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Cincinnati-made sleds will be hitting the slopes in Sochi



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Starting next Thursday, U.S. athletes in Sochi, Russia, will be near-suicidally launching themselves head-first down an ice track reaching 80 to 90 miles per hour in the skeleton sled event.

[Those sleds were designed by a University of Cincinnati professor](#) and his startup, ProStar. They're also manufactured right here in Cincinnati by Machintek Corp. in Fairfield.

"Myself and our entire company, we certainly get an extreme sense of pride in being a part of this with the U.S. (Bobsled and Skeleton) Federation," Machintek President [Roger Hasler](#) told me. "We'd certainly feel very jubilant if we brought home some of the medals."

Hasler was approached by ProStar founder [Grant Schaffner](#) in 2008 to manufacture the skeleton sled he had designed. Machintek made five different iterations of the sled since then, including the design that was used in the 2010 Vancouver Winter Olympics.

There are more than 100 different special manufactured components that go into each sled, and the saddle is custom fitted to each individual athlete.

Machintek manufacturing engineer [John Domansky](#) told me the manufacturing team put hundreds of hours into making the sleds and refining all of the components. While each athlete may use the same sled body for multiple seasons, Machintek makes new kits and retrofits them each season to meet the needs of the coaches and athletes.

"From an engineering standpoint, it's fun to do something like that," Domansky said. "It's cool to do something outside of the box."

In addition to manufacturing the sleds, Machintek is a sponsor of the U.S. men's and women's skeleton sled teams.

"You hear so much gloom and doom that it's nice to know that manufacturing is alive and well in Cincinnati," Domansky said. "It's something that hasn't been outsourced to China."

Brownfield covers technology, startups, manufacturing and courts.