

Tracie Sachs **QUEEN** of **SPEED**

By Chris Dehnel

Tracie Max Sachs can give Clark Kent a run for his money. He's a mild-mannered reporter for a great metropolitan newspaper. She spends time at the Guggenheim Museum as a metalsmith and art handler. He counsels a cub reporter. She summers as a sculpture instructor at a former grand-resort-turned-artists'-community in the Catskills. He has a suit that lets him fly. Hers is pretty aerodynamic too. He can run faster than a speeding bullet. She can double the Northway speed limit on skis.

He may be Superman, but she is the Quick Chick. Just check out her Web site by the same name. The number is staggering - 148.27 miles per hour, the fastest American woman ever, and the third fastest female of all time. It looks even better in kilometers - 238.57.

Just how did a 34-year-old Long Island woman measuring just 5-foot-3 and weighing a mere 120 pounds get into such a thing?

"I had been skiing since I was 3, but in the 1990s, when I was in school,

I continued to come back East and ski at Hunter Mountain," Sachs says.

"There was this annual speed skiing event at Hunter, and my sister did it. I saw a video of it and thought it was the coolest thing ever."

Going to college where Sachs went would leave anyone jonesin'

for any runs, never mind fast ones. She first attended Washington University in St. Louis. It was the only institution she applied to that did not have a ski team, so she did the next logical thing - she rowed.

"I know, it sounds weird, but there were no mountains," Sachs jokes.

"But the crew team did keep me in shape."

So did the 200-foot vertical hills outside Detroit, when she was in a graduate program at the Cranbrook Academy of Art, but barely. She dabbled in the speed skiing thing with her sister when she visited Hunter, but it was in 1999, after she moved back to New York, when she had the revelation.

"It was in 1999. I was bartending at The Village Idiot saloon, so I had the time to ski. Naga Kusumi, who organized the events at Hunter, took

me aside and said I needed something more challenging. He encouraged me to attend the national championships that year in Colorado."

Kusumi set her up with a pair of his 240cm skis, an aerodynamic helmet, and even found a woman Sachs' size who let her borrow a speed suit.

"It was tough finding all the equipment, but I wound up with all the cool stuff," she says. "A couple of weeks after speaking with him, I had tickets."

Getting used to speed skis can be a crash course - literally. Skiers can reach the 100- mph mark within 10 seconds of leaving the gate, so a good stance from the outset is imperative. Sachs took a week to get used to Kusumi's skis and wound up taking third at the nationals, reaching a speed of 115 mph. That was that!

"I was hooked. I was, like, 'Wow, I can't believe I did that in my first race,'" Sachs says. "The bar gave me some money and a sponsorship, and I went to Europe."

She finished 1999 ranked third in the world after hitting 125 mph - or 200 kmh. The American record was held by Carolyn Curle, at 231.5 kmh, and Sachs believed she could better that. After winning World Cup titles in 2003 through 05, she then won it again last season while setting that American mark.

"On the run previous to me breaking the record, I had done 228 (kmh) to break my personal record," Sachs says. "I knew I could go 5kmh faster, but when I saw I did 238, I was just screaming."

As successful as 2006 was, it also took its toll physically. In March, Sachs was in eighth place with a shredding anterior cruciate ligament in her left knee, deteriorating meniscus in the same knee, and sore ribs.

"I decided - against some people's judgment - to go for it," Sachs says.

She went to Sweden, and was able to get into her tuck on a few training runs. She placed fifth over all. In another Swedish race in March, she placed second. Then there was a second-place finish and a win in Finland. She won another race in Italy and almost made the men's podium.

"I was completely relaxed at that race," Sachs says. "I won by 3kmh and was fourth in the men's standings. That gave me enough points to win the World Cup overall. This one was pretty special, because I was pretty injured."

As April went into May and May ran into June, it became apparent that Sachs would need an operation. She went to see New York Mets surgeon Dr. Answorth Allen at the Hospital for Special Surgery. The first discussion involved taking part of her hamstring for a new ACL, but she did not want to lose any leg strength. They eventually settled on a ligament transplant, and she went under the knife on June 22.

With sponsorships from Hunter, Atomic, Power Bar, Five Seasons sportswear, Toko US, and Hotronic heating systems secure, Sachs has been able to concentrate on rehab. The World Cup season begins in January.

"I have to see how I feel," Sachs says about how soon she can begin training. "I will probably start my training at Hunter and see how I do. I will get together with Naga."

Sachs still has one time to chase - the world record of 150.7 mph.

"I do like to go fast"

"I hope we get more snow early in the season this year," Sachs says. "If I can start early, I will."

But 150 mph?

"I do like to go fast," she says.

Uh, memo to Superman ... the Quick Chick will be flying again soon. ✨

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"Quick Chick" bags another podium spot

