



MARIA CRUZ GARCIA

Short Track Speedskating American Record Holder (500m)

World Cup Team Member

2006 Olympian

Birthdate	9/20/1985
Hometown	Carson, CA
Resides	Carson, CA
Height	5'1"



CAREER HIGHLIGHTS

2009 Long Track Speedskating Olympic Trials (2010 Winter Olympics)
 2009, 2008, 2007, 2003, 2001 World Cup Team Member
 2008 U.S. Short Track Speedskating Championships (St. Louis, MO)- Silver Medal
 2008 World Cup (Beijing, China)- Set new American record in 500m
 2006 Winter Olympic Games- 4th place, 3000m Relay Team; 1500m Alternate
 2006 Winter Olympic Games (Torino, Italy)- Short Track Speedskating Team
 2005 U.S. Olympic Trials- 4th place
 2004, 2003 World Championship Team
 2004 U.S. Short Track Championships- 4th place
 2004 U.S. Junior Short Track Championships- 1st place
 2003 Junior American 500m Record Holder
 2002, 2001, 2000 U.S. Junior Championships- 1st place

SPONSORS

- Actor/Comedian George Lopez
- The Watson Land Company

BACKGROUND

Maria Garcia represents the true American dream. Born and raised in Southern California, Maria grew up in a Mexican-American household. Her father emigrated from Mexico as a teenager, determined to give his family everything the world had to offer. Maria is a five-time World Cup team member, 2006 Winter Olympian, the American record-holder in the 500m distance sprint, and a 2010 Olympic Long-Track Speedskating Trials qualifier.

Maria Garcia first started figure skating at the age of five. Though she took naturally to the sport, figure skating wasn't financially feasible for her family. At 11 years old, her mother saw a poster at the ice rink advertising to try speedskating for \$3. With passion for skating and a natural talent for speed, Maria made the switch. Within three months, she competed at the Nationals speedskating competition and placed third in her age group.

Maria has achieved much success within the sport. Missing the 2002 Olympic trials due to a severe knee injury, she was honored by the LA84 Foundation by running the Olympic Torch Relay through Los Angeles. When she broke her back in October 2004 at a World Cup in China, Maria was determined not to miss another chance at the Olympics. She came back and won the U.S. Jr. Championships a few months later, and then pulled off another win at the Olympic trials, earning a spot on the 2006 Olympic team.

She credits her local speedskating club as being a huge part of her success which lead her to the 2006 Olympics, where she continues to train in hopes of reaching her second Olympic berth. Maria relies on the financial support of actor and comedian George Lopez, who funds her training and competition expenses.

Years of hard work, dedication and perseverance have shown her that dreams really do come true. After an injury at the 2009 Short Track Olympic Trials prevented her from qualifying for the Short Track Speedskating team, Maria immediately decided that she would stop at nothing to pursue her goal. Maria decided to learn the Long Track Speedskating discipline, and qualified to compete at the Long Track Olympic Trials. Though she ultimately did not make the team she continues to be a part of the speedskating community.

Maria resides and trains at home in Carson, CA. She is currently pursuing a degree in nursing while also studying for a career as a sports psychologist. Maria hopes to volunteer with the Doctors Without Borders program someday.



SHADE GLOBAL Inc.

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AWARDS AND RECOGNITIONS

- February 2009- USOC Team of the Month runner-up with the five-member relay team of the U.S. Women's Short Track Speedskating Team
- Key to the City of Carson, CA
- Special Congressional recognition for outstanding contribution and invaluable service to the community (Juanita Millender-McDonald, U.S. House of Representatives 37th Congressional District, CA)
- Congressional Recognition (Bart Stupak, 1st Congressional District)
- Pride of Carson Award (Carson, CA Mayor Jim Dear)
- Honored by LA84 Foundation by running the Olympic Torch through Los Angeles for the 2002 Winter Olympic Games

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Maria volunteers regularly with the Ready, Set, Gold! Program, the Winter Special Olympics, and the American Heart Association. Maria is involved with a number of other projects including the LA84 Foundation, Activities for Olympic Youth Program, Team Darfur, Southern California Speedskating Association and various Olympic and youth sports programs.

She does as much as possible to spread Olympic spirit and open doors to inner city youth. She teaches speedskating lessons for beginner and novice skaters in the Los Angeles area.

MEDIA AND PROFESSIONAL EXPOSURE

- Maria has been featured in publications such as the ESPN The Magazine, *Los Angeles Times*, *The Daily Breeze*, *Concierge Magazine*, *GoGameFace GameOn* podcast, *Latin Heat Online* and *American Short Track*, among others
- 2010- CBS- KTLA Morning News segment: Olympic Short Track Speedskating, guest Maria Garcia
- LA84 Foundation Life of an Olympian speech
- AEG Salute to Olympians
- One of 18 Olympians chosen to speak for the Champions in Life program (Wash., D.C.)
- Maria has been featured on local sports news segments in the Southern California area.
- Featured in 2006 February/March Tu Ciudad Los Angeles Magazine
- 2006- NBC Olympic Special Feature Story
- 2006- NBC "Speedskaters Enjoy Surprise Video Messages from Celebrities"
- Padres Contra el Cancer speech
- City of Carson Cesar Chavez Day speech
- Black and Decker Corporate California

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