

= Magdalena Neuner =

Magdalena " Lena " Neuner ( born 9 February 1987 ) is a retired German professional biathlete . She is the most successful woman of all time at Biathlon World Championships and a two @-@ time Olympic gold medalist . At the age of 21 , she became the youngest Overall World Cup winner in the history of the International Biathlon Union ( IBU ) . With 34 World Cup wins , Neuner is ranked second all @-@ time for career victories on the Biathlon World Cup tour . She has won the Overall World Cup title three times , in 2007 ? 08 , in 2009 ? 10 and her final season in 2011 ? 12 . Neuner retired from the sport in March 2012 , citing a lack of motivation and her desire for a normal life .

Neuner started biathlon when she was nine years old and won five junior world championship titles from 2004 to 2006 . She made her World Cup debut in 2006 and won her first World Cup race in January 2007 . One month later , she claimed three gold medals in her first appearance at the Biathlon World Championships . In the 2007 ? 08 season , Neuner won the Overall World Cup and once more claimed three titles at the 2008 World Championships . After a less successful winter in 2008 ? 09 , she participated in her first Winter Olympic Games in 2010 , winning the gold medal in both the pursuit and the mass start , and silver in the sprint race . Neuner also claimed the 2009 ? 10 Overall World Cup title . At the 2011 World Championships , she won three more gold medals . In her final winter on the World Cup tour , Neuner won two more titles at the 2012 World Championships and claimed the Overall World Cup for a third time .

During her seven World Cup seasons , Neuner won 34 World Cup races and achieved 63 podium finishes . As part of Germany 's World Cup team , she won ten relay races and three mixed relay events . During six appearances at Biathlon World Championships , Neuner claimed 17 medals : twelve gold , four silver and one bronze . In addition , she has won seven junior world championship titles . Neuner was known as one of the fastest cross @-@ country skiers in biathlon . She had been noted for her volatile shooting performances in the standing position , particularly in the early years of her career , often at the expense of better results .

Neuner has lived in the Bavarian village of Wallgau since birth . At the age of 16 , she joined the German Customs Administration to become a member of the government @-@ funded Customs @-@ Ski @-@ Team . Since winning three world championship gold medals in 2007 , Neuner is one of her home country 's most popular female athletes . She was named German Sportswoman of the Year in 2007 , 2011 and 2012 .

= = Early life = =

Magdalena Neuner was born in the German alpine resort town of Garmisch @-@ Partenkirchen , the second of four children of bank clerk Paul Neuner and his wife Margit . She has an elder brother Paul , and two younger siblings ? her brother Christoph and her sister Anna . Her sister is also an aspiring biathlete who participates in junior competitions and is a member in the youth squad of the Bavarian Ski Association .

Neuner grew up in the small Bavarian village of Wallgau , approximately 15 kilometres ( 9 @. @ 3 mi ) from Garmisch @-@ Partenkirchen . She started alpine skiing when she was four years old and later tried various other winter sports at her hometown ski club SC Wallgau . At the age of 16 , Neuner finished high school ( Realschule ) in Garmisch @-@ Partenkirchen and decided to pursue a career in biathlon . Her parents were reluctant , but they eventually supported her ambition to become a professional biathlete .

= = Career = =

= = = Early career and World Cup debut = = =

Neuner started biathlon when she was nine years old after she had participated in a try out course at her local ski club . She won 29 races at the biathlon Student 's Cup of the German Ski

Association ( DSV ) , claiming the overall title in her respective age @-@ group for four years in a row from 1999 to 2002 . After finishing school , Neuner joined the German Customs Administration in August 2003 to become a member in the government @-@ supported Customs @-@ Ski @-@ Team ( Zoll @-@ Ski @-@ Team ) . She officially holds the rank of Erste Zollhauptwachtmeisterin ( first head customs officer ) , although she is a full @-@ time professional athlete with no customs obligations . One of her team mates is alpine skiing world champion Maria Höfl @-@ Riesch .

In December 2003 , Neuner won the German Cup for 17 @-@ year @-@ olds , which led to her appointment for the 2003 ? 04 European Cup competition for juniors . With four wins at European level , Neuner qualified for the 2004 Junior / Youth World Championships in Haute Maurienne , France , where she won the sprint and relay events , as well as silver in the pursuit . One year later at the 2005 Junior / Youth World Championships in Kontiolahti , Finland , she claimed two silver medals ( pursuit and relay ) , and again won the sprint discipline . With her success at junior level , Neuner at 18 years old , was considered one of Germany 's biggest biathlon talents ever . Even before achieving any results at senior level , she had signed a sponsorship deal .

