

SPORTS

Olympics a cold shot to big American egos



FROM THE SIDELINES

BY DAVE CHARBONNEAU

The 1992 Winter Olympics are over.

Personally, I don't know how to react to that.

The Winter Olympics are about as interesting to me as, oh, I don't know, that religious dude who preaches his gospel and holds up his signs on campus.

However, that's not to say certain aspects of the Olympics were not interesting.

Let me start with someone I used to be proud of knowing, Tonya Harding.

I went to junior high school with Harding. We weren't great friends, but we were acquaintances. I remember how hard we all used to laugh at her when she would say she would be in the Olympics someday.

Well, she proved us wrong.

I don't quite understand Harding. Everyone knows about her showing up in France a couple of days before her performance while the rest of the American skaters arrived weeks in advance. It seems as though Harding just doesn't want to do the work to get to the next level. She is obviously not the easiest person to get along with, as her rotating trainers will attest to.

It's no accident that Nancy Kerrigan and Kristi Yamaguchi were the ones who came home with the medals.

Women's figure skating is traditionally the pride of the Olympics. The elegance and grace these young women produce on the ice is the most captivating of all the events.

This year I would have rather watched Moe Mantha cross-body-block Eric Lindros into the wall and get a stick in the crotch. At least that would be more elegant and graceful than the display the figure skaters put on.

I think every skater bit the big one at least once in the skating competition. It was not a pretty sight.

The U.S. hockey team took all of us back to 1980 for a couple of days before falling to the Unified Team.

I'm not a big hockey fan, but every four years I find myself relearning the rules of hockey, answering questions like, "What the hell is icing?" and "What exactly is grounds for sending a player to the penalty box?"

The United States did show a lack of class after losing to the Unified Team by blaming the loss on the referees, they did get the reputation as the "Bad Boys" of the tournament, and some Americans seem disturbed by that.

But come on, the rest of the world hates us already. I don't think heaving bottles back at the Swedish fans who threw them in the first place is any big deal.

So the Americans were arrogant. I didn't see anyone getting

on Alberto Tomba's case when he said he was going to go party with five babes after winning the gold.

Tomba cracked me up. That George Michael look-alike is quite a guy.

The Italian wins two gold medals in skiing and then says he was glad to win a silver and wants a bronze to complete his collection.

That is arrogance.

Bonnie Blair is anything but arrogant.

The U.S. speed skater quietly won two gold medals and was the only American to win multiple medals.

The United States did not do all that bad this year. We are not a "winter country." We basically did what was expected of us at the Olympics: finish toward the middle of the pack as far as medals go, have some strong performances and some weak performances, and finally, prove the United States has an attitude.

Most Americans do not care all that much about the Winter Olympics because they know the United States will not be near the top of the heap. They are fair-weather fans who could care less that the Olympics will now be held every two years instead of four.

Americans would much rather wait for the summer games when the United States has a chance to dominate the medal count.

It's all just part of the attitude.

Dave Charbonneau is a sports reporter for the Emerald.

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