

21 March 2010

IN FOCUS

- Closing Ceremony Ends Vancouver
- Final Day of Cross-Country Skiing
- High Number of Visitors at IPC Exhibition
- Vancouver Athletes and Volunteers in Words

FIREWORKS AND CONGRATULATIONS CLOSE VANCOUVER



A heart-warming and spectacular Closing Ceremony this evening officially ended the Vancouver 2010 Paralympic Winter Games. Taking place at the Medals Plaza in Whistler, thousands came to watch the show that was a celebration for athletes, officials, volunteers and the people of Canada.

Countries with the highest number of winning medals were celebrated, with athletes from Russia giving their country first place with a total of 38 medals. To honour the country, the national anthem was sung by a choir,

with the sounds echoing in and around the Whistler Village.

With a total of 24 winning medals, Germany came in second place behind Russia, and was followed by both Canada and Ukraine who tied with 19 medals.

In his speech, International Paralympic Committee (IPC) President Sir Philip Craven said that the Vancouver 2010 Paralympic Winter Games offered everyone not only elite sport by hard-working athletes, but a sense of family and community.

“The notion of true sport - pure sport, has been understood by all of us,” Sir Philip said. “With excellence, our Paralympic athletes came here to compete fairly, and the result was a fantastic show of sportsmanship. Together, we have all captured the Paralympic Spirit from these Games and can carry it around the world. With this, our athletes, coaches and officials will encourage new athletes, make new friends and inspire them to light the flame in their hearts.”

He continued to say that he looks forward to seeing all athletes back in four years, at the Sochi 2014 Paralympic Winter Games.

Following the IPC President’s speech was the official presentation of the Whang Youn Dai Achievement Award to Endo Takayuki of Japan and Collette Bourgonje of Canada. The Award recognizes elite athletes with a disability who have demonstrated an exceptional level of determination to overcome their adversities through sport and the Paralympic Games.

Also recognized during the Closing Ceremony were the winners of the IPC Athletes’ Council Election, which included Katarzyna Rogowiec from Poland in Biathlon & Cross-Country Skiing (275 votes), Todd Nicholson, Canada in Ice Sledge Hockey (203 votes), and Eskil Hagen from Norway in Ice Sledge Hockey (193 votes).

The Vancouver 2010 Paralympic Winter Games took place in Whistler and Vancouver from 12-21 March 2010, with events in Alpine Skiing, Biathlon, Ice Sledge Hockey and Wheelchair Curling. To relive the Opening and Closing Ceremony, as well as the competitions of the Vancouver Games,



check out the IPC's internet channel, www.ParalympicSport.TV, the best source for Paralympic Sport content.

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

SPRINTING FOR GOLD

It was a busy final day at Whistler Paralympic Park with six 1km sprints taking place. Ten countries took home medals and six different countries won gold, displaying the truly international spirit of the Vancouver 2010 Paralympic Winter Games.

In the Men's Visually Impaired category, the McKeever brothers from Canada won their third gold medal. It was an exciting race as Brian McKeever (B3) made an unexpected move and dropped his guide and brother, Robin McKeever, while going uphill on the course as he did not want to take the chance of losing his lead. Brian was singled out for his unique technique as he used both poles uphill and used skate-skis.



On skiing without a guide, Brian said, "It was a bit scary when the Russian fell, but I just made a good call and cut inside."

In the Women's Visually Impaired race, Germany's Verena Bentele (B1) with guide Thomas Friedrich took gold once again, making this her fifth gold medal at the Games. She has won gold in every race she has competed in at Paralympic Park.

"This is the best Games for me. This is very, very special. It is a dream," she remarked.

In the Women's Standing 1km, Ukraine's Oleksandra Kononova (LW8) won the gold medal. Japan's Shoko Ota (LW8) followed in second place and Russia's Anna Burmistrova came in third (LW8). In the Men's Standing 1km, Japan's Yoshihiro Nitta (LW8) won his second gold medal of the Games. Russian Kirill Mikhaylov (LW4) won the silver medal and Finland's Ilkka Tuomisto (LW8) took the bronze medal.

