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POLITICS AS USUAL: The Wonder of the Games

By Alison Collins-Mrakas

The Olympics came to a close a week ago after weeks of glorious sporting contests.
I was glued to the television watching anything and everything.
Some, I fully admit, I had no idea what they were about or how they were being scored. The various free style skiing events are a case in point. I tried and tried to figure out what determined a ?good? run, or frankly, what the heck they were doing skiing down hand rails, but I gave up after one announcer said, ?wow, that was a fantastic bloody Dracula 1080.? What? Is that good or bad? For the love of god, just tell me who the winner is then.
The games are always a spectacle. They provide us with the opportunity to witness the personal, often lifetime, achievement of the best athletes in the world. Every person there is the best of the best, the best of each of their countries. Well, aside from that scammer skier ?representing? Hungary ? Elizabeth Swaney ? in skiing.
Suffice to say she is no Eddie the Eagle.
At least Eddie the eagle landed some decent jumps. Swaney basically skied like a five year old off a tow rope. I am fairly certain we could pull someone off the streets, slap some skis on them and push them down the hill ? and they would do a better job. Just Google it. You'll see. She made a mockery of the event. They are closing the loophole that allowed her to participate.
That aside, there were many, many highs ? the sprint to the finish of the mens' biathlon (skiing and shooting) race? Wow. Just extraordinary. The winner decided by the toe of the boot. Athletes flinging themselves across the snow, splayed about in the snow from exhaustion.
Then there was the magnificent performance of Canada's Virtue and Moir in the Ice Dancing. Beautiful. I cried through the whole thing (while I held my breath of course). And the short track speed skating? Holy smokes! One nail-biting race after another. So exciting. I think it's a shame that we only get to see it once every four years. I would watch speed skating anytime.
There were, of course, some devastating lows. The Canadian women's hockey team won silver, an amazing achievement in a hard fought contest. But it wasn't the result they wanted, and were justifiably heartbroken as a result. The Canadian curling team suffered two shocking losses. Not only did the individual teams not win gold, they did not win any medal at all. The first time ever that Canada walked away without a medal in individual curling (they did win the gold though, in the new Mixed curling event).
Costumes ripped. Blades broke. Poles snapped. Athletes fell, tumbled, crashed their way to unexpected defeat. Devastating for sure. But they should be applauded regardless of the outcome. They worked hard and did their best. And that is all anyone can ask for ? themselves included.
In a few short weeks we get to experience it all over again! The Paralympics are set to begin this Thursday. I cannot wait!