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Canada sets Olympic gold record



Who knew? Canada has rocked the Vancouver Olympics in a way nobody anticipated.

The most medals, not the most gold, was the stated goal of the Own the Podium program. Canada fell well short in the first, but was nailing the second by the penultimate day of the Games on Saturday.

The home team was assured of winning the most gold medals in the 2010 [Winter Games](#) with 13, and had a chance at a 14th heading into Sunday's men's hockey final against the U.S. With three medal events remaining, Germany was second Saturday with 10 gold.

Canada's 11th came in speedskating, the 12th in snowboarding and the 13th in men's curling Saturday to establish a record for gold medals by a host country in a [Winter Olympics](#). The previous record was 10 by Norway (1994) and the U.S. (2002).

Call it the law of unintended consequences, says [Canadian Olympic Committee](#) chairman [Chris Rudge](#).

"I think once you see our final numbers, the number of golds and silvers is going to be exceptional compared to where we historically have been," he says. "This is something we'll have to understand."

Why did it happen?"

Canada has won more gold medals in Vancouver than in any Winter or [Summer Games](#). Canadians picked up 10 gold at the 1984 Summer Games, which were boycotted by a number of countries. In Winter Games, the previous high was seven, in both 2002 and 2006.

Canada has also added its name to the record for the most gold medals at a Winter Games, set by the Soviet Union in 1976 and tied by Norway in 2002.

Unlikelies come through

Rudge said a year ago the Canadian sport system wasn't mature enough to go for the most gold in Vancouver. Developing an Olympian with medal potential takes one to two decades. Own the Podium had only five years from when it was established in 2005 to ramp up preparation for 2010.

What team officials didn't bank on, however, was the gold-or-bust, all-or-nothing attitude of some of Canada's athletes here.

Ski-cross racer Chris Del Bosco was an example of an Olympian who crashed and burned in his quest for gold instead of settling for bronze.

On the other side of the coin, skeleton racer Jon Montgomery was expected to finish in second or third, and exceeded expectations to get to the top of the podium. Snowboarder Jasey-Jay Anderson, a four-time world champion who didn't win a medal in three previous Olympics, came through with gold Saturday.

"We're going to reflect on these Games and see that the impact of setting ambitious goals has in fact worked well, not in the way we thought it would," Rudge said.

"Maybe one of the shakeouts is we may have lost some medals because athletes like Chris Del Bosco said, 'I didn't come here to be third.'"

In the early part of this decade, Canada's sport federations set OTP's sights on winning more medals than any other country in 2010. That goal was considered attainable, with the \$117 million OTP spent on improved athlete support and development.

But Canada didn't come close to winning the most medals at its own Games. While the country surpassed its previous high of 24 (7-10-7) set four years ago in Turin, Italy, the hosts will finish third with at least 26.

The overall title goes to the U.S., guaranteed a 37th medal from men's hockey Sunday. Germany again was second with 29.

"Through some kind of transference, I might segue over to gold medals and say Own The Podium met its goal, but that would be unfair and that would be a rationalization," Rudge said. "Our goal was the most medals and we didn't get the most medals."