

IN OUR OPINION

Let's all take pride in Bilodeau's gold medal

The ignominy is over. Thank you, Alexandre Bilodeau. Bilodeau won the gold medal in men's moguls Monday, marking the first time a Canadian athlete has captured the top Olympic prize on home soil — or, in this case, home snow mixed with straw and prayer. And, what a glorious moment it was. Until Bilodeau's transcendent race, only one host country in the history of the summer and winter Olympic games had failed to win a gold medal. That country would be Canada. And we did it twice.

We certainly came close to gold in Montreal during the summer games of 1976. In particular, everyone remembers Greg Joy's stunning assault on the high jump, ultimately ending with a silver medal. For many Canadians, that silver felt like gold, as Joy did manage to defeat his American rival, the loathsome Dwight Stones.

In fact, in '76, we won five silver medals, along with six bronze medals.

In Calgary in 1988, we all recall how close figure skater Brian Orser came to gold, ultimately losing the "battle of the Brians" to gold-medal-winner Brian Boitano of the United States. We had other shots at gold in Calgary, as well. The final tally was two silver and three bronze medals.

Undoubtedly, Bilodeau's win will be the first of many, many Canadian gold medals this Olympics. The mogul skier should take great pride in his accomplishment. We certainly will.

What do you think? E-mail a brief comment, including your name and town to: provletters@theprovince.com

KRIEGER'S VIEW



IN QUOTES

"The legacy I can see is the death of the protest at the hands of a bunch of clowns." — Letter writer Dean Pillings says the actions of window smashing cowards will destroy any legitimate protest message.

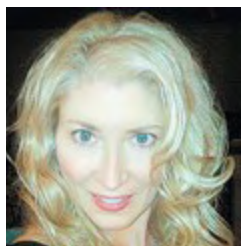
Protocol manual timely reminder of need to smile

They say attitude is everything — and attitude is certainly what the City of Vancouver got in spades upon release of its *Protocol Manual* giving British Columbians a refresher on the "art of nice."

Columnists and citizens alike united in collective sneers at the audacity of some brainiac think-tank telling the arguably nicest people in the world how to be proper hosts. Did the City of Vancouver lose the plot?

After the first of the 2010 inaugural Olympic cultural events a few weeks back, the results were in; the honourable judges award the bedraggled and much-maligned manual to a few not-so-usual suspects:

A bronze copy marked "rush" to VANOC's John Furlong, who may possibly have butchered Olympics speech protocol with his painful first attempt at the mandatory French. This is a man who has given 24/7 to these games and, at the very least, his plentiful VANOC minions could offer some pointers on compas-



Shannon Melnyk

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sionate grounds. Copies also to the thousands among the notoriously polite Canadian crowd, who snickered at Mr. Furlong's guffaws and wouldn't stop.

A silver copy to the grand master of both the Opening Ceremonies and the visiting Alberta Ballet, Jean Grand Maitre, who after introducing the Alberta Culture Minister to uproarious applause made a political, perhaps fair but very un-Olympic suggestion that the honourable Lindsay Blackett should give Premier Gordon Campbell a call — sarcastically pointing out the lacklustre government support of the B.C. arts

scene on the eve of an international event on home turf and Ballet B.C.'s money woes in particular.

But the mighty gold copy is awarded to every champion whiner, naysayer and protester who claims not to own one single pair of happy pants for a sight we will never see again in this lifetime on home soil. If the Olympics themselves could protest, their marching placards might read: "Why sneer, we're here, get used to it!" This may be apt advice when we consider our best-before date has expired in debates over money spent, political manoeuvring, corporate commercialism and inconvenient traffic gong shows.

Is it ironic that the warmest province in Canada is attempting to host the Winter Games? Is the world aware we spend all winter bragging to visitors about our summers? Is it paradoxical we are asked to become shiny happy people in one of the grimmest months of the year?

Perhaps we are mistaking these groaners for our many long-standing sufferers of SADD, known to annihilate the hardiest of West Coasters. In this case, a light box and a manual would be in order.

Spoiled by one of the most naturally stunning cities in the world, we know we have the capacity to "smile 'gently' and with sincerity" as the *Protocol Manual* instructs.

The document is probably most precisely useful, however, for those who were most offended by its distribution. But stroll downtown and the international display of goodwill is liable to turn even the biggest Olympic frown upside-down.

Olympians have shared the same message regardless of sport or home country: one can't train enough. And while the world tests our "mettle," a little harmless refresher may just help Vancouver grab gold.

— Shannon Melnyk is a Vancouver-based freelance writer who hasn't skeletonned since she was a kid.



We'll never see another local Winter Olympics so even critics should pull out their happy pants. JOHN MAHONEY — CNS