During the 2005 ? 06 season , Neuner made her first appearances in the Biathlon World Cup . Germany 's women 's national coach Uwe Müßiggang had already considered her for the team two years earlier , however , her parents and her hometown coaches Bernhard Kröll and Herbert Mayer were reluctant to let her start prematurely . On 13 January 2006 , Neuner made her debut in the World Cup sprint race in Ruhpolding , Germany , where she substituted for the injured Uschi Disl . Although her first appearance ended unsuccessfully , coming in 41st place , she was appointed for nine more World Cup races for the remainder of the season .

Neuner returned as one of the favourites at the 2006 Junior / Youth World Championships in Presque Isle , Maine , United States , where she won two more titles ( pursuit and relay ) in addition to a silver medal in the sprint race . She did not participate in the 2006 Winter Olympics for the German team . At the World Cup in Kontiolahti in March 2006 , Neuner achieved her first top ten finishes : she was fourth in the sprint and came in ninth in the mass start race .

= = = Three world championship titles ( 2006 ? 07 season ) = = =

While she had only competed in ten races during her first World Cup winter , Neuner became a fixture in the German team in the 2006 ? 07 season . She proved to be one of the fastest cross @-@ country skiers in biathlon , and at 19 years old , regularly set the fastest course times . On 5 January 2007 , Neuner won her first World Cup event , the sprint race in Oberhof , Germany . Her victory on home soil , before a crowd of 19 @,@ 000 people , received considerable media attention and put her into the national spotlight for the first time . Two days later at the pursuit race , she forgot to reload her rifle after warm @-@ up . She was handed a new magazine during the prone shooting and managed to finish third despite a total of six shooting errors .

Neuner was scheduled to compete at the junior world championships in 2007 . However , following her first World Cup win , she was instead appointed for the senior World Championships in Antholz , Italy . On 3 February 2007 , she won gold in the sprint , beating Sweden 's Anna Carin Olofsson by 2 @.@ 3 seconds . It was her first world championship event ever and only her second victory at senior level . One day later , she also claimed the pursuit title , in spite of four shooting errors . Following a 14th place in the mass start , Neuner , alongside Martina Beck , Andrea Henkel and Kati Wilhelm , also won gold in the relay race on 11 February 2007 . With three titles , she was the championship 's most successful athlete and became the youngest triple world champion .

At the end of the season , she continued her successful run with four more World Cup wins . In March 2007 , Neuner won the pursuit and mass start races at Holmenkollen in Oslo , Norway , and she won the sprint and pursuit events at the season final in Khanty @-@ Mansiysk , Russia , giving her seven career World Cup wins . She ended her first complete season fourth in the Overall World Cup standings and finished second in the pursuit discipline . In the course of three months , Neuner had emerged from anonymity to become one of Germany 's most popular female athletes . At the end of 2007 , she had earned an estimated 1 @.@ 3 million euros through sponsorship and endorsement deals .

= = = Overall World Cup winner ( 2007 ? 08 season ) = = =

After missing the podium at the 2007 ? 08 season 's first two World Cups , Neuner was part of Germany 's winning relay team in Pokljuka , Slovenia in December 2007 . She claimed her eighth World Cup win at the mass start in Oberhof in January 2008 , and later that month won the relay race in Ruhpolding with the German team . Shortly before her 21st birthday , Neuner decided to again compete at the Junior / Youth World Championships , held in Ruhpolding in January 2008 ? the last time she was eligible to enter . She won gold in the sprint and the pursuit , but withdrew from the individual race to prepare for the senior world championships alongside her German team mates .

Leading up to the 2008 World Championships in Östersund , Sweden , Neuner tried to lower expectations , stating a repeat of last year 's performance would be impossible . She failed to defend her titles in the sprint and pursuit races , with shooting errors preventing better results ; she finished 17th and sixth respectively . On 12 February 2008 , she won the mixed relay with Sabrina Buchholz , Andreas Birnbacher and Michael Greis to claim her first gold medal . Four days later , she won her second title in the mass start , beating Norway 's Tora Berger by 3 @.@ 0 seconds . She had four shooting errors compared to Berger 's one and skied side by side with the Norwegian for most of the last lap , in what she later described as her hardest fought victory ever . Alongside Martina Beck , Andrea Henkel and Kati Wilhelm , Neuner also claimed gold in the relay race on 17 February 2008 . By winning three more titles , she became the youngest six @.@ time world champion , solidifying her status as Germany 's biggest biathlon star .

