated their first victory of the Olympic season after two second-place finishes. The reigning world and European champions showcased their current top form in Lake Placid with two fastest runs and a new track record, claiming their 15th World Cup win on the 2029 World Championship track. They lead the overall standings ahead of the two German doubles Eitberger/Matschina (255 pts) and Degenhardt/Rosenthal (230 pts) as well as Podulsky/Allan (CAN, 139 pts), Upite/Pavlova (LAT, 138 pts), and Forgan/Kirkby (USA, 125 pts).

The men's doubles event remains varied, with eight different pairs sharing the top three positions so far. Only the Austrians Mueller/Frauscher have reached third place twice. In the overall World Cup standings, Eggert/Mueller (GER, 210 pts) currently lead ahead of Gatt/Schoepf (AUT, 202 pts), Bots/Plume (LAT, 195 pts), Wendl/Arlt (GER, 181 pts), Mueller/Frauscher (AUT, 170 pts), and Steu/Kindl (AUT, 143 pts).

Accreditation Deadline for European Championship Media Accreditation

All media representatives who wish to report on the 57th FIL European Luge Championships in Oberhof (January 16 to 18, 2026) must register by Wednesday, January 7, 2026. For the 6th FIL World Cup and the simultaneously held European Championship, please use the online accreditation form: [Presseakkreditierung – www.axa-winterwochen.de](https://www.axa-winterwochen.de)

The FIL annual accreditation is also valid, but we ask you to register with Press Chief Michael Panse (Email: michael-panse@gmx.de) for organizational reasons. In addition, we would like to draw your attention in advance to the 7th FIL World Cup, which will also take place from January 22 to 24, 2026, in Oberhof. During this weekend, along with the luge competitions, the FIS World Cups for cross-country skiing and Nordic combined will also take place at the Winter Sports Center in Thuringia. Interested media representatives can also be accredited for these World Cups: [Presseakkreditierung – www.axa-winterwochen.de](https://www.axa-winterwochen.de)

Road to Milano-Cortina:

Olympic Solidarity provides tailwind for Bots & Plume

The Latvian doubles team Martins Bots and Roberts Plume are counting on strong support on their way to the 2026 Winter Olympics in Milano Cortina: thanks to the





ongoing support of an Olympic Solidarity grant, they have been able to significantly improve their training conditions – with measurable success. The silver medal at the 2025 Luge World Championships marks the greatest World Championship success for a Latvian doubles team and underscores the impact of the IOC program. With clear goals, newfound confidence, and international support, the duo now has its sights set firmly on the Olympic podium.

<https://www.fil-luge.org/de/news/latvian-luge-duo-martins-bots-and-roberts-plume-soar-toward-milano-cortina-2026-with-olympic-solidarity-scholarship-support>

FIL Portraits of the Week:

Family tradition on skates – The Olympic history of the Aparjods family

A story rarely seen in sport: the Aparjods family impressively embodies what it means to live tradition, passion, and team spirit across generations. Aiva Aparjode not only taught her children the technique of luge, but also values such as perseverance, discipline, and the joy of competition – a foundation that continues to this day. The fact that Kendija and Kristers have found their own way to the top of the world is not least an expression of this special family bond. Whether as an athlete, coach, or mother, Aiva remains the emotional center of this success story – and the ice track is the place where family has become sporting identity.

[Aparjods Family: A Family Tradition On Sleds – The Olympic History](#)

Valentin Cretu (ROM): „Luge is my life”

Four Olympic appearances, a homemade sled, and unwavering passion: Valentin Cretu is the quiet fighter of Romanian luge. Despite limited resources and high pressure, he is pursuing his dream of leading Romania to a rare Olympic medal at Milan-Cortina 2026. For Cretu, one thing is clear: luge is not just a sport, it is his life's work.

<https://www.fil-luge.org/de/news/rodeln-ist-mein-leben-der-stille-held-valentin-cretu>

Quotes:

Daniels Fogelis (Chefcoach LAT): „During the Christmas period, the Latvian National Luge Team had not any training sessions planned until December 26. We believed it was very important that both athletes and coaches had time to spend with their families and took a short break from the intense preparation required for the Olympic Games. Training resumed on December 26, 27, and 28. On December 29, we will receive our equipment boxes with the sleds back. Starting on December 30, we will begin sliding in Sigulda.

