

Olympic Diary – 2002 Winter Games – Salt Lake City, UT



Saturday, February 2 – Let the Games begin! I packed up the car this morning, said good-bye to the cats and was on the road about 9:00 am. Since the weather has been pretty good I'm taking US 95 down through Idaho then US 55 to Boise. The Palouse was particularly beautiful. Nothing but fresh, white snow for as far as you could see (including some blowing across the road occasionally). The only problem getting to Boise was in McCall. They had their Winter Carnival going on and it took almost an hour just to get through McCall.

Sunday, February 3 – The last leg today. Left Boise about 9:00. Just like yesterday there is nothing but snow cover everywhere. Other than the Lewiston/Clarkston valley I've seen nothing but snow – a good way to get ready for a Winter Olympics. The fact that I'm headed for the Olympics didn't really hit me until today. Somewhere in Idaho along I-84 I went past a mileage sign that said "Ogden – 84 mi". That was the first time that I really felt the excitement start. Got into Ogden at about 1:30 pm and decided to go to the processing center today rather than wait until tomorrow. Got my accreditation process finished and went through the just-in-time training they provide (watching a one-hour tape of a 6-hour long course on customer relations that the in-state volunteers had to go through). Then it was off to the uniform distribution area. The uniform is really a nice outfit provided by Marker – a jacket, vest, fleece turtle neck, pants, hat, ear warmer, gloves and liners, back pack, water bottle, and an assortment of skin care products including sun block and chap stick. Drove up to Layton to where I'm staying. Hugh Horstman and his wife Kim have opened their house up to an entire crew that were in Utah for last year's World Cup events. There will eventually be nine of us camping out in their basement for two to three weeks. Got there just in time for the Super Bowl (Yeah Pats!)

Monday, February 4 – Went up to Snowbasin today for the venue training. Because of parking and security you drive to a large parking lot then get on board a bus to get to the ski area. Takes about an hour from the time you leave Hugh's house to arriving at the area. Had our first experience with the security screening (mag and bag as we call it). They are thorough. I did bring my skis as they are providing a secured storage area for skis on the hill so that you don't have to bring them through security every day. The Snowbasin venue will host all of the alpine speed events (downhill, downhill combined and super-G for both the men and women). It is the largest venue at the Olympics with over 1400 volunteers, half for the men's course half for the women's course. I finished

the venue training then met up with Bob Porter from San Antonio (another volunteer staying at Hugh's). We had some lunch in the new lodge at Snowbasin (really a spectacular place) then went skiing for the afternoon. Our last play day before the course work starts tomorrow.

Tuesday, February 5 – Today is an “A” day. That means we're awake at 4:00 am, on the shuttle bus at 5:00, at the mountain by 6:00 and on the course by 7:00 am. Met the rest of the crew on which I'll be working (men's course, crew #25). Five of us worked together last year on the World Cup event – Hugh Horstman from Layton, UT, Rebecca Tanguay from Milliken, CO, Dan Navis from Wyoming, MI and Jim Schaefer from San Francisco. We added a sixth member – Mark Moore from Taylorsville, UT. Each crew is supposed to have 10 but it looks like the six of us will be the core for this team. Today was actually a relatively easy day. The course was in good condition since it hadn't snowed for a number of days. I'm working on a crew assigned to an area on the course called Three Toes. We did some work there then went to help ice down the Muzzleloader jump. The sun was out all day and we did find the opportunity to do a little free skiing.

Wednesday, February 6 – Today is a “B” day. We get to sleep in to 5:00, be on the bus by 6:00 and on the hill at 8:00am. Another beautiful day. We got the course fully ready to go and did see some of the athletes on the course. They did have some of the US development ski team run the downhill course today so we got to sit in the grandstand and watch. Had most of the afternoon off so we did get a little more free skiing. Went to see the dress rehearsal for the opening ceremony. It took three and a half hours to get into the stadium but the show was fabulous. It only took an hour and a half to get back but we still didn't get to bed until 11:00.

Thursday, February 7 – Back on the “A” schedule. After the late night last night it was not easy getting up at 4:00 am. Today was the first practice day for the men. After getting the course ready we sat near the Arrowhead jump to watch. The course is only about ten feet from the fencing at that point so we were only about 20 feet from them when they went over the jump. The sound that they make when they pass you at 60 – 70 mph is incredible. Had the camera and so got some great pictures.

