

Hometown skiers geared to win gold

By MATTHEW LITTLE
Epoch Times Staff

VANCOUVER—Alpine skiing will be Canada's first chance to win gold. It's a lot of pressure to carry but the men's alpine ski team isn't letting that get to them.

If the pressure was on anyone on the team, it would be Manuel Paradis-Osborne who has had the best year of his career and is currently the third-ranked downhill skier in the world.

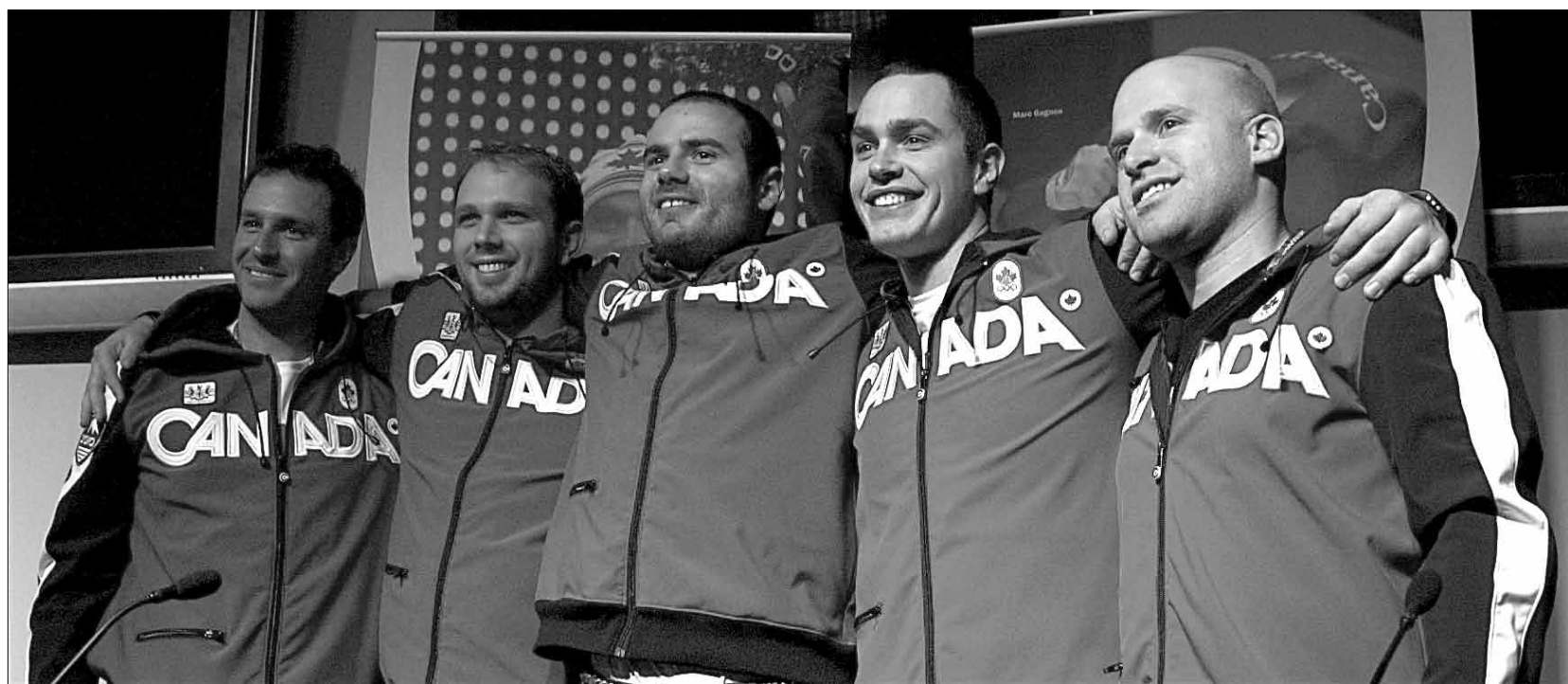
But even so, he's not getting worked up, he said. He'll just keep doing what he's been doing. "Obviously the whole country, Vancouver, Whistler, everybody is

really excited," he told reporters this week. "But for me, from start gate to finish, it is just another race. You can't take anything away from how we race world cups."

This attitude has been working, considering he's won his last two events this year and finished second in another.

It can be harder to concentrate on the race the way he normally would though, said Paradis-Osborne, given the amount of press and hype surrounding the games.

