

Personal Essay

My name is Lilly Suddaby, and I am a multi-sport adventurer and competitor raised in Morrisville, Vermont. I live with my mother and father and two younger brothers. My mother is a nurse at the University Of Vermont Medical Center and my father is an equipment operator in the summer and is a ski patroller at Smugglers Notch in the winter. Both of my parents are native Vermonters and enjoy getting out on bikes or skis whenever they can. They have passed their enjoyment for being outside on to me, as I have become someone who not only enjoys skiing and riding bikes, but also biathlon, and just being outside—especially in the winter and fall. In the fall months, I often spend weekends hiking around in the woods, hunting with my father.

I have been skiing for as long as I can remember, and whether it was on alpine or cross-country skis, it has always been an adventure. I started cross country skiing at the Craftsbury Outdoor Center when I was in third grade and I have participated in all of the youth ski programs they offer. Skiing has always been something that I enjoyed, whether it was cross country skiing on a gloomy day, or alpine skiing in fresh powder. In 2021, I started skiing in the Bill Koch League at the COC. As I continued skiing and got better at it, I began to enjoy it more and more. The Bill Koch League taught me to have fun while getting better at skiing, and during my time in the BKL program, I made several new friends, some who have gone onto different sports, and some who continue to ski with me today. My first ever cross-country ski race was in 2021 when my father couldn't convince me to race, so he bribed me with a pair of sunglasses. I didn't want the sunglasses, but the idea of the sunglasses was enough to convince a little eleven-year-old me to do it. After that, I was convinced to race in a three-lap relay with one of my friends-wearing the sunglasses I was bribed with- and had lots of fun doing that, as well. I am currently participating in the Juniors program at the Craftsbury Outdoor Center, and have made so many wonderful memories with the team.

In 2022, I was introduced to biathlon by a friend, and it has become a huge part of my life. The first biathlon race that I competed in was the Singletrack Shootout, which took place on bikes at the Craftsbury Outdoor Center. I competed in the novice category, along with dozens of other people who were interested in the sport. After the singletrack shootout, I began to take the sport more seriously. My first true biathlon race was at the Ethan Allen Biathlon range, in Jericho, during one of their Thursday night races. After the Thursday night race, I went on to compete in several biathlon races at the COC and eventually built up the courage to attend an Eastern Cup in Lake Placid in 2023. I placed second in both the sprint and pursuit races, making it one of my best sports performances. After Lake Placid, I competed and volunteered at the Bayley Hazen Shootout, where my mother competed in her first biathlon race, along with many of my friends, and one of my friends' dads. In March, I attended the Biathlon National Championships, in Fort Kent, Maine, placing third in sprint, fourth in pursuit, and ninth in the IBU mixed relay. Biathlon has been a huge part of my life and I have had so much fun competing in the sport over the years.

For several years, I have skied in a supportive environment, surrounded and coached by dozens of members of the Green Racing Program, and world-class athletes, from Olympic biathletes, like Susan Dunklee and Hallie Grossman, to IBU athletes like Luke and Jake Brown; all of which who have taught me something that will stick with me for the rest of my life, no matter how important it is for my progression in the sport; Jake Brown once taught me how to load all five bullets into a

magazine in one go, Susan Dunklee has taught me appreciation and enjoyment for the community around me through volunteering at biathlon races and teaching people how to shoot, and Ethan Dreisigacker taught me how to clean a rifle. The atmosphere on the range at the COC is always filled with laughter and smiles, no matter the situation. Most biathlon practices consist of a quick, race-style zero, followed by games or races focused on a certain aspect of biathlon, whether that be race procedures, trigger squeeze, follow through, or range time, the coaches almost always find a way. Race to The Middle is a club favorite, as it combines speed and precision on the mat. Call The Shot is another fun game, where one person is on the mat and the other stands next to the mat with a scope, watching as their partner calls out where they think their shot went.

I have always enjoyed traveling, especially when there is a sport involved with it, and recently, I have been lucky enough to visit Lake Placid, New York, and Fort Kent, Maine for biathlon events, yet I have never traveled internationally, though I was recently chosen to represent the United States at the Liatoppen Biathlon Festival in April. The Liatoppen Biathlon Festival is the largest biathlon festival in the world, with over 1,000 applicants. It takes place in Liatoppen, Norway, every year. If I receive a Flyin Ryan Scholarship, I would use it to help with the financial aspects of traveling to Norway to compete in the festival.