In the following World Cups , she won the sprint races in Pyeongchang , South Korea , and in Khanty @.@ Mansiysk ? her tenth and eleventh World Cup victories . With a second @.@ place finish in the penultimate mass start race of the season , Neuner won the 2007 ? 08 Mass start World Cup . At the season final in Oslo , she also claimed the season 's Sprint World Cup and took over the yellow bib of the Overall World Cup leader for the first time in her career . In the last race of the season , a ninth place in the mass start ensured Neuner the 2007 ? 08 Overall Biathlon World Cup victory . She was the youngest Overall World Cup winner since the International Biathlon Union was established in 1993 .

= = = First setbacks ( 2008 ? 09 season ) = = =

Neuner 's preparation for the 2008 ? 09 season was affected by several illnesses . In the summer , she battled an intestinal fungus which forced her to pause training for seven weeks ; she later attributed it to pressure of public expectations . In October 2008 , she contracted influenza and in November , a bacterial infection caused her to miss two weeks of training . Subsequently , her ski speed saw a substantial drop at the start of the season . In the first four World Cups , Neuner only achieved two individual podiums ; atypically courtesy of good shooting performances , not her skiing .

Following the Christmas break , her skiing times had improved . In Ruhpolding in January 2009 , Neuner was part of the winning German relay team . She beat team mate Kati Wilhelm by 0 @.@ 2 seconds in the Ruhpolding sprint and also won the following pursuit event , which marked her World Cup wins twelve and thirteen . Neuner again missed the podium in Antholz . She was leading the mass start by 53 @.@ 6 seconds before the final shooting , in which she missed all five targets , eventually finishing sixth . This result received much public attention . She later described it as a pivotal moment in her career and called it the " total end of the world " .

Neuner suffered further setbacks at the 2009 World Championships in Pyeongchang , where she struggled with a cold and a high number of shooting errors . She finished eighth in the sprint , in which she crashed on a downhill slope , and came in eleventh in the pursuit race . She was not appointed for the individual race and could not start in the mixed relay due to her cold . On 21 February 2009 , Neuner claimed silver as part Germany 's women 's relay team , alongside Martina Beck , Andrea Henkel and Kati Wilhelm . On the last day of the championships , she came in

seventh in the mass start race .

At the Olympic rehearsal in Vancouver , Canada , in March 2009 , Neuner claimed the 2008 ? 09 Individual World Cup , despite never having won a race in that discipline . She also won the Vancouver relay race with the German team , and was second in the sprint , 0 @.@ 7 seconds behind Sweden 's Helena Ekholm . At the season final in Khanty @-@ Mansiysk , Neuner won the pursuit race ? her 14th World Cup win . She ended the season fourth in the Overall Biathlon World Cup , which was generally considered disappointing in the media .

Neuner later revealed that due to public expectations and constant media attention , the 2008 ? 09 season had been extremely difficult for her psychologically , and she even briefly contemplated retirement . She started working with a psychologist and cut down her media appearances as much as possible in the summer .

= = = Double Olympic champion ( 2009 ? 10 season ) = = =

Neuner competed at the Summer Biathlon World Championships for the first time in September 2009 when they were held in Oberhof . She only reluctantly agreed to interrupt training and participate in the summer event , which is contested on roller ski , however she went on to win gold in all three competitions ( sprint , pursuit and mixed relay ) . Neuner missed the first World Cup of the 2009 ? 10 season due to a cold in December 2009 . She returned at the following races in Hochfilzen , but was still affected by her cold and finished outside the top 20 . Her first podiums of the winter came in Pokljuka , finishing third in the sprint and second in the pursuit race . Thereby she secured her Olympic qualification within the German team .

Shortly before the Oberhof sprint in January 2010 , Neuner injured her back during warm @-@ up and had to withdraw . She returned in Ruhpolding where she came in third in both the sprint and the mass start race . In her first relay of the season , she dealt a blow to the German team by incurring two penalty loops , with Germany finishing fourth eventually . With some top competitors missing in Antholz at the last World Cup before the 2010 Winter Olympics , Neuner won two events ? the first individual race of her career as well as the sprint , giving her 16 career World Cup wins . She also came in second in the pursuit , which marked her seventh consecutive podium finish .

