

B.C. ATHLETICS - A.G.M. 2009

ATHLETICS CANADA REPORT

2008 has been a year of both achievement and of moving forward towards 2012.

Organizationally, Athletics Canada has, in line with its Strategic Plan, redefined its emphasis on strengthening the coaching services to be provided to athletes across the country. Primarily, it is a pleasure to welcome Alex Gardiner back from the COC to fill the position of Head Coach. Les Gramantik, who did a great job of leading our athletes in Beijing, has taken over the High Performance Centre in Calgary where, among other responsibilities, he will develop an enhanced program of liaison with our athletes attending US universities through NCAA scholarships.

Within this context, Hugh Conlin, Director, Development Programs, has compiled a document outlining the Athletics programs, including coaching staff components, of every University in Canada as a guide for post-High School athletes and their parents and coaches as an alternative to the NCAA route.

A review of our para-athletics program, jointly conducted with Road To Excellence and Sport Canada, has resulted in the decision to recruit a Director/Head Coach who, like Alex Gardiner, will focus on the coaching of coaches as an essential part of the development of our Paralympic team as it heads towards its London rendezvous.

Financially, while we received additional funding from Sport Canada and Road To Excellence, and have instituted a program of building up a reserve fund to avoid in future the deficit problems we have now eliminated, the levels of future funding are still a question mark. Much will depend upon decisions of the Federal Government in its upcoming budget as to whether the earlier commitments to a higher level of sustained sport funding can be maintained in these times of economic recession. The additional matter of increased funding support for our developmental athletes is also tied in with the question of higher membership fees – something that all Branches are currently assessing.

Administratively, while some staff changes have taken place, internal promotions and external recruitment have continued to strengthen that aspect of our activities. In particular, I am delighted to report that our C.E.O., Joanne Mortimore, has, under the auspices of the IOC, completed a program of international study which resulted in her gaining an Masters degree in Sports Organizations Management from the Universite de Lyons, France.

Athletically, the Olympic/Paralympic year is always the big one. Not only for our athletes and their coaches but now, because of the emphasis that the COC, Sport Canada and Road To Excellence place upon the winning of medals at these Games, for the funding of our future programs.

Thus, in terms of podium finishes, we had predicted 2 such achievements for our Olympic athletes and 17 for our Paralympians.

In August, we came – oh, so close; 1 centimetre close! While we delighted with Priscilla Lopes-Schliep in her 100 metre hurdles bronze, we all felt the agony of that last American throw which deprived our own Dylan Armstrong, the first Canadian shot-putter to go over 21 metres, of a similar bronze in his event. Gary Reed, in spite of the most gallant of efforts, also missed out by a literal hair's-breath, on his bronze attempt in the 800m. And Jessica Zelinka's pb/Canadian record 5th place performance in the Heptathlon, along with our men's 4x100m relay placing 6th, meant that this was one of our best Olympic results in a long time.

September saw our Paralympic team more than achieve their podium predictions.

10 Gold Medals, 1 Silver (won by Diane Roy in the re-run of the 5000m, after she had been unfairly deprived of her original gold medal, won in a new Paralympic record time in spite of the penultimate lap crash), and 8 Bronze, provided the team with a total of 19 medals. These included the 2 gold medals won

by B.C.'s own Michelle (Mikey) Stilwell, as she set World and Paralympic records in the 100m and a further Paralympic record in the 200m events.

And this Paralympic performance cannot be concluded without further noting the incredible achievement of Chantal Petitclerc, who not only duplicated her 5 gold medal wins from Athens, but set 3 new World Records in the process. Is it any wonder that she was not only recognized as the Outstanding Canadian Woman Athlete of the Year, but was also awarded the Lou Marsh Trophy as the Outstanding Canadian Athlete, male or female, in 2008.

Bracketing these Games results were the World Indoor 400m Championship gold medal win by Tyler Christopher in Valencia, Spain; those from the NACAC Cross-Country Championships, where the Canadian team won 6 gold medals, from both individual and team results, and a bronze; the 5 Gold, 3 Silver and 7 Bronze medals won at the NACAC Under 23 Track & Field Championships; the 7 (1 Gold, 3 Silver and 3 bronze) of the 26 medals won by Canada at the Commonwealth Youth Games in Pune, India; the 7 "Top 10" placements by our athletes at the World Youth Championships in Poland; and the 5th place finish by our Junior Women's team, together with the 7th place finish for the Junior Men's team, at the World Cross-Country Championships in Edinburgh, Scotland.

These results, and the growing cohesion and partnership building between Athletics Canada and its Member Branches, are great signs for the strong future of our sport.

Respectfully submitted,
Danny Daniels,
Vice Chair, Athletics Canada.