In the Men's 1km Sitting category, the Russians dominated the podium with Sergey Shilov (LW10) taking first place, followed by Irek Zaripov (LW12) and Vladmir Kiselev (LW12). In the Women's 1km Sitting category, Italy's Francesca Porcellato (LW10) won the first gold medal for Italy, with Ukraine's Olena Iurkovska (LW12) taking silver and Belarus's Liudmila Vauchok taking the bronze.

After winning the gold medal, Porcellato said, "Today is the anniversary of my incident, and I wanted to give myself a gift. Every gold medal is beautiful. I still don't believe it. I wanted this medal so much, it is unreal, and now I have it."

IPC EXHIBITION SUCCESSFUL IN PROMOTING PARALYMPIC SPORT

The IPC Exhibition was a complete success at Whistler Village during the Vancouver 2010 Paralympic Winter Games, attracting a total of 23,749 visitors. Saturday, 20 March had the highest number of visitors in a day with 3,199. The high numbers indicate the strong curiosity that the people in Whistler had for Paralympic Sport and the Paralympic Movement in Canada.





One of the highlights of the IPC Exhibition was a one day showing of the Paralympic medals, where visitors had the opportunity to touch and feel the prized possession of every top placing athlete. Because of the medals, this day had attracted a high 2,085 people just by afternoon.



Titled "Spirit in Motion – Discover What Moves Us", the IPC Exhibition was supported by IPC Worldwide Partner Otto Bock Healthcare. The aim of the interactive exhibition was to provide all visitors with information about the Paralympic Movement and Paralympic Games History, including specific details on sports, athletes' stories and background knowledge on technology. The IPC Exhibition also gave visitors the chance to test out Ice Sledge Hockey.

Included in the exhibition was an extensive timeline, which illustrated the Paralympic Movement since its beginning in 1948. The exhibition also had prostheses and wheelchairs on display, as well as the aforementioned opportunity to sit and play in an original sledge manufactured by Otto Bock Healthcare. Before leaving the Snow Dome, visitors were also given the chance to enjoy the Paralympic Lounge, with film clips showing past Games.

PARALYMPIC ATHLETES AND VOLUNTEERS



Bernhard Habersatter is 39 years old and from Salzburg, Austria. During the Vancouver 2010 Paralympic Winter Games, Habersatter competed in the Downhill and SuperG events of Alpine Skiing. Unfortunately he did not qualify for the finals, however he said that he is satisfied with his performance and still had an exceptional time during the Games. Concerning the complete Games experience, he said it was sensational, "from the Opening Ceremony to the slopes, it was all impressive." When he returns to Salzburg he will go back to work, and in his free time go skiing with his son. With his future, Habersatter hopes to compete at the IPC World Cup in Sestriere, Italy.

Nixon Otim is from Vancouver and has been working during the Vancouver 2010 Paralympic Winter Games facilitating traffic at the Whistler Paralympic Park venue. His responsibilities include assuring that all individuals are safe when crossing the roadway, and keeping all traffic moving. Nixon decided to work for the Vancouver Games because it is an inspiration for him. It is his first Winter Games to be working, and he has been thoroughly enjoying the experience. When the Games are over, Nixon plans to return to his respective home in Vancouver, where he will continue his profession as a day trader.



IPC THANKS VOLUNTEER JOURNALISTS

The IPC would like to thank Brett Cameron, Dan Chalcraft, Murray Chu, Kie Shiroma, Sam Araki and Sara Newham for their extensive work during the Vancouver 2010 Paralympic Winter Games. These were the volunteer journalists who contributed to the Vancouver 2010 News in various arenas, providing on site information and analysis of the competitions and events. Thank you for your hard work! It has been a great pleasure working with you!



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.

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.