Friday, February 8 –A “B” day but it snowed today. In fact it snowed all day with wind (50 mph at the top of the mountain). We spent all day moving snow off of the course many times. Because it snowed so hard both the men's and women's practice runs were cancelled. We were on the hill until 6:00 pm trying to move as much snow as possible. Finally got to the bottom wet and exhausted. No free skiing today. Didn't get back to the house where I'm staying until 7:00, just in time to see the opening ceremony. Looked very much like the dress rehearsal except for the ending. At the dress rehearsal they had five large balloons out on the floor of stadium that they didn't have during the actual ceremony due to winds.

Saturday, February 9 – Back to the “A” schedule. The snow stopped overnight and it was clear and beautiful, just like Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. Still had about an inch of snow to get off of the course in two and half hours. Got it done, however, and both the

men and women got training runs in. While the athletes are on the course no one is allowed to cross the course so if we are on the far side of the course (as we plan to be) we can't get down to the bottom of the mountain. So we have to just sit by the course and watch for the 2 hours it takes to get everyone a practice run. The afternoon was spent putting the final touches on the course. We were off of the hill at 3:30 today, a welcome change from yesterday. The sunny, clear weather is predicted to last through Tuesday, which means the men's and women's downhill races should get off on time. Tomorrow is our big day – the men's downhill. It turns out that the race director at Snowbasin has tried to hold three international competitions and all have been cancelled due to weather. Let's hope that his luck changes tomorrow.

Sunday, February 10 – Another “A” day but what a great day. Just like yesterday it was sunny and cloudless. We were on the lift at 6:30 am and had the course ready to run at 8:30. They started the preliminary runners at 10:00 and started the downhill event right on time. I was able to watch from the Arrowhead jump and then from Three Toes. The only fall of the day was one of the preliminary runners and I managed to get it on tape. The downhill was a great event. It was topped off by having the men's course crews released for the afternoon. So of course we all took off and skied all afternoon. We're relaxing now and have a “B” day tomorrow so we get the extra hours rest. Now we're waiting for the downhill coverage on TV.

Monday, February 11 – Today was supposed to be the women's downhill. It was another beautiful day, lots of sun but with some gusty winds. We were on the men's course that is right beside the Shooting Star jump on the women's course. So we cleaned up a little bit of accumulated snow churned up by yesterday's competition then settled in to watch the women. They first delayed the start until 11:00 am then to noon then cancelled the race. Thought it was going to be an easy day. But they decided to reroute the super-G course under the Muzzleloader jump. This meant that all of the snow from last Friday that we had carefully stomped down and smoothed off had to be dug out and removed. My crew got caught for the task. So we spent three and a half-hours digging packed snow off of a mountainside. It was almost 6:00 pm before we were finally finished.

Tuesday, February 12 – Because of the postponement we had a “B” day again – got that extra hours sleep. The day was almost identical to yesterday, sunny, warm with a little wind. We did almost the same as yesterday, cleaned up Three Toes then settled in to watch the women. The schedule went almost the same as well. The start was postponed to 11:00, then noon, but they finally did get started at 12:15. Got to see Picabo Street's last competitive downhill run. Afterwards they ran a practice run for the women's combined competition, then we had to quickly get behind our course barriers as they ran a practice for the men's combined. We then had to tear-up the B-fence crash barrier on our section to clear away accumulated snow, pack it down and reset the fence. I got off of the hill just in time to shower and get to the airport to pick up Diane. It took a bit of switching sleeping arrangements since we already have eight others sleeping in the basement of our host's house but we got everyone in.

Wednesday, February 13 – Since the men’s combined competition is today we’re back on an “A” schedule. Today was almost identical to the past four except that we really did have some wind. We again just cleared snow from yesterday’s practice and cleaned up after the inspection runs today. Then we sat back and watched the men run the downhill portion of the combined competition. The competition started at 10:00 am and finished just before noon. We lowered the top of the crash barriers on our section to protect them from the wind, had some lunch then skied down to the lower part of the mountain to watch the slalom portion of the competition. Our crew chief skis this mountain all of the time so he knew good locations to watch the slalom. He didn’t mention that we had to crash through a jungle to get there. We did get to see the two slalom runs just above the grandstand area. The best news was after we got back to the crew tent at the bottom of the hill. We are on the mountain tomorrow but don’t have to be there until 8:00 am. This means we can sleep in until 6:00 am tomorrow morning. We then are scheduled for a day off on Friday. We’ll see if this schedule works as the weatherman is predicting 6” of snow over night. If it does snow the day off doesn’t look likely.