Neuner went into her first Winter Olympics in Vancouver with the declared aim of winning a gold medal . On 13 February 2010 , she participated in the opening sprint , which was contested at Whistler Olympic Park in rainy conditions . With one shooting error , Neuner claimed the silver medal , finishing 1 @.@ 5 seconds behind Slovakia 's Anastasiya Kuzmina . She uncharacteristically lost five seconds against the unheralded Slovak on the cross @-@ country course , which led to speculation of inferior ski preparation in the German media . Three days later , Neuner won gold in the subsequent pursuit race . Despite missing two targets in the standing position , she beat sprint winner Kuzmina by 12 @.@ 3 seconds . In her third Olympic event , she finished tenth in the individual . She had three shooting mistakes and said it had been difficult for her to immediately get her concentration back after winning her first gold medal . On 21 February 2010 , Neuner claimed her second gold of the Games in the mass start . After missing two targets , she had been trailing by as much as 29 seconds , but she pushed the pace and a clean final standing shoot allowed her to overtake Russia 's Olga Zaitseva on the last lap . After the race , Neuner made the announcement not to participate in the relay , citing mental exhaustion and her desire to give all of her team mates the chance to win a medal . Her withdrawal allowed her friend Martina Beck a start in her last Olympic Games . Neuner was Germany 's most successful athlete in Vancouver and was chosen to carry the German flag at the closing ceremony .

Following her Olympic success , Neuner continued her good form at the season 's remaining three World Cups , finishing all races in the top ten . She came in second in the Kontiolahti pursuit , and third in Oslo 's mass start race , which increased her World Cup lead after taking over the yellow bib in Vancouver . Neuner ended the season with her 19th World Cup win in Khanty @-@ Mansiysk 's mass start , which ensured her the 2009 ? 10 Overall World Cup , making her the first German woman to win the Biathlon World Cup for a second time . She also won the pursuit and mass start discipline World Cups . In the last event of the winter , the Mixed Relay World Championship , she

won gold , alongside Simone Hauswald , Simon Schempp and Arnd Peiffer , to claim her seventh world title .

== = Record world champion ( 2010 ? 11 season ) == =

During the summer , Neuner admitted struggling for motivation for the upcoming season , having won every title in the sport at only 23 years old . However , she vowed to continue her career at least until the 2012 world championships in Ruhpolding . In December 2010 she suffered from a cold , missing the season 's first World Cup in Östersund for the second year in a row . She started the 2010 ? 11 season in Hochfilzen , where she managed two seventh @-@ place finishes , and was part of the winning German relay team . At the third stop of the season in Pokljuka , she won the sprint race in spite of two shooting errors , claiming her 20th career victory .

Neuner continued the winter with mixed results in January 2011 . She reached the podium in the sprints of Oberhof and Ruhpolding , coming in second and third respectively . In the relay in Oberhof , Neuner was part of Germany 's team coming in sixth place , the team 's worst result since 2005 . She also had her worst personal result in 13 months , finishing in 16th place in the Ruhpolding individual race , which ended her streak of 24 consecutive top ten finishes ( including 15 podiums and 6 wins ) . At the World Cup in Antholz , Neuner again struggled with illness . She only participated in the concluding mass start , coming in 6th place .

At the World Cup stops in February in the United States , Neuner returned to good health and showed more consistency ; her worst result was a 6th @-@ place finish . In Presque Isle , Maine , she won the mixed relay as part of the German team . On week later in Fort Kent , Maine , Neuner finished all three races on the podium . She came in third in the sprint , second in the pursuit , and claimed her 21st World Cup win in the mass start ? the last race before the world championships .

At the 2011 World Championships in Khanty @-@ Mansiysk , Neuner won three gold and two silver medals . She claimed silver , alongside Andrea Henkel , Arnd Peiffer and Michael Greis , in the opening mixed relay . On 5 March 2011 , Neuner won the sprint race courtesy of a clean shooting performance . She finished second in the pursuit and fifth in the individual subsequently . On 12 March 2011 , Neuner won her second title in the mass start despite of four shooin errors . The following day she also claimed gold in the women 's relay , together with Andrea Henkel , Miriam Gössner and Tina Bachmann . Running the last leg for Germany , Neuner started in fourth , 67 @.@ 5 seconds off the lead , but she pulled back the entire time and moved in front on the last lap . Her five medals made her the most successful female athlete in the history of Biathlon World Championships .

