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## **PULLIN CLAIMS BRONZE AND AUSTRALIA'S 40TH MEDAL THIS SEASON**

In a thrilling finale to the 2016-17 Snowboard Cross World Cup this weekend, Alex 'Chumpy' Pullin claimed his third podium this season with a bronze in perfect conditions on the high-speed course of Veysonnaz.

Pullin's bronze marks a watershed year for Australian winter sports with our skiers and snowboarders winning a total of 40 medals in World Cup competitions (35) and at the World Championships (5) in the one season. The best previous medal haul was 2012/13 with 25 medals (22 and 3).

In a tight duel, Pullin qualified second in Veysonnaz and went on to dominate his quarter and semi-finals – only to be beaten in the Big Final by Olympic and World Champion Frenchman Pierre Vaultier and Alex Deibold (USA). Vaultier also took out the overall Crystal Globe, with Pullin fourth.

"I'm satisfied with this season in making most of the finals but I'm certainly left feeling hungry for next year," two-time Crystal Globe winner Pullin said.

"I'm hungry to put down another year to achieve my third Crystal Globe. I'm attracted to that challenge."

"It's been a really tight year between the best four riders. There's been good heats all season. I'm in a good place and even that alone is a good thing – especially coming into the Olympics.

"I've been on the other side as the winner of the Globe and World Champion coming into the Olympics. I know what that feels like. This year it will be good to be on the hunt.

"It's been a really positive year for all the Australian winter athletes. So many are doing so well," he said.

Australia was well represented in Veysonnaz, having qualified six men (including Pullin). Adam Lambert (27<sup>th</sup>), Cam Bolton (34<sup>th</sup>), Adam Dickson (38<sup>th</sup>), Matt Thomas (41<sup>st</sup>) and Josh Miller (44<sup>th</sup>) unfortunately did not make it past the first heat.

World number three Belle Brockhoff missed the event in Switzerland, having returned home two weeks earlier with a season ending knee injury, World Cup medallist Jarryd Hughes also went home after the World Championships to rest and get ready for his Olympic campaign.

Australia's successful winter sports programs have delivered 18 World Cup Gold medals which include seven for Britt Cox (Moguls), two for Scotty James (Snowboard Halfpipe), three for Lydia Lassila (Aerials), two for Belle Brockhoff (Snowboard Cross) and one each for Danielle Scott (Aerials), Alex Pullin (Snowboard Cross) and Matt Graham (Moguls).

World Cup bronze and silver medallists for the 2016-17 season include Sami Kennedy-Sim (Ski Cross), Jarryd Hughes (Snowboard Cross), Brodie Summers (Moguls), Russ Henshaw (Slopestyle Skiing), Laura Peel (Aerials) and Samantha Wells (Aerials).

Additionally, five medals were delivered at the World Championships for Snowboard and Freestyle Skiing in Sierra Nevada, Spain. Britt Cox became a World Champion and Scott James claimed his second successive World Championship Gold following on from Austria in 2015. Alex Pullin won his third career World's medal with a Bronze, Danielle Scott took her career tally to two with a Silver in Spain and team mate David Morris broke through with World Championship Bronze for his first.

Both Cox and James also picked up World Cup Crystal Globes as the number one ranked athletes at conclusion of the season's World Cup series of events. Dani Scott was the World Cup series runner up in Aerial Skiing, team mate Lydia Lassila was third, as were Mogul skier Matt Graham and injured Snowboard Cross rider, Belle Brockhoff.

Not to be outdone on the slopes, Australia notched up its first ISU Figure Skating Championship when Harley Windsor and Ekaterina Alexandrovskaya won the Junior World Pairs Championships ten days ago in Taipei City.

The dynamic duo will be joined by national ladies' champion Kailani Craine and the ever-improving men's champion Brendan Kerry in Helsinki, Finland this week as they all vie for Olympic qualifying quota spots for Australia at next year's Olympic Winter Games in PyeongChang, Korea.

The OWIA together with the AOC, Australian Institute of Sport (AIS), New South Wales Institute of Sport (NSWIS) and the Victorian Institute of Sport (VIS) have provided excellent programs for athletes in the winter sports covering coaching, international competition opportunities and support services including medical, strength and conditioning, psychology and physiotherapy.

OWIA CEO Geoff Lipshut wrapped up the successful winter season.

"This year has been phenomenal from the first December event in Finland when Britt won, till today with Chumpy stepping up for Bronze in Switzerland," Mr Lipshut said.

"This has been our best season by far. All the athletes were remarkable, none better than our two World Champs and World number ones, Scotty and Britt, who both dominated this winter, winning everything.

"Lydia had a super comeback, Dani Scott, Chumpy and Matt Graham were all strong on the podium and lots of our athletes improved to career best levels of performance.

"And then skating pair, Katia and Harley fantastically won World Juniors - our first ever big win in that sport.

"The only downer was the ACL injury to Belle Brockhoff at Worlds earlier this month. It was very unfortunate for Belle who was either World number one or two all season and in great form.

"We can all celebrate some great achievements but we need to stay focused and really get going on programs and preparations for the Olympic season - which is here right now."

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