

BEST SPORTS STORY



A golden experience Highlights from the North American Indigenous Games

By Amy German

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AMY GERMAN *the Nation*

Simply terrific! Great page layout, good photos to accompany comprehensive, well-written, well-reported coverage. Good job.

WILL NICHOLLS *the Nation*

This was really a fun read - something you would share over the breakfast table, even if you aren't a fan. Storytelling was great - great picture stories to compliment - nice work.

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Heavy Mania

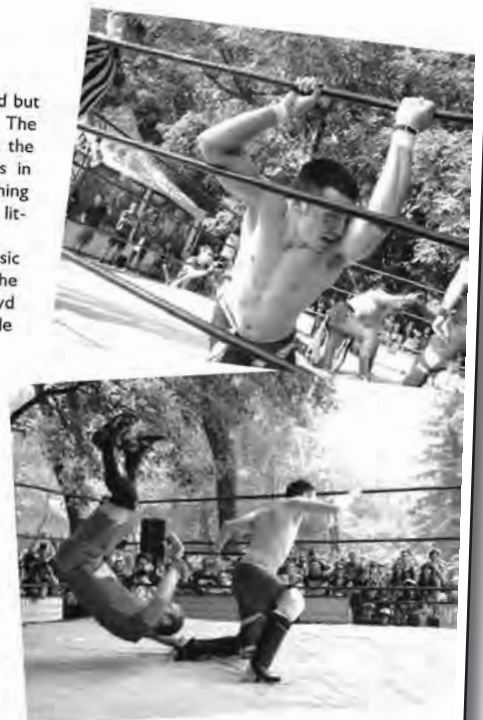
by Will Nicholls

We might all know professional wrestling is mostly faked but that doesn't stop us from enjoying the experience. The Romans understood the value of a spectacle and built the Colosseum to host their games. Usually, no one dies in today's games and matches but they still trigger something inside us and produce responses that may make us feel a little ashamed.

Heavy Mania - a side event at the Heavy Montréal music festival - was just like that. The villains and heroes made the crowds respond with cheers and jeers. Hearing a crowd chanting, "You fat f*ck," in unison was a moment that made me feel a little conflicted. Watching a woman go head to head with a much larger male opponent excited me. Everyone wanted her to win but when she lost it just made the winner more of the detestable villain the organizers intended him to play.

The wrestlers themselves are quite open about who they are and what they do. There are wrestlers like Eddie, or if the announcer could be believed, Sexy Eddie with five pounds of meat below the belt. The 15-year veteran leads the Brotherhood of the Hawk. As he told the Nation, "You don't f*ck around with the Mohawks!"

Eddie grew up a fan of wrestling. "I watched Hulk Hogan and I wanted those cheers," he said. Given little money many wrestlers make this is all they really get in the end. One time, someone grabbed Eddie's five pounds



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RUBY PRATKA

Quebec Chronicle-Telegraph

A great sports story well written - a good read.

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Unlikely Olympian says fun is the key

RUBY PRATKA
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As the Canadian Olympic speed skating trials in Calgary, no one saw Maurice Guardilone coming. Not even Maurice Guardilone.

"People didn't see me as a contender, but that made me more impatient to do better," he says. "The week before the competition, I started thinking maybe I had it in me to do it. But still, there were a lot of good people fighting for four places."

Guardilone placed second in the 1000-metre race and fourth in his specialty, the 500 metres, edging out former Canadian champion Jeremy Wetherpoon and training partner Laurent Dubreuil. He will race twice in Sochi, the cherry on the top of a long, unblemished career.

"My parents are Moroccan, and when they came to Canada they didn't know how to skate," says Guardilone, who was born in Charlevoix 10 years after his parents arrived. "They signed me up for lessons; they thought it would help me integrate into Quebec society. The coach told them that I was fast, and they should sign me up for long-track (speed skating). I was right."

"The 100 per cent Québécois," says Guardilone, pushing aside his curly black hair. He is direct without being defensive, and his accent causes all doubt.

"When you start learning to skate, you're just happy to be out on the ice having fun with the other kids, and most of the time I was with Québécois kids. People thought it was fun to see a kid from a minority group doing this kind of sport. It doesn't happen very often. People know I'm not just off the boat, I'm Montreal the skater."

"I was doing it for fun for a long time, and no one really considered me a great talent," he remembers. "Then, when I was 13, I won a North American junior championship. The year after, I started focusing on long track."

Guardilone began a long, slow rise up the national senior ranks, overcoming a series of injuries on the way. He talks about his highs and lows matter-of-factly, conversationally - the opposite of the tough-talking elite athlete.

"I've done some things in my body that you can't really do," he says. A ten knee ligament last January nearly derailed his Olympic plans. His best times were in 2010 and 2011.

"Even though I'm very strong mentally, getting just past the knee injury was a big problem. I had to adapt my training so I wouldn't hurt myself further, and it was frustrating not to be able to do the same things in training that my friends were doing. I missed half of the season and I had to do a lot of catching up."

Eventually, Guardilone got back on the ice, but wasn't satisfied with his competitive results. At a competition in December at his home rink in Sainte-Foy, he didn't crack the top five in his races.

"People didn't see me coming because I was sixth or seventh at the last competition, but I knew I hadn't done my best," he says.

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Winter's glory days revived

CASSANDRA KENNEDY
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The National Battle-Field Commission has decorated Jean de Arc Park in a winter theme. Signs proclaiming, "Welcome, Snowshoers" greet passersby at both entrances. Elaborate stunts describe the origins and development of popular winter activities and sports in our city. Adding a touch of coziness are gigantic mock hilltops and displays encouraging visitors to build snowmen around the Jean de Arc monument.

A specialty for treppers and travellers over thousands of years, snowshoeing became a popular social-leisure activity in the last century, and Snowshoe Clubs were founded in the area. At the same time, ice skating became popular as a weekend social event on the river. Once a covered rink appeared on

(CONTINUED ON 2)

Biathlon snapshot

A snowshoe racer finishes a lap at the Biathlon des Neiges. The biathlon was the third in a series of seven pre-Carnival events organized by the Duchesses. The events conclude next week with an outdoor obstacle course in Les Rivières, outdoor artwork in Limoilou, and a Guinness record attempt at the world's longest piece of fire d'érable in Sainte-Marie, near Lévis.

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Judge: Michelle Rea, Executive Director, New York Press Association, Cohoes, NY • Number of entries in the Best Sports Story category: 21