

# Winter Sports Preview



## Prima diva

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*Alshammar leads life by own code*

**K**now this about Therese Alshammar before anything else: She loves eye contact. It might not even be a love. It seems like an obsession.

She says she doesn't know she's doing it. But sit down and talk with the Nebraska swimmer, and first thing you'll notice is a double-barreled, gray-eyed shotgun of a stare.

Yes, you have her attention – which makes sense: Alshammar is game for any conversation where the primary focus is her. She loves talking about herself. And she doesn't have any problem saying so, either.

But don't look away or shift your gaze. Her eyes will follow you, because she wants to know exactly what's behind yours.

"The eyes bring out the best in people – or the worst," Alshammar said. "You see what people are and how they are. You see what they think."

"Your eyes are the windows to your soul. I was brought up that way. I was born with it."

Alshammar has no problem baring her soul or offering an opinion on just about anything. That's the other thing about her: She's direct – about herself, about her swimming and about those around her. So much so, it

borders on pure bluntness.

Of course, it's about what you'd expect from someone who was named Sweden's Sexiest Woman.

**'Of course I'm sexy'**

Alshammar loves to be noticed, she said. She goes out of her way to be seen. And it's hard not to in Lincoln. She's dyed her hair six different colors. She wears short, tight-fitting clothes. One pair of her shoes (out of many) resembles moon boots.

It was her irreverent style and attitude – along with her swimming ability – that got her noticed by the Stockholm, Sweden-based Café Magazine – and launched her straight into celebrity status.

Café, said Managing Editor Mikael Svensson, is Scandinavia's leading men's magazine – the Swedish equivalent to America's GQ Magazine. Except the women wear fewer clothes – a lot fewer.

For six years, Café has given out the award to the "Severiges 69 Seixgaste" – the 69 sexiest women in Sweden, a list that changes every year. In May 1998, Alshammar was the sexiest on that list.

"We're looking for someone that's a little more than just some blond model with big breasts," Svensson said. "Who cares about her?"

"We want somebody who's got an attitude and style. We want somebody who's not afraid. Therese is that, and she's a great swimmer, too. She's from Sweden, but she's got a U.S. state of mind."

Attitude and style are things Alshammar isn't short on, which are rarities in Sweden, where both Svensson and Alshammar said standing out is looked down upon. It's better to blend in with the other 8,541,000 inhabitants.

"You're not supposed to say you're good at anything over there," Alshammar said. "In Sweden, if someone says you look good, you're supposed to say, 'Oh no, you really think so? Oh, I don't think so.' It's an unwritten law."

"When they tell me that, I say, 'Thank you!'"

Svensson recalls a similar response the first time he talked with Alshammar.

"We said we were considering her for the award," Svensson said. "And Therese said, 'Of course I'm sexy. I've known that all along.'"

**Celebrity status**

What Alshammar didn't know was just how big the award was to win. Café debates the winner for weeks with a jury of writers, celebrities and other notables. Local television stations tap members of the jury for possible leaks.

When Alshammar won the title as Sweden's Sexiest, she was in Lincoln. And to hear Alshammar tell the story, finding out wasn't a big deal.

"They call me and tell me, 'You've won! You're Sweden's Sexiest Woman!'" Alshammar said. "'What do you have to say?'"

"'Good.'"  
"No!' they say to me. 'You have to say something more emotional than that! Give us something else.'"

"'OK. Great.'"  
When Alshammar went back to Sweden that summer, she was greeted with a day's worth of interviews and her picture on about every newspaper in Sweden. Alshammar was, and continues to be, a celebrity in her

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NU basketball coach talks about everything from the player walkout in 1996 to the Rutgers job to his tour of duty in Vietnam.

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New safety rules force NU wrestlers to cut weight earlier and watch their diets more closely in the offseason.

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### Farmer Paul

After growing up on a farm in North Carolina, Paul Sanderford is ready to take the Nebraska women's basketball team to the Sweet 16 in the NCAA Tournament.

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