The season ended in disappointment for Neuner in Oslo . After claiming her 24th career win in the sprint , she had moved into second place in the Overall World Cup ranking . However , she again suffered from a cold and had to pull out of the penultimate race of the winter , the pursuit in which she would have started 31 seconds in front . This effectively ended her hopes of retaining the World Cup crown . She eventually finished fifth in the overall standings , having missed five of the season 's 26 races .

== = Final World Cup winter ( 2011 ? 12 season ) == =

Before the start of the 2011 ? 12 season , Neuner hinted the upcoming season might be her last . She began the winter in Östersund with the best season start of her career , beating Tora Berger by 0 @.@ 2 seconds in the sprint to claim her 25th World Cup win . She also came third in the individual and the pursuit , and took the yellow bib of the Overall World Cup leader . On 6 December 2011 , Neuner announced her retirement from biathlon by the end of the season on her homepage . She explained her early departure from the sport ( at age 25 ) with a lack of motivation and her desire for a normal life . Neuner nonetheless continued her good form in Hochfilzen , where she claimed her 26th World Cup win in the sprint .

After Christmas , Neuner won both individual races in Oberhof ? her World Cup wins 27 and 28 . In the women ? s relay , she incurred 4 penalties in the final shooting , which foiled a likely German

victory . Neuner suffered one of the biggest mishaps of her career , when she fired on the wrong targets in the Nove Mesto pursuit , dropping from first to seventh place . She recovered quickly by winning the sprint race in Antholz one week later . In February , Neuner claimed a double sprint and pursuit victory in Oslo despite suffering from a cold , which forced her to withdraw from the mass start . At the last World Cup stop before the world championships in Kontiolahti , she reached her sixth sprint win of the season , and extended her World Cup lead over Darya Domracheva .

At the 2012 World Championships in Ruhpolding , Neuner won bronze in the opening mixed relay , alongside Andrea Henkel , Andreas Birnbacher and Arnd Peiffer . On 3 March 2012 , she claimed her 11th world title in the sprint race courtesy of her clean shooting . Neuner dropped to second place one day later in the pursuit , in which Domracheva overtook her at the final shooting bout . During the second week of the championships , Neuner often struggled with her shooting . She only reached 23rd place in the individual - her worst world championships result ever . With Tina Bachmann , Miriam Gössner and Andrea Henkel she won her second gold medal in Ruhpolding in the women 's relay on 10 March 2012 , despite incurring a penalty loop . In the concluding mass start , Neuner came in tenth place , with six shooting mistakes in total . Her 12th gold medal made her the second most successful biathlete of all time at world championships , behind male record holder Ole Einar Bjørndalen .

Having led the standings uninterruptedly since the second race of the winter , Neuner won her third Overall World Cup title at the season final in Russia , where she claimed her 34th and final World Cup win in the sprint . Neuner also won the 2011 - 12 Sprint World Cup thanks to an unprecedented eight out of ten sprint wins . With ten victories in total , her final World Cup season was the most successful in her career . She also became only the second woman after Magdalena Forsberg to win the overall title more than twice . On 18 March 2012 , Neuner ended her biathlon career with a sixth place in the Khanty - Mansiysk mass start .

= = Skiing = =

Neuner was one of the fastest female cross - country skiers in biathlon . During 66 of her 151 World Cup races ( 44 % ) , she has set the fastest course time ( race time without time spent at the shooting range or in the penalty loop ) . In addition , she has been among the top three fastest skiers in 77 % of her career races .

In her first World Cup races in the 2005 - 06 season , Neuner achieved average course times ; her best result was being fourth fastest in the pursuit race in Kontiolahti . During her first full season in 2006 - 07 , she finished among the top three fastest skiers in 19 of her 24 races and came in fastest in seven of them . Neuner won the 2007 - 08 Biathlon World Cup with dominating skiing performances . She set the fastest course time in 19 of her 25 races and was second or third fastest in the remaining six . At the beginning of the 2008 - 09 season , Neuner had a substantial drop in her skiing times due to a series of illnesses . However , she recovered and set the fastest course time in 14 of the remaining 18 races from January onwards . In the 2009 - 10 Olympic season , Neuner again started slowly in December , but came back finishing among the top three fastest skiers in 17 of her 21 races . She had her second best winter in 2010 - 11 when she set the fastest or second fastest skiing time in 90 % of her 21 races .

