***SKELETON SHOULD NOT BE A WINTER OLYMPIC SPORT***

 BY **LITERALLY ANYONE**

Not every activity can be considered a sport, much less a sport deserving a place in the Winter Olympics. This is especially true of skeleton.

In skeleton, people ride a small sled down a frozen track while lying face down and head-first. Although it receives the same attention as any other sport at the Winter Olympics, it does not involve the same level of strategy, skill, or artistry required by other sports.

Skeleton’s competitors do not need to train as much as those of other sports: for example, national skeleton champion Eric Bernotas only discovered the sport by chance three years prior to his 2004 win.

Not many people even compete in skeleton at any level, including beginners. U.S. Olympic skeleton spokesman Tom LaDue estimates that there are only 100 to 200 competitors in the United States.

Although it was rightly removed from the Winter Olympics in 1948, skeleton was reinstated for the Salt Lake City Games in 2002. This was for two reasons: 1) the IOC needs content to fill the 17 days that the Games last; 2) it’s a cheap sport to run, since it only requires the same venue, stands, and cameras that are already required for bobsledding.

Jim Shea Jr. (a member of the movement to reinstate skeleton at the Winter Olympics) was the best male skeleton competitor in the USA in 2002, and so was given all the privileges that come with being a star athlete: reading the athletic oath at the Opening Ceremonies in front of four billion people; holding the torch; and visiting President Bush at the White House. He himself, however, admits that he only got into skeleton on a whim, and that it hardly requires much skill or technique.

The U.S. skeleton team’s track record has not been remarkable enough to justify its inclusion in the Olympics. To date, its only newsworthy events have been: 1) the suspension of its coach, Tim Nardiello, after two female skeleton competitors accused him of sexual misconduct; 2) one of its best athletes, Noelle Pikus-Pace, breaking her leg after falling from a platform near the bobsled track; and 3) competitor Zach Lund’s positive test for a substance which can be used to mask performance enhancing drugs.

Given all of this, it is clear that skeleton should not be a Winter Olympic sport.