"You definitely have to mentally stay in your bubble and figure out how you're going to race and don't let everything else get in your way and mislead your focus."



GOLD DIGGERS: Coach Paul Kristofic (far left) stands with his men's downhill team, Manuel Osborne-Paradis, Jan Hudec, Erik Guay, and Robbie Dixon (left to right). MATTHEW LITTLE/THE EPOCH TIMES

He said the downhill team, which includes himself, Robbi Dixon, Erik Guay, and Jan Hudec, is keeping a level focus but aiming for the gold.

"The difference between Torino and now is that we have four guys right here that can all win golds. We're all capable of it. That is what

we have been pushing for."

Osborne-Paradis and Dixon grew up skiing the Whistler hills and in some ways it is a bit of a homecoming for them to be in Vancouver again. Dixon said he was excited to have the first shot at gold.

"It is a great opportunity to have the downhill be one of the first

events. Obviously the pressure and the energy that's really building up around Vancouver and around Canada is just amazing."

Dixon is ranked No. 32 in the world at the moment, but was the second fastest to complete a practice run of the course last Saturday.

He said it would be great to have

the chance to win gold. It would be the first time that would ever have happened on Canadian soil. In the previous two Games Canada hosted, in Montreal 1976 and Calgary 1988, Canada left with silver.

"Especially racing on my home hill where I grew up skiing with Manny, it's pretty amazing," he said.

Saints win one for New Orleans

Quarterback Drew Brees deservingly named MVP

By RAHUL VAIDYANATH
Epoch Times Staff

MIAMI GARDENS, Fla.—In another storybook Super Bowl, the sentimental favourite New Orleans Saints upset the mighty Indianapolis Colts 31-17 last Sunday.

"It's all meant to be. It's all destiny," said Super Bowl XLIV MVP Drew Brees.

"He [Brees] was outstanding, consistent, and he's just a winner everywhere he's been," said Saints head coach Sean Payton.

The Colts started brightly in the first quarter, racing out to a 10-0 lead after their first two possessions. But with the chips down, the Saints got going much like the city of New Orleans did after Katrina knocked it down.

"We put this city on our back four years ago and now it's worth it all," said Saints safety Roman Harper.

From there on in, the Saints outscored the Colts 31-7, which strangely didn't reflect how close the game actually was.

While the Colts could've seized complete control at the end of the first half after an impressive goal line stand and possession of the ball with about two minutes left, the Saints stuffed them and added another field goal. Saints kicker Garrett Hartley would set a Super Bowl record with three field goals of 40 yards or more in a championship game.

The Colts led 10-6 at the half despite being totally dominated in the second quarter.

ON-SIDE KICK

The second half started off with a bang after a rousing medley of classic songs by The Who. The Saints fooled the Colts with the onside kick in a very bold move by Sean Payton.

"When you do something like that, you just put it on the players and they were able to execute. It turned out to be a big change of possession and ended in a score," said Payton.

Building on the momentum, the Saints punched it in with a 16-yard catch-and-run TD from Pierre Thomas. The Saints now had the lead that they should've had at the end of the first half.

Down 13-10, back came the Colts. The game entered the fourth quarter with the Colts up 17-16. You couldn't ask for a much closer game than that—two excellent football teams evenly matched, not having turned the ball over.

The two high-powered offenses look like mirror images of each other with their short passing attacks going horizontal rather than vertical and adding in the occasional run to shake things up.

"The Saints did a good job of containing the long ball and making sure they kept the ball in front of them," said Colts wide-out Austin Collie.

After a 51-yard field goal attempt by the Colts went wide left, the Saints drove downfield and scored a touchdown with a short pass to former Giants tight end Jeremy Shockey. They converted the two-

point conversion after a lengthy challenge review. The Saints were back in front 24-17 with just under six minutes to play.

With the ball back and facing third and five on the Saints 31-yard line, Manning made the first mistake of the game. His pass was picked off by cornerback Tracy Porter. The Louisiana native read the play perfectly, and returned it 74 yards for the touchdown. Mayhem broke out in Sun Life Stadium as the Saints fans went wild.