Neuner had been a fast cross -country skier from an early age . When she was eight years old , she won the first cross -country skiing competition she entered at her local ski club . At junior level , her lap times at the German Student 's Cup were comparable to older or male opponents . At the age of 15 , Neuner managed to set the same skiing times as her coeval male training partners . In preparation for the 2006 - 07 season , Neuner skied 5 @, @ 300 kilometres ( 3 @, @ 300 mi ) in training ; she increased the volume to 6 @, @ 000 kilometres ( 3 @, @ 700 mi ) for the 2007 - 08 season . Because of her ski speed , she has often been able to compensate for one or sometimes two or three shooting errors ( a penalty loop is 150 metres ( 160 yd ) long and normally takes 21 to 26 seconds ) .

During three of her 32 World Cup wins ( 2007 World Championships pursuit , 2008 World Championships mass start , and 2009 Ruhpolding pursuit ) , Neuner skied three additional penalty

loops compared to the second @-@ place finisher . In March 2008 , she came in second in the Khanty @-@ Mansiysk mass start race , despite completing five penalty loops . She also reached third place in the Oberhof pursuit in January 2007 with six missed targets . At Neuner 's first World Cup victory in the individual discipline in January 2010 , she compensated for a total time penalty of two minutes on the 15 kilometres ( 9 @.@ 3 mi ) cross @-@ country course ( incurred by two additional shooting errors ) .

= = = Skiing statistics = = =

\* Key : Number of respective times achieved / number of all races entered , percentage . Results in IBU World Cup races , no relay events .

\*\* Statistics as of 18 March 2012 .

= = Shooting = =

Neuner averaged a career shooting accuracy of 78 % . Her career average in the prone position was 88 % , while her career average in the standing position was 67 % . Her shooting results in the prone position were similar to other top contenders . The standing shoot had long been her weak point and her hit percentage was well below average in the World Cup field , although it had improved considerably in her later seasons .

With a 78 % accuracy , Neuner had solid shooting results during her 2005 ? 06 season debut . Her average dropped to 74 % in her first complete season in 2006 ? 07 . Neuner won the 2007 ? 08 Biathlon World Cup with a shooting accuracy of 73 % , which is the lowest result for an Overall World Cup winner ever and roughly ten per cent below the previous three winners ' averages : Andrea Henkel ( 84 % ) , Kati Wilhelm ( 87 % ) and Sandrine Bailly ( 81 % ) . She steadily increased her shooting percentages in the following two seasons with a 76 % average in 2008 ? 09 , and her career best results of 82 % in the 2009 ? 10 Olympic season . In the 2010 ? 11 season , she set her career high in the standing position with a 75 % accuracy .

Neuner 's shooting performances have been a regular topic in the German media . At times she has been reluctant to discuss her shooting in interviews and has said the public 's fixation on it contributes to the problem . She has insisted her difficulties in the standing position are not due to technical weaknesses but psychological , and her training results are just as good as the results of her team mates . She explained in interviews that she had developed a fear of the standing shooting over time , knowing she had to justify herself after the race if she missed . In 2008 , Neuner trained with Bundeswehr shooting coach and former large calibre world champion , Rudi Krenn , and subsequently changed her stance slightly . Since 2009 , she has worked with a psychologist , primarily focusing on mental techniques to build her confidence on the shooting range . Her standing position average has improved from 60 % to 75 % from 2008 to 2011 . Neuner has been wearing ear plugs during some of the races in order to better concentrate while shooting . The individual race , which places a high emphasis on shooting , has traditionally been her worst discipline ( each shooting error results in a one @-@ minute time penalty , instead of a penalty loop ) .

Neuner has won 6 races ( all sprints ) with a perfect shooting record : Khanty @-@ Mansiysk sprint in March 2007 , 2011 World Championship sprint and 4 sprints in her final 2011 ? 12 season . She also shot clean on two other occasions , the sprint in Kontiolahti in March 2006 , coming in fourth place , and the Östersund sprint in December 2008 , finishing third . Her worst shooting performance came in December 2008 , with a total of nine shooting errors at the World Cup pursuit in Hochfilzen . Neuner 's costliest shooting occurred during a mass start race in Antholz in January 2009 . After 15 clean shots , she was leading by 53 @.@ 6 seconds before the final shooting , in which she missed all five targets , eventually dropping to sixth place .

= = = Shooting statistics = = =

\* Key : Hits / shots , percentage . Results in all IBU World Cup races including relay events .

\* \* Statistics as of 18 March 2012 .

= = Personal life = =

Neuner has lived in Wallgau , Bavaria , Germany , a small alpine village of 1 @, @ 400 people , from birth . In 2007 , she bought her grandmother 's house in Wallgau , where she now lives in her own flat . Neuner plays the harp and owns an enduro motorcycle . She has said she enjoys mountain biking , hiking and swimming during the off @-@ season .

