

2010 Countdown

with Ann MacBeth

Eye on Brad Lennea

❖ The moment Paralympian Brad Lennea heard the news of the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Games coming to Canada, he packed his things and moved to Whistler on a wish and prayer. He's been going hard ever since. An accomplished competitor in all four alpine disciplines, Lennea was named to the Canadian Disabled Ski Team after just one year on the development team and competed in the 2006 Paralympic Winter Games in Torino. He now has his sights set on a podium finish in 2010.

In 1991, a tragic motor vehicle accident left Lennea a paraplegic. It took a few years to discover the sport of sit-skiing, but once he got into it, it gave him a new lease on life. "The more I got involved with disabled skiing, the more it consumed my life. Now every decision I make revolves around skiing and 2010," he says.

Unlike traditional ski racers, Lennea was not born into the sport. But if hard work translates into Olympic medals, place your bets on Lennea in 2010.

Third-time lucky

❖ Canada has the dubious distinction of being the only host nation not to win a gold medal—we've missed the top of the podium at both the 1976 Summer Games in Montreal and the 1988 Winter Games in Calgary.

To prevent a third blow in 2010, Olympic organizers created the campaign "Own the Podium 2010." It is a challenge for Canada to step up and show the world its very best. It's also a promise to athletes that they will have increased support from training to competition.

The goal is for Canada to be the top medal finisher at the Olympic Winter Games in 2010 as well as to place in the top three nations at the Paralympic Winter Games.

If the World Cup scene is any indication, the extra support is working. Canadian winter athletes concluded the 2007-08 World Cup season with a total of 184 medals in events that are part of the Olympic Winter Games sport program. Seventy-four athletes reached the podium last season, achieving a collective best-ever result for Canada in World Cup competition.



WHISTLER TIMELINE

- 1962** Four Vancouver businessmen envision Whistler as the site to host a future Winter Olympic Games. The bid is unsuccessful, however, the Garibaldi Lift Company is formed, with Franz Wilhelmsen as president, whose goal is to create a ski hill.
- 1964** Whistler still has no road, electricity or sewer systems.
- 1965** Whistler Mountain finally has a name: Garibaldi Whistler Mountain. A four-person gondola, a double chairlift, two T-bars and a day lodge are constructed.
- 1966** Whistler officially opens for skiing.
- 1975** Whistler becomes the first "Resort Municipality" in Canada.
- 1977** The new municipality is given 53 acres of crown land to develop a town centre.
- 1978** Construction begins on the new town centre that will eventually become Whistler Village.
- 1980** Blackcomb Mountain opens, creating one of the largest ski complexes in North America.
- 1985** Blackcomb Mountain expands its terrain and becomes North America's only "Mile High Mountain," in recognition of its skiable vertical.
- 1992** The U.S. ski media votes Whistler the "Number One Ski Resort in North America" and the trend continues for almost a decade.
- 1998** Blackcomb's owner Intrawest buys Whistler Mountain.
- 2003** The International Olympic Committee (IOC) announces Vancouver as the Host City for the 2010 Olympic Winter and Paralympic Winter Games, with some of the most-watched alpine sports being hosted at Whistler.

2010 traffic jam

❖ Historically, the Vancouver and Whistler area has struggled with efficient transportation during five-o'clock rush hour, not to mention an international Olympic and Paralympic event. As previous hosts to major concerts and World Cup events, both communities aren't new to the party scene. But the Olympics are uncharted territory.

With tens of thousands of spectators, media, athletes and Games officials in town, just getting around will be the biggest issue. "Transportation, transportation, transportation. That's what everybody is concerned about," said Maureen Douglas, community relations director for the Vancouver Organizing Committee.

What's the big deal? Whistler currently has a transportation system with 25 buses, which will explode to 130 buses during the Games. That's just to move people around the municipality. B.C. Rail let its tracks to Whistler degrade so far that an act of God would be required to revive passenger-train service, while plans for charter buses to ferry people in from Vancouver are still on the drawing board.

People living around venues in Whistler will have to modify their daily lives in order to accommodate such things as road closures and parking restrictions. At an information meeting in June, organizers promised that residents will at least be able to go out and buy a carton of milk.

There will be no parking in Whistler Village during the Games, which will prove to be interesting for locals not wanting to walk for milk. But organizers insist that a special transit plan will be in place for the Games. Maybe they can look into five-o'clock rush hour issues while they're at it.

