

WINTER OLYMPICS



Picture: Racer Ready

RYDING HIGH: Dave Ryding is British No.1 in the slalom

DAVE'S NO.1, SNOW JOKE

EXCLUSIVE

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DAVE RYDING might be one of Britain's big skiing hopes for this year's Winter Olympics in Vancouver – but he wasn't happy when the snow began to fall just before Christmas.

He grumbled: "I'm sick of the stuff. I was slipping all over the place. Transport was carnage.

"I wanted a break from my normal routine – I did not want to see any snow."

Ryding, 23, spends several months of the year training in Austria.

And after being brought up in the Lancashire town of Bretherton, he has now reached the dizzy heights of British No.1 for slalom.

But what is so incredible about Ryding is that until just three years ago, he skied on dry slopes!

He said: "Let's face it...we aren't a skiing nation.

"The Austrians can't believe we do it. They've never heard of skiing on plastic or a dry slope.

"But lots of Brits ski. And there are a group of us who are emerging as contenders and getting known around the world. I have

had scary moments, like catching an edge training downhill on a glacier and heading straight for the ropes surrounding the crevasses."

He added: "My dad got me into skiing when I was six.

"He said I couldn't come on holiday with him until I could ski properly. I joined the race team at Pendle Ski Club at eight.

"I've missed out and made a massive sacrifice.

"When my mates went partying I've given it a miss. Alcohol is a no-no and my social life has suffered.

"And I was at a disadvantage because of being on dry slopes for so long and coming so late to snow.

"But the Brits are improving and have come a long way since Eddie Edwards."

Eddie 'The Eagle' Edwards was the sole British applicant for the 1988 Winter Olympics and turned failure into an art, becoming a global celebrity as a result of his notoriety.

Ryding said: "It was bad for the sport. I won't be in Vancouver, if I'm selected, and be like him.

"Sometimes I ask myself why I'm doing it. But then I get that adrenaline rush.

"You can't beat it."