

## Behind-the-scenes stories heighten Olympic drama

By SARA BENNETT

Will freestyle skier Donna Weinbrecht be healthy enough to win another gold medal for the United States in the 1994 Olympic Winter Games?

How will bobsled driver Brian Shimer apply the techniques of auto racing to his sport?

Will the shortened two-year break between Winter Olympics help or hurt CBS' coverage of the Games, beginning Saturday, Feb. 12, and concluding Sunday, Feb. 27?

Because of a new format, this year's Winter Olympics in Lillehammer, Norway, will be the only Games to get underway after such a short hiatus. Subsequent Summer and Winter Games will take place at alternating two-year intervals.

After the recent 1992 Olympic Winter Games in Albertville, France, analysts should be accustomed to the pace and style of Olympic events, from the booth, in the studio and at event-level.

Multifaceted analyst Greg Gumbel, who served as a morning host in Albertville, serves as prime-time anchor for CBS' coverage in Lillehammer.

"It benefits all of us at CBS that we've just done it recently," he says.

"I think it will be that much better this time around."

However, Gumbel concedes, there's still plenty to work on.

"One of the things that we all have to learn is just how is this going to work physically," he says. "Actually getting there, and putting a show together, and getting it on the air, and getting off the air, and everything (that goes along with) it tends to be something you can plan all you want, but there's nothing like doing it."

Gumbel's segments will come to the United States taped because of the six-hour time difference between the U.S. and Norway.

Live or taped, Gumbel and other analysts have a job to do in Lillehammer: They must show the audience the events, but perhaps more importantly, they must show viewers what they wouldn't see otherwise.

"Every competition kind of has its own stories within," Gumbel says. "The people involved in figure skating, for instance, are probably very (well known), especially the comeback people, Brian Boitano and Katarina Witt, who appears on her way back to the Olympics after a layoff.

"In mogul skiing," Gumbel continues. "Donna Weinbrecht is a terrifically interesting story because she won the gold medal in Albertville and then ripped up her knee. She's been going through rehab, and now the question is, is she still the best in the world?"

Gumbel adds, "In bobsledding, the United States has made terrific strides. Brian Shimer is a young guy who has worked hard and diligently at it, and he's been assisted by Geoff Bodine, the race car driver, who has tried to apply some of the aerodynamics that go into auto racing and into the construction of race cars, and tried to combine that into the bobsled that Brian drives."

Just as interesting, and more controversial, are the varying opinions on the reinstatement of professional athletes to the Games. Some people believe the amateur spirit of the Olympics is lost. Others just aren't sure who the United States is up against.

"We beat the Russians," says CBS late-night Olympics anchor Pat O'Brien, in reference to the U.S. hockey team's performance during its pre-Olympic tour. "But we don't know if it's the real Russian team. And the real Russian team could be somewhere else, beating the (stuffing) out of other countries."

Tim Taylor, coach of the hockey squad that won or tied approximately 75 percent of its John Hancock USA Hockey Tour matchups, also has mixed feelings on reinstatement.

"Philosophically and romantically I believe in the traditional Olympic ideal," he says. "A player has to make a sacrifice of huge proportions to be an effective Olympian, especially in a team sport. (But) I think it's fine if they reinstate themselves in time to be part of a program that we've put together that's gonna help us win a medal."

From plans for a "goalie-cam" to the performance of U.S. figure skater Nancy Kerrigan, who will test her strength and courage after an assault that captured the world's attention, all eyes look to the Olympics to answer questions and, of course, to entertain.

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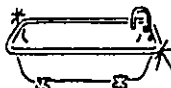
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