

18 March 2010

IN FOCUS

- Japan Takes Gold in Cross-Country
- Wheelchair Curling Round Robin Draws to a Close
- Speed Central at Alpine Skiing Downhill
- Japan Defeats Canada at UBC Thunderbird Arena

JAPANESE UNDERDOG WINS GOLD

Today's Cross-Country races kicked off with the Men's 10km Standing category, with 29 men fiercely competing in every moment of the competition. The Cross-Country competitors also had a clear blue sky and warm sunlight shining down on Whistler Paralympic Park.

Norway's Vegard Dahle (LW4), Russia's Oleg Balukhto (LW6) and Kirill Mikhaylov (LW4) were singled out as the early favourites. However, by the 2.3km mark, Japan's Yoshihiro Nitta (LW8) had taken the lead with a time of 5:26.0. Mikhaylov was in second place with a time of 5:44.4 and Balukhto followed with a time of 5:47.3.

Halfway into the race, Nitta was still in gold medal position with a time of 12:57.8, with Mikhalylov holding onto second place and Ukrainian Grygorii Vovchynskyi (LW8) in third. At this point, Nitta had a 24-second lead over Mikhalylov.



As Nitta skied down the last turn, the Japanese fans cheered and held their breath, anticipating that this could be Japan's first gold medal at the Paralympic Games.

Once Nitta crossed the finish line he waved a large Japanese flag in celebration, although he still had to wait for a few competitors to see whether he had indeed won gold. When it was announced that he had won first place, he and his support team jumped up and down in excitement and embraced one another. One of Nitta's main goals is to inspire elementary and middle school children.

"I want them to think that the Paralympics are cool, to enable them to think, 'Even though I've injured myself, I want to play sports, I want to aim to compete in the Paralympics,'" he said.

KOREA AND USA QUALIFY FOR SEMIFINALS

Both Korea and USA played their last game of the Wheelchair Curling round robin this afternoon and both qualified for the semifinals after both winning their respective games. Canada clinched their spot in the semifinals yesterday.

The Americans found draw weight early in their game against Switzerland and consistently pressured Swiss skip Manfred Bolliger to make difficult shots that did not succeed. Bolliger threw 18% for the game as USA won 8:2.

Korea kept Germany off the scoreboard for the first half of the game despite the fact that Germany started with the hammer. Korea would control the game, wrapping up at 9:2 in seven ends.



Italy improved to four wins and four losses as they defeated Great Britain 6:3 this afternoon while Sweden also sits at 4-4 after losing to Japan 7:8 in the same session. Both Italy and Sweden need one more win to reduce competition for the fourth semi-finals spot. A loss would give Norway, Japan, and Germany a chance in the Tiebreakers session tomorrow.

DOWNHILL RACES HIT WHISTLER CREEKSIDE

The sun shone a big spotlight on the amazing Downhill races of Alpine Skiing today. In the first run, Viviane Forest (CAN, B2) with guide Lindsay Debou won gold with a time of 1:27.51. This is her third medal from these games. "We have three colours so far, a whole set," Forest said about winning gold, silver and bronze in the Vancouver 2010 Paralympic Winter Games.

Only 0.68 seconds behind Forest was Henrieta Farkasova (SVK, B3) with guide Natalia Subrtova, adding a silver medal to her collection after a gold medal win in the women's giant slalom (Visually Impaired) event. Danelle Umstead (USA, B2) won her first medal of the Games with guide Rob Umstead with a bronze and was one of three American women to ski away with medals in the Downhill events.



Alana Nichols (USA, LW11) and Laurie Stephens (USA, LW12-1) were the other two in the trio of American medal winners having won the gold and silver medals in the Women's Downhill Sitting category, respectively.

"I'm just on cloud nine again. Two is awesome, three is a charm so I've heard. All I can do is ski my best run," Nichols said about winning her second gold medal and looking ahead to her future races.

