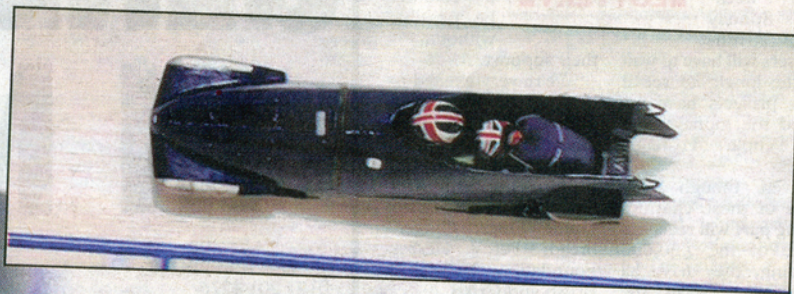


SACRIF-ICE WORTH MAKING

HARD WORK: Mica McNeill with her bobsleigh partner at Calgary



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ICE queen Mica McNeill isn't your typical partying teenager . . . she's staying stone cold sober in her bid for medal glory.

And the bobsleigh champ's determination has already paid off – the Team GB sports star has just scooped her first gold medal.

Mica, of Consett, County Durham, was only 15 when she first took up the daredevil sport, frightening her parents to death by hurtling down dry training tracks at speeds of up to 140kph.

Four years on, she has turned her thrill for adrenaline-fuelled sports into a career, becoming part of the Great Britain team and travelling to cup events all over the world.

The former Durham High School for Girls pupil has made many sacrifices to follow her dream – not least of all deferring a place at university to concentrate full time on bobsleigh, and her social life certainly won't see her boozing and dancing until all hours.

"I only really go out for special occasions, like birthdays, because training is too important," said Mica, who has a younger brother, Cory, 14.

"I'm away a lot too, especially over winter. And when I do go out with my friends I'm usually the designated driver, which I don't mind.

"My goal obviously is to get

gold at the Winter Olympics so I've made sacrifices.

"There are two of us in the women's bobsleigh – the pilot and the brakeman – and I'm the pilot.

"I just love everything about it. You have to be fast and powerful at the start, then when you jump into the bobsleigh you have to totally relax to be able to steer it down the track at 130 to 140kph."

Mica lives at home with her brother, mum Paula, 44, an NHS nurse, and dad Anthony, who runs his own civil engineering firm. But she's not there very often.

Summer months see her spend a lot of time in Bath, home to Team GB's bobsleigh training track, and winter is when she gets to put her training into action.

Last month Mica flew to Calgary for the North American Cup, and her perseverance has paid off because she returned with three silver medals and a gold – that's a medal for every race she competed in with her team member Frances Slater.

That's to add to the silver medal she won at the inaugural Winter Youth Olympics in Innsbruck, Austria, in February.

Next month she will also take part in the Junior World Championships in Cesana, Italy in December.

"I was buzzing when I got my first gold medal in Calgary," said Mica. "It was last race of the day and I was determined to win."

Mica is now aiming for the Winter Olympics 2014 in Sochi, Russia, and has been spurred on by Team GB's phenomenal success at the London Olympics.