Thursday, February 14 – The 6” of snow they were predicting turned out to be about one-half an inch. And then the clouds only stayed around until noon with sun again all afternoon. Since the men will no longer be running from the top of the mountain our job consisted of moving some of the crash barriers from the upper portions of the course to the lower portions. In the morning we untied large bags (4’ x 8’) filled with shredded foam from the trees and TV towers at the top of the course and moved them to the Rendezvous Face. Not an easy task considering that the Rendezvous Face is as steep as the initial face on the course. Before my crew could get together again at the bottom of the mountain the women’s combined race started and trapped half of the team on the other side of the racecourse. So we sat in the sun at the bottom and ate lunch. When the slalom portion of the women’s race was over the crew reformed and went back to the top of the mountain for more jobs. We spent most of the rest of the day moving loose snow off of an area called Off Track Canyon. The course is steeply banked and, like everywhere else, very icy. We finished that project and again got stuck on the wrong side of the course while the women ran the downhill portion of the combined race. Since we couldn’t stand by the side of the course we were directed to the area directly in front of the Jumbotron in the finish area. So we finished the afternoon reclining on some ice seats that others had built and watching the women race on the Jumbotron.

Friday, February 15 – Our promised day off. What do you do when you’ve been on skis for 10 days straight? You go skiing, of course! It was a beautiful day and, since there was no race, no crowds. Had a great day. Left about 3:00 pm to go to the medals ceremony for the day. Smashmouth was playing the concert after the medals ceremonies but we had to leave early because we are scheduled for another “A” day tomorrow.

Saturday, February 16 – Up at 4:00 am for the last time. Today was just like all of the other days this past week – cool but sunny in the morning and warm and sunny in the afternoon. Today was the men’s Super-G race. However, with the work we did on Thursday (and the other crews did on Friday) there was nothing that needed work on the course. So we all sat around the lodge from 6:30 am until 9:00 then went up to watch the

men race. The work on the course is done by two groups primarily. Course crews, like the one I'm on, rove around the mountain doing jobs while section crews stay at one location. We've worked primarily with the section crew at Three Toes. Since they are the first on the mountain and usually the last off, and never get a hot meal we treated them to a hot meal today. We carried a small charcoal grill up with us along with bratwurst, sauerkraut, potato salad, and brownies and had a picnic while the men's Super-G race went on. As soon as the men's race was over, however, there was a lot to do. We started by taking down all of the B-fence in the Three Toes area. The B-fence is the orange colored fencing you see lining the course. The biggest task was to take down the A-fence. This is suspended from overhead cables and buried into the snow. It then has a fine-mesh blue "slip fence" attached to the front to deflect skiers away from hazards that cannot be protected other ways. To take down the A-fence you first have to pull all of the fencing out of the snow (it usually goes down 6 – 12"), detach the slip fence and roll it all up, dig up the anchors that hold the fence in the ground (they're spaced about 10' apart all along the A-fence) then lower the netting and roll it up. Tearing down all of the A- and B-fence took about 2 hours. You then have to move it to central sites so the snow cats can come in and haul it back to the bottom. We got it all down so tomorrow (a women's race day) there is nothing left for us to do. So tomorrow will be another free skiing day.

Sunday, February 17 – Today is the women's Super-G. Since I was on a course crew for the men's course, and we got the entire men's course torn down yesterday, today is a free skiing day for us. Got up on the hill with Diane about 9:00 and skied down to a point where we could watch the women race. We were just below Draba Drop, one of the bigger jumps on the women's course. Had a great time, then went to one of the mountaintop lodges for lunch and went free skiing with the rest of the crew for the rest of the afternoon. Since the women's race was the last competition being held at Snowbasin we needed to take all of our equipment off of the mountain with us.

Monday, February 18 – A sad day today. The four guys from Michigan (Dan Navis, Mike Bylsma, Mike Canaan and Bill Clair) all left today at 6:00 am. Rebecca and Doug Hansen are leaving for Colorado later this morning and Diane and I leave for Pullman. It's been almost three years since I first started the process of volunteering for the Olympics. Now it's all over. It feels sort of like it does when you graduate. It's an event you've been anticipating for a long time but now its over. You've got all of the wonderful memories but it's time to move on. Had breakfast with our hosts at a place called Sill's. Afterwards I drove to the processing center to get the package of gifts that they are giving to all volunteers who complete their assignment. The package included a certificate from both the IOC and the SLOC, a medallion and a Pulsar watch. After picking that up we went back to our host's house, packed up and started for home. Made Boise easily and are staying there over night.

Tuesday, February 19 – Left Boise in the morning to start for Pullman. As we were filling up with gas there appeared to be a rather substantial storm in the mountains north of Boise. So we drove along I-84 to Pendleton then up to Pullman. Still ran into snow in a number of stretches along I-84. Stopped in Pendleton to visit the woolen mills. Finally

got back to Pullman about 6:00 pm. Tomorrow I get back to normal. The memories will last a lifetime, however.