

# Whistler Sliding Centre BC Sliding Development Centre

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## Ryan Taal, Head Coach Bobsleigh

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Ryan Taal was born on March 10, 1987 in Calgary, Alberta. Before becoming a bobsleigh coach, he was a competitive sliding athlete up to the World Cup level in both skeleton (2 years) and bobsleigh (7 years). During his active career, he represented two countries internationally, Canada and the Netherlands where his family originates from. He got his biggest inspiration from being a forerunner for the 2010 Winter Olympic Games on Whistler's track, where he slid alongside the world's best athletes.



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### Athletic Career

Ryan became involved in sliding sports after a friend who did skeleton invited him to a tourist race on Calgary's track. He ended up finishing third, and used his prize money from the tourist race to pay for his first skeleton school which started his skeleton career. When a friend, a bobsleigh athlete, asked him to try pushing bobsleighs, he loved it right from the start and eventually made the change to bobsleigh.

Ryan raced up to World Cup level as a competitive sliding athlete, two years in the sport of skeleton and seven years in bobsleigh. During his international career, he represented two countries internationally, Canada and the Netherlands where his family originates from. He finished fourth in the 2-man race of the 2013/2014 Canadian Championships on the Whistler track. One of his personal career highlights was to be part of the team of forerunners for the 2010 Olympic Winter Games at the Whistler Sliding Centre.

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### Why Coaching?

Ryan decided to become a coach because he loves the sport of bobsleigh, and he wants to pass this on to his athletes. He wants to share the knowledge that he has collected throughout his active sliding career with others, in the hope of making them achieve their athletic goals.

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### Biggest Career Influence

Having the opportunity of being a forerunner in the 2010 Whistler Olympic Games was the biggest influence on Ryan's athletic career. It was the first time that he was away from his home track, Calgary, with other athletes and with a full focus on sliding. During his time in Whistler in 2010, he was able to learn a lot from the many high profile athletes and coaches. He loved the energetic environment and was especially impressed by the friendliness of all athletes who, despite facing the most important races of their lives, still had a friendly word or advice for the younger athletes and forerunners. It was then that Ryan decided that this was a community he wanted to be a bigger part of.

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### Meaning of Sport

Ryan loves the sense of community in bobsleigh and sliding sports, and he is impressed by the relatively small group of people who are more than willing to help each other out if needed. He is addicted to the discipline of bobsleigh, because it mixes high adrenaline with a lot of power and speed as well as coordination, which for him is similar to race car racing, minus the engines.

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### Coaching Philosophy

Ryan's philosophy is to approach the sport of bobsleigh with confidence, which is what he passes on to his athletes. He sees bobsleigh as a sport that athletes need to approach with determination in order to feel good about going down the track, so it is important to him that his athletes feel confident in what he is telling them.

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### Coaching Education

- Various NCCP courses
  - Coached under Canadian bobsleigh coach Dennis Marineau
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### Further Education

- Diploma in Avionics from SAIT Polytechnic
- Completed 2 years of the Engineering Program between the University of Victoria and the University of Calgary before focusing entirely on bobsleigh