

Lester B. students have Olympic closing of their own



By Jeff Doner

Still energized by the buzz of Canada ending the Olympics with flurry of gold medals in the final few days, students at Lester B. Pearson PS were treated to a special closing ceremony of their own last week.

Students put on performances, watched highlights from Canada's athletes and also received a few words of encouragement from local Olympians Paul Savage and Horst Bulau.

Savage, a Canadian curling great, won a silver medal at the 1998 Winter Olympic Games in Nagano, Japan and spoke to students about the importance of school and sport.

"My training for the Olympics started when I was in school, because the only way to get to the Olympics was to practice every day," he said. "We didn't have an official training program then, we just practiced as hard as we could and hoped we would make it to the Olympics."

He also told a few fond stories of his days wearing the Canadian maple leaf at international competitions.

"The Olympic Village was a fabulous experience throughout, with hockey players, skiers, snowboarders, figure skaters and we all got to be together at the Olympic Village - it was great," he said. "It was a journey I'll never forget."

Then came Bulau, Canada's most decorated male ski jumper ever, wearing his flashy Canada parade jacket from the 1998 Calgary Winter Games that drew cheers from the crowd.

"The best Olympics for me was in Calgary and being able to compete at an Olympic Games in our home country - as a Canadian it was really great to compete in an Olympic Games in your own country and I was very proud to be Canadian," he said.

"The Olympic experience was certainly amazing. My first Olympics was in 1980, that was a lot of time ago, so I'm not sure a lot of you can't remember that, but maybe some of your teachers can," he joked. "I had a wonderful experience at Lake Placid and I had the opportunity to see the 'Miracle on Ice' when the US won the hockey gold medal."

Bulau competed in an incredible four Olympics for Canada - 1980, 1984, 1988 and 1992.

He boasts an impressive resume of national and international titles and also spoke to students about training, school and staying focused.

?It was a lot of work and it all began right here in school, so that is one thing you need to focus on. It was something that was embedded in me, having to put as much focus on my studies as I could along with my training. If you are mentally sharp in school, that would help you stay mentally sharp in sports,? he said.

?My training took part for hours and hours each day. We spent a lot of time on the ski hills in the morning and the afternoon and evenings and we spent some time working out in the gym and making sure that we were physically fit. This was all very important.?