The fast course caused more than 20 skiers to crash in their races, most notably double gold medalist Martin Braxenthaler (GER, LW10-2) and double bronze medalist Kuniko Obinata (JPN, LW12-2). However, the speed on the course was golden for Laura Woolstencroft (CAN, LW3-1), who won the Women's Standing category and her third gold medal of the week. Solene Jambaque (FRA, LW9-2) raced to a silver medal with a time of 1:29.94. Double silver medalist, Andrea Rothfuss (GER, LW6/8-2) skied to a bronze medal in the standing category.

In the Men's Downhill (Visually Impaired) Jon Santacana Maiztegui (ESP, B2) with guide Miguel Galindo Garces won gold by skiing just 0.4 seconds faster than silver medalist Mark Bathum (USA, B3) with guide Slater Storey. This was Santacana Maiztegui's third medal but first gold in the Vancouver 2010 Games.

After winning that first gold Santacana Maiztegui said, "We never thought we could win a medal in this event but we have improved a lot. Being here is like a dream come true."

JAPAN DEFEATS CANADA AT THUNDERBIRD ARENA

The Japanese Ice Sledge Hockey team surprised the spectators inside the stadium by defeating the Canadian 2006 Torino Paralympic Games' Gold medalists' with two late third period goals. Japanese forward Daisuke Uehara scored on a give and go play from Assistant captain Kazuhiro Takahashi to make it 2:1 Japan with 1:15 left in the game.

In the final moments of the game, captain Takayuki Endo was the last Japanese player to touch the puck as a Canadian pass from the point ended up finding it's way into the back of the net



crushing Canada's hopes for any late comeback. Commenting on scoring the winning goal, forward Daisuke Uehara said "the fact that I touched it means a lot".

The Japanese were excited after winning the game, with players crying and embracing each other. Goaltender Mitsuru Nagase punched the air with his fists after the victory.

Nagase said, "we wanted to do it and I can't describe how happy we are especially to do it in Vancouver a hockey mad city. I will have special memories in Canada. It will be morning news in Japan as I think it is 7 a.m. back home". The Japanese goaltender has connections to Canada having been studying college for three years in Ottawa and playing hockey for 15 years.

Ranked fourth coming into this tournament, this victory in Ice Sledge Hockey will improve Japan's ranking. It will be a first time win for Japan over Canada in 12 attempts since the beginning of the Canadian National Sledge Hockey Team in 2004. Coach Kojin Nakakita said, "it is the biggest win ever for Japanese hockey".

SEBASTIAN COE AND CHRIS HOLMES IN VANCOUVER

Representatives from the London 2012 Paralympic Games have made it to Whistler for the Vancouver 2010 Paralympic Winter Games and are enjoying every minute. Lord Sebastian Coe, Chairperson of the London 2012 Organizing Committee and Chris Holmes, Director of the Paralympic Games in London both were in the Whistler Village to comment on their experience so far in Canada.

"It's been an extraordinary experience," Lord Sebastian said. "I have not since Sydney seen the Games embraced in the way that they have been here in the last few weeks. It's really important to have four stadia, and clearly the ticket strategy has been about right. And I think the volunteers have been of an extraordinary quality. And when you get the greatest competitors in the world in one place, you tend to get great sport – and I think that is what we have witnessed."



Paralympic Games Director Chris Holmes said that he has had a fantastic time, visiting the sports and the venues both in Vancouver and Whistler.

"I have been lucky enough to go to the Athletes' Village in both Vancouver and Whistler, and clearly everything has been thought about," Mr. Holmes said. "Not just the practicalities, but the vision that is behind the Games, to enable the athletes to think about nothing else other than perfect performances, because everything else has been taken care of here."

One of the most memorable experiences that Mr. Holmes had was yesterday at Whistler Creekside during the Giant Slalom competition.

"We had just about every weather possible within the space of about half an hour, but none of that dulled the atmosphere in the crowd or the competition," he said. "Just seeing people competing on a really challenging course - and that this is about elite athletic performance, you could see that the audience really got the whole Paralympic experience."

AUSTRIA HOUSE BRINGS SUSTAINABILITY

The Austria House is nestled among the trees between the upper and lower village in Whistler. The 2,700 square foot house is designed after traditional buildings of Austria's Alpine regions and uses building





techniques and materials which are ecologically sustainable and protect the environment. The interior boasts beautiful wood columns and finishing throughout the two-floor building.

