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One-on-one with Paralympian Melanie Schwartz

MAY 27, 2015

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[Melanie Schwartz](#) is a Paralympic alpine skier with podium dreams. As a congenital leg amputee, Melanie skis on one

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SUBMIT

leg and uses two outriggers, similar to poles with ski tips on the bottom. Melanie began racing in 2007 and quickly progressed to competing at international races. At the Vancouver 2010 Paralympic Winter Games, she skied in four events for Canada, highlighted by a 10th place finish in the super combined event. She is currently a member of the US Paralympics Alpine ski team and recently earned two top 10 results at the 2014 Paralympics in Sochi, Russia.

Melanie joined the USOC Athlete Career and Education (ACE) Program in 2014 to find a part-time job in the computer science field that would work around her travel and training schedule. Adecco helped her find the perfect position with [Ignite](#), the innovation lab for the Adecco Group North America. She now does QA for various projects including [Wicked Smart](#), one of Ignite's creations that aims to help students find career-focused paid internships and entry level jobs. The project offers students the ability to complete a digital profile with assessment tests, video introductions and comprehensive skill-set matching for employers to find the very best employees!

Melanie has done numerous media appearances and has even [been featured on Aspen Public Radio](#).

[Listen to Melanie's appearance on Aspen Public Radio](#)

We recently caught up with Melanie at her job with Adecco Group North America's Ignite to see how her remote job was working with her training..

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN PARTICIPATING IN YOUR SPORT AND WHAT ARE YOUR LONG-TERM GOALS IN SPORT?

I started ski racing in 2007 and I hope to become one of the best in the world.

HOW DID YOU GET INVOLVED IN THE ATHLETE CAREER AND EDUCATION PROGRAM?

I found out about the program during my new athletes orientation at the Colorado Springs OTC. I was job hunting and welcomed the assistance available.

WHAT IS IGNITE?

Ignite is the innovation lab for Adecco Group. They come up with solutions to problems in the staffing industry.

TELL US A LITTLE BIT ABOUT THE JOB YOU ARE DOING WITH IGNITE. WHAT ROLE DO YOU PLAY AND WHAT ARE YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES?

I'm a Quality Assurance Analyst, which means that I test solutions to make sure they are the best they can be. I identify things that don't work properly and find ways to improve on them.

TELL US A LITTLE BIT ABOUT HOW WICKED SMART MIGHT HELP OTHER ATHLETES LOOKING FOR ENTRY-LEVEL JOBS OR INTERNSHIPS.

Wicked Smart is a system that matches young adults with jobs and internships. It can be tough to find entry-level jobs and Wicked Smart streamlines the process. Prospective employees don't need to apply to jobs or write cover letters. They simply create a Wicked Smart profile and wait to be contacted by employers. It was originally designed

for college students and recent grads, but it is also ideal for athletes.

Many athletes lack job experience because they spend so much time and energy on their sport. Wicked Smart is a great way to match athletes with entry-level opportunities because it emphasizes personal qualities such as intelligence, rather than focusing strictly on job experience.

WHAT IS THE BEST PART OF YOUR JOB?

Not only do I enjoy my work, but I get to work whenever and wherever I want, which is an incredible luxury given my hectic schedule.

WHAT ARE SOME CHALLENGES YOU FACE IN YOUR JOB?

While I love being able to work from home, I sometimes feel a bit disconnected from my coworkers.

WHAT ARE SOME INTERESTING THINGS ABOUT IGNITE THAT PEOPLE MIGHT NOT KNOW?

The people are awesome!

WHAT ARE SOME INTERESTING THINGS ABOUT YOU OR YOUR SPORT THAT PEOPLE MIGHT NOT KNOW?

In para-alpine skiing we compete in three classes: visually impaired (they follow a guide down the course), standing (like me!) and sitting (they use a mono ski, which is like a seat on a ski). There is a factor system that means our times are adjusted based on our disability. The factors allow us to compete against people with totally different disabilities.

WHAT IS NEXT FOR MELANIE SCHWARTZ?

Skiing-wise I am looking forward to a summer of intense training to prepare me for the upcoming season and I hope to continue working with Adecco Group North America and Ignite long -term.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE OTHER ATHLETES JUST STARTING THEIR SPORTING CAREERS REGARDING THEIR PREPARATION FOR LIFE AFTER SPORT?

It is important to enjoy your experiences as an athlete, but you can't be an athlete forever, and it is important to prepare for a career after sport. While many athletes assume they have plenty of time before retirement, the reality is that sport is fickle and your sporting career might end sooner than planned due to injury or other unexpected events.

BRING THE DRIVE AND PERSONALITY OF AN ELITE ATHLETE TO YOUR TEAM. [CLICK HERE TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE USOC ACE PROGRAM!](#)

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