

2 WAY RACE

Pierre Lueders has been Canada's king of the bobsleigh track for years. But in a crazy sport with alpha personalities, along comes Lyndon Rush, forcing Lueders to share the road (and talent) with his countrymen

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This is big country up here in the Adirondacks - not as big as Whistler, to be sure, but still a good place to wonder whether the Canadian bobsleigh team is big enough for both Pierre Lueders and Lyndon Rush.

If Rush's win last weekend in the World Cup four-man race at Park City is a one-off, it's moot. Lueders, 39, dominates the Canadian program not only by force of personality, but also by virtue of two Olympic and 80-some World Cup medals.

But heading into today's two-man race and tomorrow's four-man event here at Mount van Hoeverden, the Canadian sliding fraternity is wondering: What will be the tenor of the inevitable transition from Lueders to the younger Rush if it's less a passing and more of a grab?

On his way to the top, the rap against Lueders was that he didn't always play well with others.

There is a pecking order in this sport, much like [Formula One](#).

"Pierre's an unbelievable champion," Rush, a native of Sylvan Lake, Alta., said. "Pierre's going to be good until he stops. It's not like we don't have resources. There's lots to go around."

Rush, with brakeman Lascelles Brown of Calgary, Chris Le Bihan of Grande Prairie, Alta., and Dan Humphries of Calgary, caught everybody's attention last weekend by winning in their new, German-designed Singer sled. Rush's Canada II team took advantage of sloppy conditions and injuries to Andre Langer of Germany and Todd Hays of the United States to win the first four-man race of the season while Lueders finished 10th in Canada I. Rush finished seventh in the two-man race, while Lueders was ninth.

"Pierre's probably going to have some difficulty with it,' and it's going to bring in a new dimension to how he performs this season," said Chris Lori, the former Olympic medalist who will be a commentator for the Olympic broadcast consortium in Vancouver. "Given the fact that Lyndon is now entitled to equal opportunity, that can create challenges.

"We're going to see an interpersonal change within the team that's going to be a lot more positive and refreshing," Lori said, continuing. "Now, the administration will have liberty to objectively balance the allocation of resources."

Lueders, who won two-man gold at Nagano in 1998 and two-man silver at Turin, has been the face of the Canadian team since the '98 Games, when Lori threatened to boycott the four-man event, believing Lueders had been given preferential treatment in the selection of brakemen. Lori finished 11th, and went on to become a successful foreign currency trader who keeps his hand in the game by designing runners for sleds and serving as confidant to Hays.

Brown, the brakeman, who won silver with Lueders in Turin, is now with Rush and said earlier this year the only way he'd ever race again with Lueders is if "Jesus Christ stood at the bottom of the course" and asked him to do it. Brakeman Giulio Zardo won a World Cup with Lueders but quit before Turin, saying he'd rather not win an Olympic medal than win one with Lueders.

Don Wilson, chief executive officer of Bobsleigh Canada Skeleton, understands the fascination with the internal politics of the Canadian team even though he says the resource allocation won't shift.

"This is," he said with a sigh, "one crazy sport. I mean, you have alpha personalities who are older individuals who could be doing something else, not 16-year-old swimmers or gymnasts. These are people who are committing time, energy and money - sometimes their family's money - and that lends itself to a competitive situation. So, things will happen - but ultimately, it's a good thing."

Lori believes "Lyndon has all the pieces he needs to be in the medals."

But there is a concern about the brakeman's position on Lueders's team - hence the fascination with Edmonton Eskimos running back Jesse Lumsden as a possible Olympian.

"They'll have to keep Lyndon's team together," Lori said. "It's a question of distribution of power. Right now, Lascelles has the power and ability to perform, and if he doesn't want to push Pierre, well, no coach who wants to keep his job is going to go against him. Coaches tend to focus on the short-term a lot of the time. That's where the job security is."