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Leader of the future
Austin

Chicago, IL / By Amy Reavis Sinn / Photo for Latino Leaders by Stephen J. Serio



The Need for Speed Marin Austin

Current US Juvenile National Champion in Short-Track Speed Skating, Marin Austin, is in hot pursuit of Olympic gold.

Marin started out figure skating at age four and speed skating at age eight. She claims that as soon as she got on the ice that first day she was hooked, and she not only knew that she wanted to be a speed skater, but that she wanted to be an Olympian. "It's a rush; it's everything you would want in a sport," she says.

To help her reach her goal, Marin attended the prestigious FLAME (Finding Leaders Among Minorities Everywhere) Program, run by the US Olympic Committee in Colorado Springs last summer. FLAME endeavors to "inspire minority youth to cultivate their desire to succeed and rise above ordinary levels of expectation." Marin was proud to be the first of 15 females to be chosen for the one-week program.

In addition, Marin trains hard and has been attending summer speed skating camps for the past couple of years. She trains all day, every day in the summer, then skates and does weight training seven days a week for the rest of the year. Last year was her year for competitions, and she currently holds nine national and regional titles. Her speed skating coach in Evanston, Illinois, Jim Nubani, applauds her commitment, saying that she is great to coach and very charismatic and passionate about the sport.

In addition to her outstanding academic performance and speed skating, Marin is also a champion lacrosse player. She ranked No.1 junior high lacrosse player in Illinois and the MVP of the Lacrosse America Indoor league and of the Illinois Indoor Lacrosse state champions. She has aspirations of going to college on a lacrosse scholarship.



Acclaimed author Julia Alvarez has also recognized Marin's potential as a leader. Alvarez told Marin that if she had known her earlier, Marin may have been her role model for her most recent book, *Before We Were Free*, which features the observations of a young girl caught up in the Trujillo regime in the Dominican Republic.

Making the Olympic team in 2006 is Marin's ultimate goal, but there is no shortage of short-term goals, such as making the US National Team, which she did last year, and the Junior World Team. In just three years the top six women speed skaters will be picked for the US Olympic team, and Marin hopes to be in their company.

"I am going to do everything in my power to be the best and to meet my long-term goal of making the Olympic team," she effuses.

Marin loves the quote: "Reach for the moon, and if you miss, you'll land among the stars."

"I'll reach for the Olympics, and if I don't make it, then I'll see where it's gotten me so far. Look at how many lessons I've learned already, and look at how accomplished I am—even without the Olympics. I think landing among the stars wouldn't be so bad. It's still right next to the moon."