

# Team Canada ranks second at Special Olympics

**B 6317**  
*Editor's Note: Melinda Smith journeyed to Austria as coach with 144 Canadian special athletes who participated in the World International Winter Games. Melinda is originally from the Port Qu'Appelle area.*

Dear Editor:  
Hi everyone! Well I'm home and the trip to Austria was a success. Our Team Canada ranked second in the world, Team USA ranked first. Team Canada brought me 96 medals with 44 coming from the speed skating team. That's all!! The whole trip was a great experience.

After arriving in Frankfurt, Germany I boarded a bus and drove seven hours to Salzburg, Austria. We stayed in Salzburg for a week of competition.

The hotel we stayed in was 560 years old and they hadn't remodelled it at all! A very cold and damp building but the feathertick blankets on the beds were very warm. No elevators and our rooms were on the third floor, so we got our exercise over the week.

Lights were on a timer and every evening at 11:00 p.m. they went off automatically except for the bathroom lights which one could still turn on. So we had to ask that our lights be taken off the timer as we had coaches' meetings every night at midnight. Also more often than not we were up throughout the night with athletes who were

homesick and needed some attention. I was getting homesick as well, so I could relate to how the athletes were feeling.

The food was average. They keep everything at room temperature, so as a result we had to get used to drinking warm milk. Breakfast was a bun with a slice of meat and cheese, no cereal or fruit. They told us that if they ate a big meal like us Canadians they would be fat. So we went out and bought our Canadian style of cereal and breads for breakfast.

Lunch was a kaiser bun with meat and cheese with a bag of nuts and an apple. Coke was a sponsor so we had all the free Coke we wanted. Supper was noodle soup, German potato salad (served warm), breaded veal and a shredded carrot salad.

It was nice to get back to Canada and have a cup of coffee that one didn't have to chew. The coffee in Austria was very strong and thick.

The prices of things in Austria varied. Coffee and hot chocolate were \$2.50 Canadian a cup, and junk food was very expensive. But articles made in Austria were very cheap. The Berkenstock sandals are \$40 compared to \$100 in Canada.

The schedule we had for the week did not allow any time for sight-seeing or shopping. So all the sights I saw were from the bus each day travelling to our speed-

skating rink.

The city is very old and the architecture is beautiful. The streets are very narrow, lined with very tall buildings on either side. More often than not there is a church at the end of every street. The churches are very beautiful and are kept looking as they did when they were first built.

It is a good experience to see how other countries live as there were 60 nations participating in the games. Our opening and clo-

ing ceremonies, which were held outside in a square, were about three hours long. Good entertainment by local and USA performers. A ski hill parade of skiers with lit torches and a fireworks show ended the opening ceremonies.

I got to meet a lot of interesting people. Most of them marvelled at how the Canadians integrated their special athletes into the community. Some of these countries are just starting to bring their handicapped population out

of the closets.

We should be very proud of our country and I'm grateful to live in Canada after seeing first hand how some of the other people in our world live and cope with difficulties out of their control. For instance, one group of coaches and athletes travelled 50 hours by bus through a war zone just to get to the games.

The weather was plus 16 and 17 the first two days we were there but then began to snow and rain. Then the temper-

ature dropped and it became very damp and cold. We were competing in an outdoor rink so it was hard to stay dry or warm. But we had indoor dressing rooms to retreat to between races.

TSN T.V. will be airing a two-hour special on the Winter Games on May 1 at 3:00 p.m. and May 4 at 7:30 p.m. so you may see me on T.V.

Take care.

MELINDA SMITH  
(nee Toth)  
Regina

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**College Riders**

**SPAKING**  
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