Neuner had been involved in a nearly two @-@ year relationship with Austrian ski technician and former biathlete Franz Perwein , whom she had met during the 2006 Junior / Youth World Championships . Until the autumn of 2009 , she then lived in a relationship with DSV chief biathlon technician Björn Weisheit for 19 months .

In December 2009 , Neuner confirmed a romantic relationship with Josef Holzer , a school day friend from Wallgau . The couple married in March 2014 and have one daughter , Verena Anna ( born 30 May 2014 in Garmisch @-@ Partenkirchen ) .

= = In the media = =

Biathlon is the most popular winter sport in Germany . Each World Cup event is shown live on German television and the January World Cup races in Oberhof , Ruhpolding and Antholz are regularly seen by over five million viewers . Following her three world championship titles in 2007 , Neuner quickly became one of Germany 's most popular female sport stars , often nicknamed " Gold Lena " in the media . During her first two years in the spotlight she signed several endorsement deals and claimed numerous awards . Neuner 's popularity grew further with her success during the 2010 Winter Olympics . Her second gold medal win in the Olympic mass start was seen live by 9 @. @ 75 million television viewers ( a 31 @. @ 5 per cent market share ) , the most watched programme of the Games in Germany . Her withdrawal from the Olympic relay was one of the dominating stories of the Winter Olympics in Germany , leading to much media speculation whether pulling out had been entirely her decision . She later received the Fair Play medal of Germany 's Olympic Society for setting an example of " team spirit " .

Neuner won the Biathlon Award , chosen by the national coaches of the World Cup teams , for Female Athlete of the Year in both 2007 and 2008 , and she was awarded the Goldener Ski ( Golden Ski ) , the highest award of the German Ski Association in 2007 , 2008 and 2010 . The Forum Nordicum , a consortium of journalists from twelve countries , named her Biathlete of the Year in the 2007 ? 08 and 2009 ? 10 seasons , beating out her male counterparts Ole Einar Bjørndalen and Emil Hegle Svendsen respectively . Neuner was chosen as Germany 's 2007 Sportswoman of the Year by the country 's sports journalists . The following years , she came in third for the 2008 award and was voted in second place in 2010 . Along with all Olympic medal winners , she received the Silberne Lorbeerblatt ( Silver Laurel Leaf ) in 2010 , the highest state decoration for athletes in Germany . In 2011 , readers of Germany 's top selling newspaper Bild voted Neuner the seventh greatest German sportsperson of all time , and she was again named German Sportswoman of the Year . Nine months after her retirement , Neuner received Germany 's Sportswoman of the Year award for a third time .

Neuner 's interest in knitting has often been addressed by the German media and she maintains a knitting website , which includes detailed knitting instructions and a " knitting blog " . She has stated that she usually takes knitting equipment on her travels during the season and that knitting is a way for her to relax . In 2007 , Neuner declined an offer to appear nude in the German edition of Playboy . Outside of Germany , she is particularly popular in Russia , where she has a fan club and from where she has said to receive half of her fan mail . In 2010 , Neuner appeared in an advertising campaign for a lingerie line . She explained she tried to use it in a deliberate attempt to correct her media image , after becoming irritated with her public persona of " little sweet Lena " . She was an ambassador for the 2011 FIFA Women 's World Cup in Germany. and a member of the board of trustees for Munich 's bid to host the 2018 Winter Olympics .



= = Record = =

= = = Olympic Games = = =

Neuner has won two gold medals and one silver medal at the Winter Olympic Games . At her only appearance at the 2010 Winter Olympics in Vancouver , Canada , she won gold in the pursuit and the mass start event . She also claimed silver in the opening sprint . After winning three medals , she decided not to participate in the concluding relay race .

= = = World championships = = =

Neuner is the most successful female biathlete in the history of Biathlon World Championships . She has won seventeen medals , twelve gold , four silver and one bronze . At her debut during the 2007 World Championships in Antholz , Italy , Neuner won three titles ( sprint , pursuit and relay ) . One year later at the 2008 World Championships in Östersund , Sweden , she again claimed three gold medals , winning the mass start , relay and mixed relay events . Neuner did not win a title at the 2009 World Championships in Pyeongchang , South Korea ; her best result was the silver medal in the relay event . She won her second mixed relay gold in Khanty @-@ Mansiysk , Russia , in 2010 . At the 2011 World Championships , she won three more titles ( sprint , mass start , relay ) and two silver medals ( pursuit and mixed relay ) . At her final championships in 2012 , Neuner won her world titles eleven ( sprint ) and twelve ( relay ) , as well as her fourth silver ( pursuit ) and her first bronze medal ( mixed relay ) .

