

# Clark retiring after 20 years in the halfpipe

By EDDIE PELLIS  
AP National Writer

DENVER — What was perhaps Kelly Clark's most memorable trip down a halfpipe had nothing to do with winning.

It was the Winter X Games in 2011. Clark had already secured the title. With one lap left — a victory lap, as they call it in snowboarding — she decided to try something no woman had ever done. She became the first to land a 1080 — that's twisting three revolutions above the halfpipe — in competition.

The move summed up the essence of what the greats do for snowboarding. As much as winning, they are about pushing the sport to new levels. And often their biggest competition is the person looking back at them in the mirror.

At peace with her role in cementing that mindset into snowboarding, the five-time Olympian, who dominated her sport while ushering in the Olympic era, has decided to retire.

"At some times in my career, days that might not have included my best snowboarding led to some of my greatest victories," the 35-year-old Clark told The Associated Press. "This sport has always been about more than just winning and losing."

But there's been plenty of winning along the way: A gold medal in her Olympic debut. Two bronze. Five X Games titles. Nine more at the U.S. Open. A total of 78 victories and 137 trips onto the podium spanning a career that began 20 years



AP Photo/Gregory Bull, File

In this Feb. 12, 2018, file photo, Kelly Clark competes in the women's halfpipe qualifying at Phoenix Snow Park at the Winter Olympics in Pyeongchang, South Korea.

ago, back when the halfpipes were handmade and only about half the size of the 22-foot behemoths that challenge the riders in today's pro game.

In 2001, Clark was a fresh-faced teenager from Vermont whose parents had indulged her dream — maybe a fantasy — to shred down halfpipes with the hopes of making it big someday. She had no real expectations, and the thought of making the Olympics the next year seemed far-flung.

Over the span of a few weeks, that all changed. Clark figured out the McTwist — an avant-garde trick of that era that involves 1 1/2 spins while holding the

edge of the board with one hand — and started winning Olympic qualifiers. In February 2002, she became the first American to win an Olympic snowboarding gold medal.

"The ultimate peak at the ultimate time," she called it.

But it didn't necessarily lead to happiness. In the aftermath, Clark became consumed in a world of too much pressure, too many commitments, not enough fun. In an interview last winter, her coach, Rick Bower, recalled that he "kept wondering, does she want to keep doing this?"

"You're young, you win gold, you think life is going to be easy and you're all set, and it wasn't," said Bur-

ton CEO Donna Carpenter, the wife of the company's founder, Jake Burton. "That's when she realized it wasn't about winning but more about finding her own measure of success and progressing the sport."

Clark's bronze medals in 2010 in Vancouver, then again four years later in Sochi, both came after hard falls that made her question whether she could do it. Last year, she finished fourth in Pyeongchang, but even making it to South Korea was a minor miracle given the brutal crash she endured weeks earlier at the X Games in Aspen.

Reflecting last year on some of those mishaps, she said "sometimes you value things based on what they cost you."



Clark

# Bettman: NHL owners not 'looking for a fight' in CBA discussions

By JOSH DUBOW  
Associated Press

SAN JOSE, Calif. — NHL Commissioner Gary Bettman said Friday the owners aren't "looking for a fight" when it comes to collective bargaining negotiations with the players.

The current CBA runs until 2022, but the league and players each have the option this September to terminate it effective Sept. 15, 2020. Bettman said at a news conference at All-Star weekend that the owners are mostly satisfied with the last two negotiations that instituted a salary cap, and then provided an even split of hockey-related revenues between players and owners.

"There's no question that the league is healthier now dramatically," Bettman said. "We wouldn't be where we are today if we didn't have a system that corrected some of the ills in the past. We have stability, we have competitive balance and the game is able to grow. That's good for everyone involved with the game."

NHLPA special assistant to the executive director Mathieu Schneider agreed that the tenor of discussions has improved in a sport that has had one strike and three lockouts since 1992, but that play-

ers want to recoup some of the losses they suffered in the last two negotiations, including an end to the escrow payments that ensure the 50-50 split in revenues.

However, Schneider said he didn't agree that the players are in control of whether there will be another work stoppage.

"There's no question that the players have given back billions of dollars over the course of the past two negotiations," Schneider said. "That's no secret."

I don't think I'd characterize it as the ball's in the players' hands."

Both sides have had productive talks already and were able to reach an agreement on player and puck tracking, which Bettman said bodes well for more difficult negotiations ahead.

Schneider said the tension that was present at the start of the last talks, that led to a lockout that wiped out 510 games, is in the past and both sides agree the relationship between players and owners is stronger than ever.

"Hopefully, we're at a place where labor peace can be more important than anything else we need to accomplish," Bettman said. "Because I think the opportunities in front of us are even greater than what's been behind us."



Bettman

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