



Greenwich skier aims for the Olympics

By David Fierro

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Kay Holscher, 22, of Greenwich has earned a spot on the Chilean Men's National Ski Team. Holscher has recovered from a torn anterior cruciate ligament, an injury he suffered in February.

Photo: Contributed photo

GREENWICH — Kay Holscher first put on skis as a 2-year-old in Chile. Five years later, he was racing competitively. Today, the 22-year-old Greenwich resident is a member of the Chilean National Ski Team and aspires to represent Chile at the 2022 Winter Olympics in Beijing.

Holscher's love of skiing stems from his parents and includes his whole family.

“My mom's family, they were the first generations of skiers down in Chile,” he said. “When I was a kid, I started going to the same ski club my mom was in. I never really questioned



Kay Holscher, 22, of Greenwich has earned a spot on the Chilean Men’s National Ski Team and has hopes of qualifying for the Winter Olympic Games in 2022.

Photo: Contributed photo

Holscher’s three brothers and one sister all ski, too. His 19-year-old brother Diego, a University of Vermont student, was also chosen for Chile’s 2020-21 team and shares his Olympic dreams.

Two more of Holscher’s siblings attend Eastern Middle School in Greenwich and another brother goes to the Stratton Mountain School in Vermont — a college preparatory high school where Kay and Diego also honed their skiing skills.

“My parents have done a very good job of getting me and all my siblings into skiing,” Kay Holscher said. “Most of my friends and family ski and race. It’s something that really connects us as a family.”

Cardinals boys ski team that won the team championship at the Connecticut Interscholastic Ski League State Open in 2015 and qualified for the Eastern High School Championships, placing third in the slalom event.

Kay Holscher then moved to the Stratton Mount School, which has produced 46 Olympic athletes who have won six medals.

“It was nice doing all the racing and training” there, he said. “They were really flexible with school and skiing training and racing.”

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Olympic dreams

At Stratton Mountain, Holscher earned his first selection to the Chilean National Ski Team and qualified for the World Junior Championships. After graduating in 2017, Holscher moved to Chile, where he attends Pontificia Universidad Catolica de Chile in Santiago and is currently studying law there online.

With the Olympics just over a year away, Holscher is the top-ranked Chilean competitor in the slalom. The team for Chile is small, with spots likely for only one or two skiers, he said.

Mountain in December, then hopes to return to Chile in March.

“I am excited to get back on skis and race again,” he said. “I want to take my time and gradually work my way up. This upcoming season, my main goal is to train and then race, while focusing on getting back up to the level I was at before my injury.”

When he’s in Santiago, Holscher is just an hour away from the La Parva ski resort in the Andes.

“A lot of times, I would ski in the morning and drive straight down to my classes,” he said. “It’s pretty ideal to have the best ski resorts pretty close to me.”

Knee injuries

Holscher suffered his first ACL injury in his first year in college in Chile in 2017.

“After that season, I came back here and did some rehab in the U.S., then went back to Chile,” he said.

But he tore his ACL again at the North American Cup at the National Winter Activity Center in New Jersey on Feb. 14. Holscher, who mostly competes in the slalom and giant slalom events, was injured during a test run.

“My ski got caught inside a gate and I twisted it,” he said. “My knee hurt and I knew it was a torn ACL.”

He underwent ACL surgery at the Hospital for Special Surgery’s Manhattan campus despite the start of the coronavirus pandemic.

“Even before I had the surgery, the ski season was shut down, because of the virus, so I didn’t miss out on that much,” Holscher said.

The surgery was done by Dr. John MacGillivray, another Greenwich resident and an associate attending orthopedic surgeon at HSS and New York-Presbyterian Hospital.

MacGillivray also serves as team physician for the U.S. National Ski Team and a member of the board at the Carlos Otis Clinic at Stratton Mountain School.

MacGillivray performed the ACL surgery and made other cartilage repairs on March 3, just before most elective surgeries were shut down.

“We were able to get to him before the pandemic hit the area,” said MacGillivray. It was another three or four months before he could return to his backlog of orthopedic surgeries.

MacGillivray was impressed with Holscher’s quick recovery.

“He is a phenomenal athlete, who did extremely well with his rehab,” said MacGillivray, who is also an avid skier.

Road to recovery

But Holscher said the first couple of weeks after ACL surgery were challenging.

“The knee is really swollen ... and it hurts all the time,” he said, recalling that the pain kept him from sleeping. But “by the 10th day I started going to the gym and doing rehab. It took me a couple of weeks to go full speed on the bike at the gym.”

Holscher did two weeks of rehabilitation at Stratton Mountain School until the COVID-19 pandemic forced him to return home to Greenwich.

MacGillivray advised Holscher for five months while he rehabbed at home and visited him three months after the operation.

“I had already been doing some strength training at my house, then after I saw Dr. MacGillivray I knew I was able to push myself more,” Holscher said. “I started going harder started getting in pretty good shape.”

After many months of rehabilitation, he is primed to make his way back on the ski slopes.

“I would say I took it better than the first time I tore my ACL,” he said. “I know a lot of people who have gone through ACL surgeries and a lot didn’t come back, because their knee hurt too much, or if they came back to ski, they didn’t get back to the same level.

comeback.”

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