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native and former track star has his mind set on a medal in bobsledding

GOING FOR THE GOLD

Randy Jones was looking back as a sprinter and football player at Duke University, and now he's interviewing for a job at Ford.

He described himself as a bobsledder. He was on his answering machine when a message came that earned him a place on the team for the upcoming Winter Olympics.

Winning a gold medal in bobsledding is not something he has on his mind.

But gold medals don't come along too often, and he's a long time away," Jones said in a recent interview from Calgary, Alberta, where

his team learned Friday that it had finished first overall in the Olympic trials.

Jones grew up on Cameron Avenue in East Winston, which isn't exactly known as a haven for winter sports.

HE LED GLENN HIGH School to the state track championship in 1986 by winning the 100-meter dash and anchoring Glenn's 400-meter relay team. At Duke, he played running back in football and continued to run track.

"He knew how to focus himself and gain what he wanted," said Steve Whicker, his track coach at Glenn.

"Once he set a goal, he went after it."

That goal originally was to make the Olympic track team, but once Jones had the opportunity to

be a bobsledder, he set his mind on winning a gold medal in that sport, Whicker said.

When Jones graduated from Duke in 1992 with a degree in mechanical engineering, he seemed set to be an automobile-company executive. But a bobsled driver named Scott Pladell noticed Jones' sprinting times in a track magazine and left a message on his answering machine. Pladell invited Jones to learn how to push a bobsled.

At a camp in Lake Placid, N.Y., Jones caught the eye of Brian Shimer, who some describe as the foremost bobsled driver in the United States. He joined Shimer's four-man team.

Jones' role is to push the sled when the team starts its runs. After that, he sits in the rear and



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Randy Jones will help push a sled for the U.S. bobsledding team

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handles the sled's brakes. "Basically, all you do is push and jump on," he said in an interview in 1992.

"You try to stay as low as possible to cut down wind resistance. You have to learn the tracks so that when you get to the end you can pull the brakes."

Jones was resting Saturday night, glad for a break from the grueling sport that requires his team to lift and carry sleds weighing 400 pounds and 600 pounds.

"There's really a lot more to it than what everybody sees," he said.

"After a while, you feel like, 'I

really don't feel like lifting this thing up anymore.' "

Bobsledding generally is dominated by white athletes from icy climates. The comic movie *Cool Runnings* played up the novelty of the story of a bobsledding team from Jamaica. But Jones said he hasn't faced any disadvantages as a black bobsledder.

He cited an incident in October in which a black athlete training for the U.S. Olympic luge team was taunted and one of his teammates was beaten by a group of neo-Nazi skinheads at a bar in Germany.

Such an incident wouldn't happen to the bobsledders, Jones said, in part because they socialize in large groups.

"With the luge team, you've got four guys who weigh 150 pounds in

a bar full of skinheads," he said. "We've got big guys; we've got tall guys."

Jones said that his team will remain in Calgary for training until Feb. 9, then fly to Norway in time for the opening ceremonies Feb. 12 in Lillehammer. The bobsled races will begin about a week later, and, if his team succeeds, it will be the first American team to win a medal in bobsledding since 1956.

Jones' parents, Lois and John Jones, said that their son didn't even sound excited when he called them Friday to tell them he had made the Olympics.

"He's kind of a laid-back person, so I had to kind of pull it out of him," John Jones said. "He said, 'We're in. You weren't expecting anything else, were you?' "