= = = World Cup = = =

During her first World Cup season , Neuner only appeared in ten races , finishing 34th in the overall standings . In the 2006 ? 07 season , she became a regular in the German team and ended the season in fourth place . Neuner won the Biathlon World Cup for the first time in 2007 ? 08 ; she also won the sprint and mass start disciplines . She finished the 2008 ? 09 season fourth , winning the individual discipline that year . In the 2009 ? 10 season , Neuner won the overall World Cup for a second time ; by winning the pursuit and mass start scores as well , she has claimed each World Cup title at least once . In 2010 ? 11 , she won the sprint discipline for a second time and finished fifth in the season ranking . In her final World Cup season in 2011 ? 12 , Neuner won her third Overall World Cup title , as well as the sprint discipline .

\* Key : Races ? number of entered races / all races ; Points ? won World Cup points ; Position ? World Cup season ranking .

\* Statistics as of 18 March 2012 . ''

= = = = World Cup wins = = = =

Over the course of seven seasons , Neuner has reached 34 personal World Cup wins . In the history of the International Biathlon Union she is ranked second behind Magdalena Forsberg ( 42 ) , with Uschi Disl ( 30 ) third , for all @-@ time career victories . In addition , she has won nine relay races and three mixed relay events as part of the German World Cup team . Neuner has often started slowly at the beginning of a winter season and has claimed only three of her individual victories before Christmas . Consequently , 18 of her 47 wins came in the month of March . Geographically most of her wins occurred in Khanty @-@ Mansiysk , Russia ( 10 ) , followed by Antholz , Italy ( 6 ) and Ruhpolding , Germany ( 6 ) .

\* Key : WCH ? World Championships ; OG ? Olympic Games . Statistics as of 18 March 2012 .

= = = Overall record = = =

During her seven season on the World Cup tour , Neuner had competed in a total of 175 races , winning 47 of them ( a 26 @.@ 86 win percentage ) . She has claimed at least one win in each discipline of biathlon and has scored World Cup points in all but three of her races . Neuner has reached a total of 82 World Cup podiums ( 63 in individual races and 19 in team events ) . In addition , she has achieved 137 top ten finishes ? 78 @.@ 29 per cent of all the races she has entered .

\* Results in all IBU World Cup races including relay events . Statistics as of 18 March 2012 .

= = = Junior / Youth World Championships = = =

Neuner has won seven gold and four silver medals at the Biathlon Junior / Youth World Championships . With the exception of the individual discipline , she has won a medal in every race she entered . In 2004 , at her first junior world championships in Haute Maurienne , France , Neuner won two titles ( sprint and relay ) . One year later , she claimed gold in the sprint race in Kontiolahti , Finland , and in 2006 , she again won two titles ( pursuit and relay ) in Presque Isle , Maine , United States . Neuner did not participate in the 2007 event . She returned to the junior world championships in 2008 when they were held in Ruhpolding , Germany , winning two more gold medals ( sprint and pursuit ) .

= = Achievements and honours = =

International titles

Winter Olympic Games ? 2 gold medals2010 : Pursuit , Mass start

Overall Biathlon World Cup winner ? 2007 ? 08 , 2009 ? 10 , 2011 ? 2012

Individual World Cup winner ? 2008 ? 09

Sprint World Cup winner ? 2007 ? 08 , 2010 ? 11 , 2011 ? 2012

Pursuit World Cup winner ? 2009 ? 10

Mass start World Cup winner ? 2007 ? 08 , 2009 ? 10

Biathlon World Championships ? 12 gold medals2007 : Sprint , Pursuit , Relay

2008 : Mass start , Relay , Mixed relay

2010 : Mixed Relay

2011 : Sprint , Mass start , Relay

2012 : Sprint , Relay

Biathlon Junior / Youth World Championships ? 7 gold medals

Awards

German Sportswoman of the Year ? 2007 , 2011

Biathlon Award for Female Newcomer of the Year ? 2007

Biathlon Award for Female Athlete of the Year ? 2007 , 2008

Goldener Ski of the DSV ? 2007 , 2008 , 2010

Biathlete of the Year of the Forum Nordicum ? 2008 , 2010

Silbernes Lorbeerblatt ? 2010