



Olympic skiers play it cool with Suzuki December 08, 2006

CALGARY — Two of Canada's leading winter athletes are fighting global warming by joining the David Suzuki Foundation to play it cool.

Concerned about the future of their sports — as well as the future of their family and the environment — Olympic medalist cross-country skier Sara Renner and partner double World Cup winner Thomas Grandi are going carbon neutral, shrinking their environmental impact and offsetting the greenhouse gas emissions they produce.

“Play it cool” is a new initiative by the David Suzuki Foundation to get winter athletes to help combat global warming and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

“Global warming threatens the winter sports we love and that help define us as a nation,” says Thomas Grandi. “If we continue business as usual, we’re going to lose that cultural identity and all the recreational opportunities that go with it.”

A recent United Nations report warns that downhill skiing could disappear completely at some resorts by 2030. The National Science Foundation reported last February that recent studies showed some mountain ranges in Europe and the Western United States have experienced decreases of 50 to 75 per cent in snowfall amounts in recent decades.

“As winter athletes, we have much to lose from global warming, but so do all Canadians, especially our children,” says Sara Renner. “Being a winter athlete might end up being a real luxury — if it’s even possible.”

While some places in North America have had early and heavy snow this year, there are more persistent, longer-term troubling trends threatening winter sports. This year on the World Cup alpine circuit, warmer-than-average temperatures in the Alps have led to repeated race cancellations due to lack of snow.

That’s why Ms. Renner and Mr. Grandi are going carbon neutral and talking to their teammates and other athletes about doing the same. They bike rather than driving in their hometown of Canmore, Alberta. For emissions they don’t directly control, such as those produced by air travel and hotel accommodations on the road, they neutralize by purchasing high-quality carbon offsets.



Mr. Grandi is also donating half his World Cup winnings this season to the David Suzuki Foundation.

“It’s an issue that hits close to home because we are winter athletes. But it encompasses more than just sports,” Ms. Renner says. “It’s the environment we all share and depend on.”

“Sara and Thomas are taking bold steps and concrete action to do something about one of Canada’s biggest challenges — global warming,” says Dr. David Suzuki. “Winter sports are a big part of our country and our culture. We hope Sara and Thomas’s example can lead other athletes to help protect their winter sports.”