

Lead weights lift Vulcan Global Manufacturing into international spotlight



Olympic luger Julia Clukey wears a specially crafted uniform that includes lead weights made by Vulcan Global Manufacturing.

Olympic luge competitor **Julia Clukey** hopes to speed down a 1,198-meter track at nearly 100 miles per hour in Pyeongchang, South Korea in 2018 at the Olympic games. She and her fellow luge athletes will be taking a little piece of Milwaukee with them. Actually, several little pieces. Vulcan Global Manufacturing Solutions is a radiation shielding manufacturer on Milwaukee's near south side. The vast majority of its products are used in medical applications, airport security, and industrial markets. But once every four years, specially crafted lead weights measuring about one inch square made by Vulcan are fitted into the uniforms of Olympic luge athletes.

It all began more than 25 years ago. Vulcan CEO **Chuck Yanke** was watching the Olympics on TV when he heard that the athletes could use weights in their suits to adjust their total weight to the allowable weight standard.

That's important in a sport that's all about speed – it's the only sport tracked to .00 of a second. Before Vulcan's involvement, the team had to cut and trim the weights themselves from lead sheets. Yanke called the team and offered to craft the weights specifically for their needs.

The U.S. took home its first medals in luge in 1998 at the games in Nagano, Japan. In addition to providing weights, Vulcan also became part of the "Adopt an Athlete" program and Vulcan's adopted athletes — **Mark Grimmette** and his luge partner **Brain Martin** — won the bronze that year. Grimmette went on to compete in five Olympics, retired after 2010 and is now the team manager. Currently, Vulcan's adopted athlete is Julia Clukey.

Olympic support rallies employees

"The motivation behind our support is really to be part of something so much bigger than ourselves," said **Matt Macur**, vice president of marketing and sales for Vulcan GMS. "We're not in this for the publicity as a sponsor – we just wanted to do something really fun that we could relate to."

Macur said the company's involvement with the Olympics has created a sense of pride and connection for its 110 employees. "Every year we fly members of the team into Milwaukee for our company picnic and recently have asked the athletes to speak to students in Milwaukee schools so they can learn about this experience."

Yanke continues his personal involvement in the sport of luge. He has attended several Olympic Games and has served as a track judge, helped with weighing in of equipment and monitored track temperatures and conditions.

Of course, luge weights are only a side business for Vulcan GMS. The company has four main business units, including casting, extrusion machining and assembly. Their diverse product portfolio includes X ray tube housings that are used in radiation therapy for cancer; airport and cargo security scanners; counter weights for helicopter blades; and shell casings for explosives used in mining.

"We offer everything from developing new concepts and research to 3D printing and assembly for our customers," said Macur. "And we're always looking to create new products."