

Thompson, Dale

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area, and CUP's sponsorship does not include cash. Thompson spent most of the winter working with a home renovation company in Toronto and tried to save every dime he earned.

"My flight cost \$800 and they want \$180 a night to stay in the press centre," says Thompson.

In fact, the best deal Thompson could swing for his 18-night stay was room and board in a house in Lillehammer he'll share with three other people for \$2,200 each.

"You're at their mercy," he says. "They know you need a room. It's the cheapest one we could find."

A major consolation, however, is the building's proximity to Lillehammer's unique hockey arena which is built into the side of a mountain.

"We're just two doors down from the rink," says Thompson.

As for food, Thompson discovered it won't be much cheaper.

"They (organizers) sent a list of prices," he says. "A can of coke costs about \$6 (Cdn) and I'm a Coke freak!"

And close friends shouldn't expect Thompson to be carting back boatloads of Olympic souvenirs either.

"An Olympic pen costs eight bucks," he says, "and a coffee cup is \$25."

Thompson will try to save dollars — or Norwegian kroners — by cooking his own meals and relying on media hand-outs for pens, pencils and notepads.

In the kitchen, when the boys cook up a mess of sardines or a frying pan full of herring, Thompson might get some help from his Loyalist schoolmate Boris Minkevich. Minkevich is the

other student-journalist who qualified for the program, attending the Games as a photographer.

While Minkevich snaps the action, Thompson will try to take a non-traditional tack at the Games, avoiding the major venues in search of more off-beat stories.

"Other papers want local boy or local girl stories," he says. "I'm focusing on a lot of different stories other than hockey and figure skating. That gets boring after a while.

For example, one of the athletes is a guy from Fiji who's a ski-jumper. How does he ski-jump in Fiji? Has he ever seen snow before? I'd like to maybe meet the Jamaican bobsledders, people from Bosnia and see how they're affected by the war there and how they go on with sports with friends and family being killed. That takes a lot of guts."

And while Thompson hopes to land a future job out of his trip (he's bringing 1,000 business cards overseas with him), he won't turn down the opportunity to continue sightseeing for a brief period once the Olympic flame is extinguished in Norway.

"I'm going to see if I can travel a bit," he says. "I'd like to go to Amsterdam and see some different countries. That is, if I don't run out of money first."

And despite his claim not to be interested in celebrities, there is at least one famous Olympian Thompson would like to meet — German figure skater and two-time gold medallist Katarina Witt.

Quipped Thompson: "I heard she likes younger men."