

# Cookie Chronicles

## New Reindeer Leads Team

*Topsy-Turvy Team Tryouts*



### *Lightning Shows Off His Red Nose*

Santa's sleigh team is taking on new leadership this year with the unexpected retirement of superstar Rudolph, who has been leading the team since 1939, with a few brief breaks in his tenure.

"I'm sorry to make this announcement," said Santa Claus, "but our old friend Rudolph has decided to retire this year, along with the two oldest reindeer, Dasher and Comet.

The starting reindeer lineup since 2007 has consisted of Dasher, Dancer, Prancer,

Vixen, Comet, Cupid, Rudolph, and Lightning. There have only been a few temporary substitutions due to illnesses and injuries in the last seven years.

As a result, this year's team opened up three coveted slots to qualified reindeer. Santa decided to return to the traditional nine-member team.

"This year's games were the biggest in twenty years," said Gonzo the Great, *North Pole News* Sports Reporter. "The games were physically and mentally tough. It was

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## COOKIE CAPER

Mysterious cookie disappearances have been plaguing people around the world since last Christmas.

"I left a plate of cookies on the kitchen counter, intending to put it out for Santa when I went to bed," said Abigail Crumb of Portland, Maine. "But all of the cookies were gone after I brushed my teeth. I couldn't figure it out. I live alone. And Santa still hadn't come to my house." Miss Crumb doesn't even have any pets who could have stolen the food.

Several of Miss Crumb's neighbors had similar problems, so they reported it to the local police. Detective Roger Cinnamon found nothing to suggest a problem with intruders.

"After the initial investigation, I almost forgot about it," said Det. Cinnamon, "because there simply wasn't any evidence. Frankly, I thought they

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great! The new reindeers Cloudburst and Meteor showed off with some crazy high altitude acrobatics. I hope they'll give me a ride sometime."

The biggest surprise addition was newcomer Mitten, a doe from Reindeer Park in Saskatchewan, Canada. "It's almost unheard of to have an outsider join up," explained Edwinna Bell, Sleigh Team Maintenance Manager. "Usually the outsiders can't fly at all. But Mitten was a born natural. She outperformed everyone in the

agility run."

Santa made the big announcement at the end of the games. "I'm happy to announce this year's starting line-up: Dancer, Prancer, Vixen, Mitten, Meteor, Cloudburst, Cupid, Zigzag, and Lightning. Also, Lightning has been promoted to the sleigh point lead." Like his father Rudolph, Lightning has a glowing red nose that outperforms most technology, but he's also proven his great navigation skills over the last few years with the team.

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were making it up. But then I mentioned it to some friends at a forensics conference in San Francisco. We started checking around and discovered similar incidents in many cities in the US and even abroad."

The search for answers has left Det. Cinnamon very puzzled. "I still have no explanation. It could be J. R. Claus getting up to mischief again, or maybe there are cookie elves at work. I might start a website to collect more reports. There has to be a pattern here, some clue that will tell us what's happening!"



*By Pippi Penguin,  
special correspondent  
from the South Pole  
Press*

We sent our visiting guest correspondent, Pippi Penguin, to get the inside scoop on Santa's sleigh team changes. She started with Rudolph.

PP: "Why are you retiring?"

R: "It's been on my mind ever since I rejoined the team after my accident in 2004."

PP: "You mean the incident with Windstorm, that left you stuck in the San Diego Zoo for a year with amnesia?"

R: "I don't want to talk about him. He's a mixed up buck. His family has been through enough."

PP: "I see. So what are your plans? Spending more time with family and friends?"

R: "Oh, spending more time with my grandkids is part of it, but there's more. It's not retirement so much as reinvention. I'm going to

## Interviews with Rudolph and Blitzen

become more involved with reindeer training. Maybe start an academy for troubled bucks and does to give them better opportunities."

Miss Penguin also cornered North Pole Mayer and former sleigh team member Blitzen for his take.

PP: "Tell me, Mr. Blitzen, how do you see the sleigh team shakeup?"

B: "I'm all for it. It's about time we got some new blood on the sleigh team. This is much better than when they tried to use the novice program."

PP: "What went wrong? The program was very popular. Wasn't it canceled in 2010?"

B: "The novices were too prone to error. Remember how Dudley nearly took out the lamp on the Statue of Liberty on the New York flyby?"

PP: "I guess we all tried to

forget that!"

B: "They had to pull the plug. Orders came from the big man himself. After that, every time they needed a backup they had to scramble for a sub. Everyone recognized we needed to return to the old-style reindeer games."

PP: "Why are so many of the old-timers leaving?"

B: "Dasher and Rudolph are going to work on youth training. But I think Comet just wanted out. He stayed on the team even after his son hurt Rudolph."

PP: "Windstorm was supposed to be the next big shot on the team, wasn't he? His assault on Rudolph must have been hard on Comet."

B: "Yes. Comet did his best to rebuild his family's reputation by serving loyally for a few more years, but the stress took its toll."

Comet declined to be interviewed for this piece.