Open to the public from 11:00-17:00 during the Vancouver 2010 Paralympic Winter Games, the House offers authentic Austrian beverages and snacks. In the evening, the house hosts Austrian athletes as they celebrate their successes from the day's competition.

The Austrian House was developed in cooperation with the Austrian Passive House Group and the Resort Municipality of Whistler.

PARALYMPIC ATHLETES AND OFFICIALS



Anna Schaffelhuber (LW11) from Bayerbach, Germany, is the youngest member of the German Paralympic team at the Vancouver 2010 Games and one of only two women on the German Alpine Skiing team. She has only been racing since 2007 but already has an overall second place in the Slalom event in the European Cup and is competing in her first World Cup season and Paralympic Games this year. So far, she has been really happy with her results in the Paralympic Giant Slalom Sitting category. When she is not skiing, Anna is studying. She has one more year until she completes her "A levels" in school, and then hopes to study law in university.

Frous Martin is the Assistant Manager and Team Leader for the Ice Sledge Hockey Team of the Czech Republic. His responsibilities include organizing the players' schedules, Anti-Doping control, and anything else related to the athletes' needs during the Vancouver Paralympic Winter Games. Mr. Martin has been part of the Czech Republic's Ice Sledge Hockey Team for five years now, choosing to continue because he enjoys the sport. He works voluntarily and says that able-bodied athletes in his country, including himself, also enjoy the Paralympic Sport of Ice Sledge Hockey.



CALENDAR

19 March	Alpine Skiing – Super G	Whistler Creekside
19 March	Ice Sledge Hockey – 7 th -8 th Game (12:00-14:00); 5 th -6 th Game (15:30-17:30); Bronze Medal (19:00-21:00)	UBC Thunderbird Arena, Vancouver
19 March	Cross-Country Skiing (Men's 1x4km + 2x5km Relay; Women's 3x2.5km Relay)	Whistler Paralympic Park
19 March	Wheelchair Curling (Tiebreakers)	Vancouver Paralympic Centre
19 March	IPC Accessibility Summit	Marriott Pinnacle Downtown Vancouver
19 March	IPC Exhibition	Snow Dome, Whistler



PROGRAMME SCHEDULE OF ONLINE COVERAGE AT www.ParalympicSport.TV

Friday 19 March		
19:00	Ice Sledge Hockey (Bronze Medal Game)	LIVE
Proudly presented by Visa and Samsung		
The logos for Visa and Samsung are displayed side-by-side. The Visa logo is in blue with a yellow checkmark, and the Samsung logo is in white on a blue oval background.		

Please note: All times are CET. This schedule is subject to change

PREPARE TO BE INSPIRED

The Vancouver 2010 Paralympic Winter Games are broadcast on www.ParalympicSport.TV.

BECOME A FAN ON FACEBOOK: Stay up to date with what happens on ParalympicSport.TV and become a fan on Facebook! Be the first to get news and videos from the Vancouver 2010 Paralympic Winter Games, with additional LIVE programming information. Simply log in to Facebook, type in the address www.facebook.com/ParalympicSport.TV, and click on the “Become a Fan” button at the top of the page.

PHOTOGRAPHY: Lieven Coudenys and Rob Prezioso return as the IPC’s official photographers during the Vancouver 2010 Paralympic Winter Games. Photos of daily events and competitions can be viewed and purchased from Lieven Coudenys and Rob Prezioso through their respective websites. For more information about Lieven Coudenys, please visit his official website at www.coudenys.be/paralympics. For more information about Prezioso Photography, please visit the official website at www.prezioso.com.au.

TICKETS

For information about tickets, please visit www.vancouver2010.com/paralympic-games/tickets.

VANCOUVER 2010 INFORMATION

For more information on the Vancouver 2010 Paralympic Winter Games, please visit www.vancouver2010.com.

PARALYMPIC INFORMATION

For more information about the Paralympic Movement, please visit www.paralympic.org. For more detailed information on this Newsletter, please send an email to jeff.wolfshohl@paralympic.org.