At the moment, we do not know the exact track conditions in Sigulda. The track is prepared, and we believe that, as always, it will offer the best possible conditions. The Sigulda track is challenging and demands precision and focus to achieve strong results. As this is our home track, we expect only the highest level of performance from our team. Competing in Sigulda means a lot to us, and we aim to perform there at the highest level possible.“





Armin Zöggeler (Technical Director, ITA): „The team took a little break after returning from Lake Placid. Everyone spent the Christmas break at home with their loved ones. Of course, they were all instructed to keep themselves physically fit. We drew up an athletic training plan for them so that they could use the time until Sigulda for individual training. Since we won't be receiving the sleds back until Sigulda, there was no racing in Cortina in the meantime, and the Italian Championships were not held as usual. But that's not a big deal, since we were only home for a week anyway. We know Sigulda well, having been there for training before the season. I hope that everyone stays healthy and free of injury over the Christmas holidays. Then we'll get ready for the race and hopefully make a successful start to the second half of the season.“

Norbert Huber (Head Coach CHN): „While the team flew straight to Sigulda, I spent a few days at home with my family and traveled to Sigulda on December 28. The athletes didn't do any luge training, just athletic training. It was important for our two doubles teams to recover from their injuries. I hope that they are back in shape and can return to their old form at the World Cup. Things haven't gone according to plan so far, but we can't change that now. Instead, we are starting the new year with optimism.“

Wolfgang Staudinger (Team Manager KOR): „Our team split up after Lake Placid: while our coach Maciej Kurowski and I spent Christmas with our families in Poland and Calgary respectively, the athletes flew to Korea to be with their families. I myself used the five days at home to organize the second half of the season to ensure that everything runs smoothly. We flew to Sigulda on December 27. The Korean athletes also spent five days at home taking care of organizational matters with the association and continuing their preparations with light athletic training sessions and regenerative measures. After two and a half months away from home, it was important for everyone to have some rest and get away from the daily routine of luge. We will then meet in Sigulda on December 28 and focus on the two races that are important for us in order to qualify some of our athletes for the Olympics, knowing very well that this will be very difficult for nations without a team relay. Unfortunately, the situation with the quota of 106 athletes and the preferential qualification of athletes from relay nations is not exactly the best option for small luge nations like ours. Especially when some athletes do not participate in the qualifying races and still qualify for the Olympics via the relay. Nevertheless, we will do our best and continue to work with focus.“

Schedule & TV coverage

4th EBERSPÄCHER Luge World Cup, Sigulda (LAT):

Local start time (CET)

Saturday, 3 January 2026

09:30 (08:30) Women's Singles, 1st run

11:05 (10:05) Men's Singles, 1st run





12:25 (11:25) Women's Doubles, 1st run
13:00 (12:00) Men's Doubles, 1st run
14:10 (13:10) Women's Doubles, 2nd run
14:45 (13:45) Men's Doubles, 2nd run

Sunday, 4 January 2026

11:15 (10:15) Women's Singles, 2nd run
12:25 (11:25) Men's Singles, 2nd run
14:15 (13:15) Team Relay

All times are subject to change!

Live TV-Broadcast: fil-luge.org/en/media/eberspaecher-world-cup-46

Link to athletes' biographies: [Athletes Overview & Achievements - Int. Luge Federation FIL \(fil-luge.org\)](http://Athletes%20Overview%20&%20Achievements%20-%20Int.%20Luge%20Federation%20FIL%20(fil-luge.org))

FIL press photo database:

Press photos from the current Luge World Cup season can be found at the following link:

<https://lugelove.smugmug.com/World-Cup-Season-20252026>

FIL press photos may be used free of charge for editorial purposes, provided the correct photo credit is given: "FIL/name of photographer."

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Press accreditations:

Winterberg (2): <https://www.veltins-eisarena.de/presse/akkreditierungen>

Oberhof 1 & 2: <https://axa-winterwochen.de/presseakkreditierung.html>

St. Moritz: <https://olympia-bobrun.ch/medien/>

Altenberg: <https://wia-altenberg.de/spitzensport/weltcup-rennrodeln/presse-weltcup-rennrodeln/>

