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Teams train on Island

BY DAMIAN INWOOD
 STAFF REPORTER



A Vancouver Island ski resort will see an avalanche of Olympic-medal hopefuls training on its slopes in the buildup to Vancouver 2010.

More than 275 athletes and coaches from nine countries will use Mt. Washington in January and February to warm up for the slopes at Whistler and Cypress.

"The excitement is really building, with all the teams that are coming here to train," Susan Kelsey, head of the Comox Valley Spirit of B.C. Community Committee, said yesterday.

Altogether, 22 teams from Canada, the U.S, Australia, Finland, France, Germany, Russia, Sweden and Switzerland will train at Mt. Washington.

They'll compete in snowboarding, ski cross, snowboard cross, biathlon, cross country, freestyle skiing and Nordic combined events.

Mt. Washington was originally chosen because it's similar to the Callaghan Valley, where the cross-country and biathlon events will take place, said the resort's director of business development, Don Sharpe.

"We were most surprised by the snowboard guys coming," Sharpe added. "The head of the Canadian team, Mark Fawcett, said we have the perfect terrain and it snowballed from there."

Sharpe stressed that training will take place mainly on terrain that isn't normally used by recreational skiers, and the mountain will be open for business.

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Collectors gather for Olympin show

Olympic "pinheads" from around the globe will be descending on Richmond Friday — when the three-day, 28th Annual Olympin Collectors Show opens at the speed-skating oval.

"We have over 70 delegates with more than 57 tables and tens of thousands of pins," said Frank Zavarella, Pacific Pin Club co-president.

Pin trading is considered the unofficial Olympic sport and it's estimated 10 million will be traded or bought during the 2010 Games. Zavarella caught the

bug at Expo 86 and hasn't looked back. "I had discussion this morning with my wife, Angela, and I'm saying my collection is around 8,000," he chuckled. "She's saying it's closer to triple that."

His two favourites are a "Prague" pin that bid staff wore in the Czech Republic in 2003 when Vancouver won the bid, and a "We won" pin handed out at GM Place the same day. The show runs today from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m., Saturday 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., and Sunday 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. — *Damian Inwood*

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