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Mr. Marks

English 8

### Personal Essay

I started my trip to France for the Kandhar Jr Ski race. I went with my teammates Trevor, Riley, Van, and my coach Naga. We drove to Newark Airport in New Jersey. We stopped at a food place and got lunch. Then we finished the drive to the airport; once we got to the airport, we checked our bags and made it through security. The airport was very crowded with many people everywhere in the terminal. Once it was time to board the plane, we walked back to the gate and boarded our seven-hour thirty-minute flight to Geneva. The flight felt quick; I was lucky to have no one sitting next to me and slept most of the ride there. Once we landed, it was only about 8 in the morning; we got all the bags, once we loaded the van, we headed to Les Houches, France. The van ride was a short hour and a half. Once we arrived, we had to wait for all the hotel rooms to be ready, so we drove around the town and drove to the mountain where we would be skiing the following day. We drove back to the RockyPop Hotel where we were staying, unloaded the van, and went to our rooms. The room was red-themed with red plaid carpeting and red lamps throughout the room. The rest of the day, we all relaxed and slept until dinner. The hotel had a set meal plan for us, so once dinner came around, we were served the meat with mashed potatoes and a variety of nuts on the side; then, for dessert, we got a cup of fruit with orange juice. Afterwards, we all went back to our rooms and got ready for the next day.

The first night most of us were very jet-lagged. As for me, I did not get to sleep until around 4:30; therefore, I slept through the morning warm-up at seven-thirty. Once it was around

eleven, we loaded up the van and headed to our first day on the hill. We stopped at a bakery to get some lunch. Out of the whole trip, ordering food was the hardest because many of us did not speak French. Then we went across the street to go up the tram, the tram was very crowded, and once we got to the top, most of our goggles were fogged, and the visibility that day was tough to see. We checked out the race venue where we would be racing for the next three days. We did some Freeski runs, and then we went down the bottom and made our way back to the hotel. We were all exhausted, so most of us went to sleep until around dinner. Most people went out to dinner with their parents, but my parents did not come on the trip, and Vans' mother had not arrived yet, so we all went out to dinner.

After dinner, we headed back to our rooms and got ready for the next day. The next day, Riley and I made it to the morning warm-up, but they slept right through it for the boys; then we went to breakfast; my favorite part of breakfast was the croissants and the orange juice. Then we all relaxed, did a bit of homework, and we were off to the hill for day two of skiing. We skied a little in the morning, and then we started to train with Slalom with the team from there, Les Houches. We only trained on that size gate not often because the gates for u14 in the United States are smaller than those used in Europe. The training was much fun; we were training on the same hill we raced on. We returned to the hotel. Once we arrived, we noticed that most of the other teams had arrived. Then we did some conditioning, and then we had dinner. Dinner was burgers, and it was just Riley and me. The burgers were different from the burgers we have had before but still good. When at the table, a different team sat next to us. Their table manners were not too excellent, and pleasant of them squirted ketchup on the other one. We then prepared for the next day, the first day of racing.

We woke up early that next morning and headed to a different gondola to load the lift. We were one of the only teams that brought slip skis. Most kids only had one pair of skis. We went up, dropped our bags at the start, and did a couple of warm-up runs before the inspection. We inspected the course with a basic rhythm that we were used to, but then we had a roller into a blind gate into a hole and then up a hill; it was a critical spot to gain speed and lose speed. Then the finish was simple and straight. After we did two runs with Naga, he sent us on the run on our own. That does not go well with catching an edge, double ejecting my poles all over the hill, and losing a glove. I stood up, and a coach helped me get my poles and skis. I look at my ski, and now I have a bent far backward tip. I go up the lift, and Naga tries to fix it, which is unfixable. I know I have to ski with a broken ski. More than any technical issues, it took more of a mental effect on me of being nervous about what might happen to my ski. I did my run. It was not one of my best skis, but I was going to attack the next run. We waited for all of us to be done; we got some lunch and headed up the lift for a second run inspection. The course did not change much. It was the same, and I knew I could attack this coming run. The nerves were racing through me, but this race did not go towards anything in the future. It was just for fun. I was just excited to be there and race against such great athletes from other parts of the world. That evening there were no awards. We decided to drive about 15 minutes to Chamonix. We got crepes and drove around and looked at one of the largest ski resort towns in the world. Once we got back to the hotel, we turned our skis and headed to dinner. Dinner that night was pizza.

The second day of racing was a long day. I woke up feeling a little fatigued and did not want to get out of bed. However, that could not stop me from the day ahead of me. We went on our morning jog and did our active warm-ups, got breakfast, then got dressed, and on day 1 of the slalom, we were ready to win. We arrived, did our inspection, did some warm-up runs, and

we're off to inspection. I had a similar bib number the day before to be a good runner. My run was a little cautious, but overall I thought I skied well. Then the second run came around and had another excellent run. We came to the end of the day, and it was the first day with awards. We got some swag bags with hats, stickers, and sweatshirts. Van ended up getting an award for the Gs, and then we drove back to the hotel and got ready for the next day. I had to pack up that night as we were leaving after the race.

The third day was the panel slalom; we woke up early, warmed up, and ate breakfast. Then we checked out of the hotel, and when we arrived at the mountain, we loaded up the gondola and skied over to the course. We started lower from where the Gs start was. I went through inspection and picked up my bib from the bottom of the course. I did my first run and then wanted the rest of our team to be finished at the bottom. We had our lunch and then waited for the second run inspection to open. Then I inspected the course; it was almost identical to the first run. I skied the second run with every last piece of energy I had left. Once the day was over, we skied down to the bottom. The run to the bottom was very scenic and enjoyable. We headed back to the hotel, packed the van, and went to the awards. It was the last day of events. We were all tired and ready to go home. On the drive back to Geneva, I slept the whole ride until arriving at the hotel near the airport. We had to take covid tests for the flight home; then we went to bed early for the long day ahead of us in the morning. I woke up very exhausted and ready to go home. We check in and make it through security, and then we go through customs to get to the gate. Once we made it there, we boarded the plane, and off to the US, we went. It was a long flight—almost 10 hours. We land, go through customs and get all the bags very quickly. Van and Riley went back with their parents, and Trevor and I went back in the van. I slept most of the way back to school.

The overall trip opened my eyes to how large the sport of ski racing is. I realized that my competition is not only in Vermont or the US; it is globally. I had a blast meeting new people from different places and seeing different parts of France.