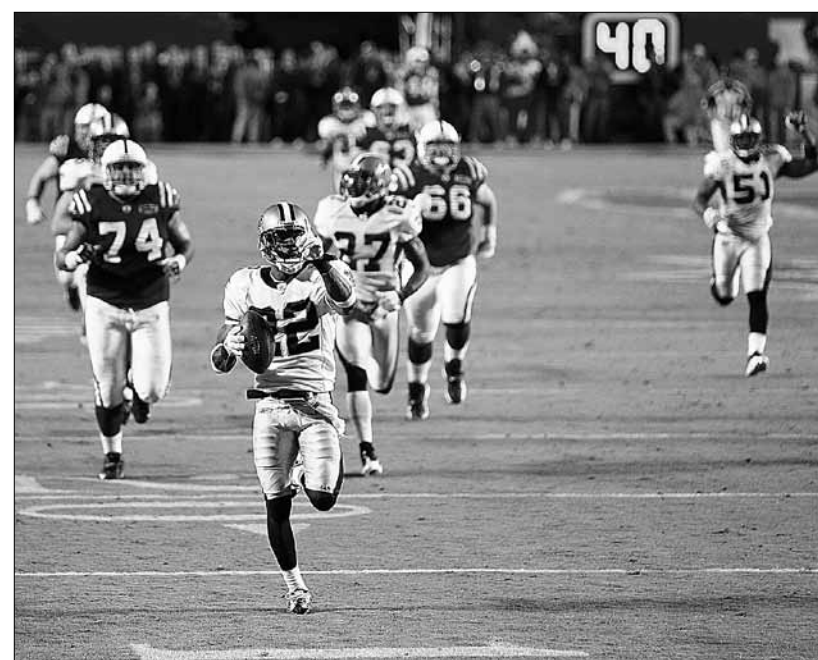
"It was great film study," said Porter. "We knew that on third-and-short, they stack and they like the outside release for the slant."

"We'd run it quite a few times, so I think Porter had a feeling it was coming because it was the same formation. He did a good job of recognizing it. He made a good play," said the intended Colts receiver Reggie Wayne.

Manning concurred with Wayne. "He [Porter] made a great play. That's all I can say about it. Porter made a heck of a play," said Manning reflecting on the game's only turnover.

The Saints defense may have had a reputation for giving up yardage but they also are known for their ball-hawking skills.

Saints safety Roman Harper spoke about the Saints defense, arguably their weakness, stepping up. "This year we were going to



GAME'S ONLY TURNOVER: New Orleans cornerback Tracy Porter read Peyton Manning perfectly and made the biggest play, a 74-yard interception return. EZRA SHAW/GETTY IMAGES

win in spite of the defense, not to spite the defense," said Harper.

Manning and the Colts moved the ball back into scoring position but the Saints defense bent but did not break. They shut down Manning on fourth down and that's all she wrote.

The Colts realized they had been beaten by a team that just played better when it mattered most.

"We just didn't execute well enough down the stretch like we typically do," said Colts head coach Jim Caldwell. The Colts had built a reputation for not panicking and fourth quarter comebacks but the Saints defense was well

prepared to counteract Manning's no-huddle offense.

"I thought we just didn't play well enough at certain times and in certain phases and the Saints certainly deserve the win," echoed Manning.

"We had our opportunities down there. You've got to take advantage of those situations and we didn't," said tight end Dallas Clark. "The Saints did a great job and they played good red zone defense, we just weren't able to make plays."

"It's a credit for every one of these players here," said Payton. "Everybody back in New Orleans gets a piece of this trophy."



DESERVING MVP: Drew Brees hoists the Vince Lombardi Trophy. ANDY LYONS/GETTY IMAGES

Danica Patrick proves herself in ARCA Slick Mist 200

By JAMES FISH
Epoch Times Staff

After months of speculation, Danica Patrick proved that she can indeed drive a stock car, finishing sixth in the ARCA Slick Mist 200 last Saturday after falling back as far as 24th place.

Danica banged doors with the veterans and came out in good shape. "That was really fun," she said after the race. "I was going side-by-side with people. The GoDaddy car doesn't look very pretty, but it was fun."

The race was won by ARCA veteran Bobby Gerhart (his sixth Daytona win) but all eyes were on IRL star Danica Patrick in the number 7 GoDaddy-sponsored Hendrick Racing Chevrolet.

Patrick started 12th in the accident-packed race, worked her way up to sixth by lap 30, then fell back to 24th with 20 laps to go after being rammed by Nelson Piquet Jr.

