

Danny Hansen: Seeing is Believing



Meet the amazing ice cross downhill athlete who skates with severely limited vision

Dutchman Danny Hansen was just 13-years-old when a dreadful accident changed his life forever. A childish firework prank backfired and resulted in serious burns to his eyes, leaving him with severely restricted vision. Amazingly, not only did the courageous youngster refuse to give up on his desire to play ice hockey, but he has also gone on to compete with the world's best ice cross downhill skaters in one of the toughest and most gruelling winter sports.



"I had a chemical burn of my cornea," explains Hansen. "Because of this, I have irregular scar tissue across my cornea. Unfortunately, healing is not possible. In my left eye I see around two percent, and my right eye fluctuates between two and fifteen percent."

It seems hard to believe that anyone could overcome such a disability to compete in a sport where athletes thunder four-at-a-time down massive, obstacle-filled ice tracks at speeds of up to 80 km/h. But

not only does he take part, Hansen has actually enjoyed a good degree of success: he's finished in the top 50 overall on three occasions and has also earned three top-20 finishes in individual races. Now in his seventh season in the sport, Hansen's remarkable story is one of courage, belief, desire and an unrelenting never-say-die attitude.

"It's a challenge to see what I can achieve with the limitations that life throws up," says 24-year-old Hansen. "That has always been my motivation. The reason that I still function in this society and can do what I want to do has to do with my adaptability. I have learned to look at the bigger picture, and by seeing things in a certain context I know what the situation should look like for someone with good eyes. This skill has ensured that I have been able to do a great job in Crashed Ice and ice hockey."

Those timeless foes, fire and ice, have played a huge part in Hansen's life. Dreams that once looked destined to be destroyed by fire are now coming to magical fruition on the ice. Who knows how far this exceptional athlete can go in 2017/18.

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CONTACT:

Michael Merkl

Tel +49 (0) 8102 / 8965-26
Mobil +49 (0) 172 / 8404-399
Email michael.merkl@smaragdmedia.tv
www.smaragdmedia.tv