

Mr. Ice Guy

Skates, weights and figure eights

Story by Winta Mebrahti

Photo provided by Luke West

An event poster Luke West spotted nine years ago led him to Smucker's Stars on Ice at Lake Placid. He was left mesmerized by what he saw. After witnessing the intricate jumps performed, the young boy knew he needed to carry on the legacy of Axel Paulsen, Alois Lutz and Ulrich Salchow, figure skaters who lent their names to some of the famous tricks in figure skating.

As he walked out of the venue, the boy turned to his mother.

"I want to be just like them."

A Plattsburgh native, West was enticed by the adventures the North Country offered. "It was nice to have an active lifestyle," says now 18-year-old West. It's led to an active life. West is now a professional athlete, a high-ranking figure skater for Team USA.

West lived close enough to Montréal and Lake Placid to make regular trips to train with coaches who used to skate professionally. With their help, West conquered the ice and won a dozen medals. His progress with the coaches was evident when he became a U.S. novice men's bronze medalist in a 2014 international competition. Tom Zakrajsek, one of West's coaches, believes athletes West's age should learn from these. For West, the competitions were more than a learning experience.

"It kind of motivated me to work even harder this year and try to get another national medal," West says. "It gives me more confidence." That motivation coupled with his belief landed him in Slovenia this past summer where he made his international debut. In what was his first Junior Grand Prix, West ranked ninth place.

To West, Slovenia was another experience from where he draws motivation.

This is only the beginning for him. After he saw the top junior men in the world and competed against the best, West opened his eyes to where he wants to be in the future — even if he's not quite there yet.

With his personal sacrifices and six-day workout routine, West is well on his way.



Westward Expansion: Our Star's Favorite Destinations

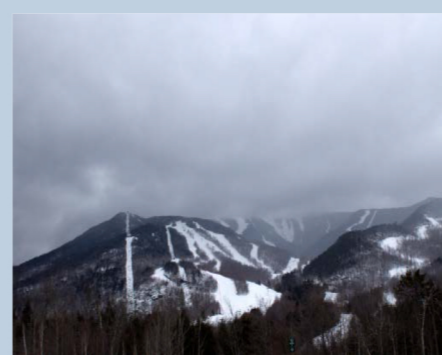


Photo by Claire Durham

Whiteface Mountain, New York: This is where West goes skiing when he visits family in Plattsburgh. It is one of the places where he can take his mind off skating when he needs a break.

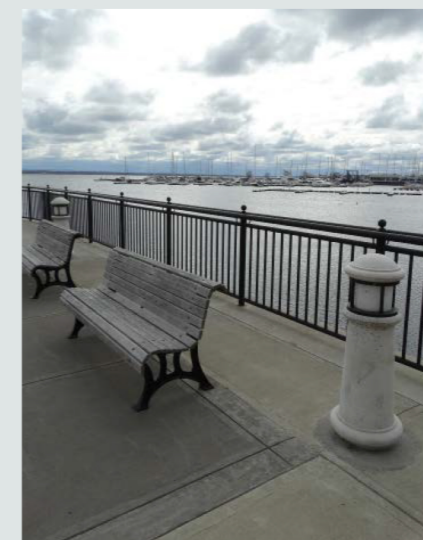


Photo by Seth Thomas

Rouses Point, New York: The Wests used to camp on Rouses Point when West was younger. Along Lake Champlain, he discovered waterskiing, boating and kneeboarding.



Photo by Nicole Hebdon

Montréal: West used to go to Montréal for his training and fell in love with the city's architectural heritage, shopping, and the fact that the city is an island. He loves the city so much that he is considering college at McGill University.



Photo by Samantha Godino

Church Street, Burlington: As a boy, West loved to go shopping for clothes on Church Street.



Photo by Samantha Godino

Iris Cafe and Wine Bar, Plattsburgh: One of West's favorite places to eat when in Plattsburgh because of the assorted "comfort food" like burgers, West's favorite kind of food.



Photo by Seth Thomas

Lake Placid: West first started skating here at the Olympic Center Skating School. This is also where he saw the Smucker's Stars on Ice show that changed his life. "I would not have been where I am today had Plattsburgh not been close to these places," he says. The nostalgia drives him to make trips to Lake Placid when he is visiting family in Plattsburgh. The Olympic Center, where West trained, is where many prospective Olympians begin. Lake Placid also offers the Lake Placid Olympic Museum where visitors can explore the history of the Olympic games.