

Some Inspirational Stories From The 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics

Joyce Grant

Watching the best-of-the-best compete for gold at the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics is inspirational.

But beyond the performance of the athletes, there have already been many other inspirational moments at these Olympics.

Helping a fellow athlete

Russian cross-country skier Anton Gafarov fell and broke his ski during the Men's Sprint Free Semifinals. In true Olympic spirit he tried to keep going, knowing that although he no longer had any chance of winning, he needed to finish the race he had started.

However, his ski was broken in half. He would end up limping across the finish line in front of the world, not to mention his fellow Russians who were cheering from the sidelines.

From out of nowhere, Canadian ski coach Justin Wadsworth ran down to the stricken athlete, carrying a spare ski. In seconds, he not only gave Gafarov the ski, but took the broken ski from him and snapped him into the borrowed one. Gafarov was able to finish the race with dignity.

This event reminded many of the 2006 Turin Winter Olympics, when Canada's Sara Renner broke a ski pole. A Norwegian coach gave her a new pole. Renner not only finished the race, but took silver with her teammate Beckie Scott. Eight thousand cans of maple syrup were sent to the Norwegian embassy as a Canadian thank-you to the coach.

Incredible gift from a teammate

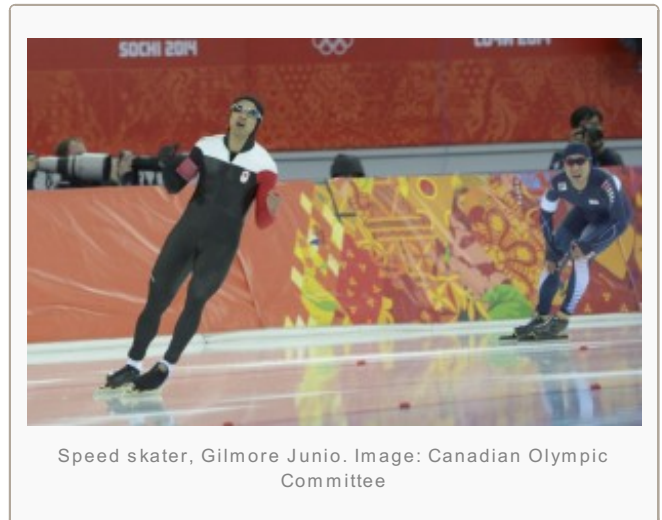
Canadian speed skater Gilmore Junio gave an incredible gift to his teammate, Denny Morrison, this week. When Morrison fell and failed to qualify for the 1000-metre event, Junio gave Morrison his spot in the race. Junio said Morrison had a better chance of winning a medal than he did, so it was in the team's best interests to let Morrison race. After years of working towards a spot in an Olympic race, it is overwhelmingly generous to allow someone else to take your spot in a race.

Morrison didn't disappoint. He won a silver medal for Team Canada.

Now, Canadians are rallying behind Gilmore Junio, saying that he showed true Olympic spirit through his unselfish gift. They say he deserves the honour of carrying the Olympic flag for the team during the closing ceremonies. We will see if Team Canada's officials agree.



Cross-country skier, Anton Gafarov.
Image: Cephas



Speed skater, Gilmore Junio. Image: Canadian Olympic Committee

Family support

No athlete gets to the podium alone. They have their family, coaches and friends to thank for supporting them along the journey. In the case of the three Dufour-Lapointe sisters who all competed in the moguls event this year (with sisters Justine and Chloe winning gold and silver), they have relied on the support of their parents. Their mother, Johane, for instance, holds three academic degrees. However, rather than working outside the home, she chose to stay home and raise her daughters—now Olympians.

And many people are inspired by Canadian skier Alex Bilodeau, who won the gold in moguls this year—his second gold in two Olympics.

He said he is greatly inspired by his older brother, Frederic, who has cerebral palsy. He said his brother can't reach most of his dreams, so he feels inspired to do his best to achieve whatever he can for himself—and for his brother. The two are often photographed before and after races, each supporting the other.



The Dufour-Lapointe Sisters. Image: Canadian Olympic Committee