"I was trying to take a run that we all had down the inside and the guy [Piquet] came down over the front of



DYNAMIC DEBUT: Danica Patrick brought the number 7 GoDaddy Hendrick Racing Chevy home in sixth in her first stock car race. JASON SMITH/GETTY IMAGES

me," said Patrick.

Patrick charged back through the field, reaching eighth within 10 laps of her collision. Five laps later she moved into the top five.

"I thought, 'Shoot, man, we're not out of it. Why would we be out of it?' I was pretty excited to go from last to back to the top five again," said Patrick.

Everyone made their moves in the final two laps; guessing who to follow and who to try to go around, was as important as driver skill at this point.

Patrick guessed wrong, got pushed high, but fought back to finish a very respectable sixth in her rookie race in a stock car. Any doubts about her ability should be erased completely.

Danica Patrick's debut stock car performance showed that she has what it takes.

Patrick to Drive in Daytona Nationwide Race

Patrick will drive the number 7 GoDaddy Chevrolet at Saturday's

NASCAR Nationwide series race at Daytona International Speedway, the DRIVE4COPD 300.

The official announcement was made by JR motorsports General Manager Kelley Earnhardt and published Monday on the JR Motorsports Web site.

"To be the one driving that GoDaddy car at Daytona means a lot to me," Patrick said in the team's press release. "Racing in the Nationwide Series race was my goal during this entire two-month preparation process, but we wanted to make sure it was the right thing to do."

"The ARCA race was a blast, and I'm not ready for my first Daytona Speedweek to end just yet. I want more racing."

Team co-owners Rick Hendrick, Dale Earnhardt Jr., and Tony Eury Jr. met with Patrick after her successful run at last Saturday's ARCA race at Daytona, and decided she was ready to step up to the next level of competition.

Snowboarder Shaun White: pushing for perfection

By JAMES FISH
Epoch Times Staff

Of the modern additions to the Winter Olympics, snowboarding is one of the most popular.

And among U.S. Olympic snowboarders, Shaun White is famous for inventing tricks and constantly pushing the level of difficulty. The only way to stay at the top is to constantly stretch the envelope, and Shaun White is driven to do just that.

"Every event is tough. I can't just show up and not try my hardest," White says on his Web site. "That's really the goal for me: to take whatever skills I had before and develop them in a new way, which isn't the easiest nowadays because the tricks are really hard."

When snowboarding started, a 360 (one complete rotation while in the air) was considered a difficult stunt.

In January, White won the Winter X Games superpipe with his newly-patented (yes, snowboarders patent their creations) Double McTwist 1260 in which he twists around twice vertically while spinning three-and-a-half times, before landing. Snowboarding tricks have certainly come a long way.

White wants to be the first snowboarder to get a perfect score. On his Web site he says, "I know they haven't handed out a full-on perfect



SUPERPIPE CHAMP: Shaun White takes the podium after winning gold in the men's snowboard superpipe at the Winter X Games last month in Aspen, Colo. DOUG PENNINGER/GETTY IMAGES

score yet. I'll get them."

This 24-year-old thrill-seeker is a huge favorite to medal in both halfpipe and slopestyle at the 2010 Olympics in Vancouver.

Shaun White has been snowboarding since he was 4 years old, before snowboarding was an Olympic sport.

At age 5, he was diagnosed with a heart defect, and underwent two

major surgeries to repair it. He came back undaunted and at age 7, won the first snowboarding competition he entered.

After winning almost every amateur contest he entered, White turned pro at age 13. He won his first gold medal at age 15 in the Arctic Challenge. At 16, White missed landing a spot on the 2002 U.S. Olympic team by three-tenths of a point.

At 17, he entered the 2003 Winter X Games, winning gold in both slopestyle and halfpipe, as well as the Winter X Games best athlete award.

For the next three years, Shaun White won gold in just about every event he entered, including winning a gold medal in halfpipe in the 2006 Winter Olympics. He won gold in every event he entered in 2005 and 2006, and was widely recognized as one of the best snowboarders in the world.

He is a five-time Winter X Game gold medalist in superpipe and in slopestyle. While dominating in snowboard, White also competed in the Summer X Games on skateboard, medaling in 2003 and winning gold in 2007. He is the first athlete to win gold in both Summer and Winter X Games.

Besides being an amazing snowboarder and gold-medal skateboarder, White is an accomplished businessman. He has his own clothing lines with Burton and Oakley, and his own videogame, produced by Ubisoft.