

IVES, Clay

Ives receives hero's welcome

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Bancroft lines streets to salute local Olympian

By Nancy Gummow

The Intelligencer

BANCROFT—Clay Ives didn't win a medal at the Winter Olympics, but he did strike gold in hometown hearts.

Hundreds of people lined the streets waving Olympic flags as their hero paraded through his hometown, 122 kilometres north of Belleville Saturday afternoon.

Ives, 21, finished 20th in the men's single luge competition in Lillehammer, Norway and earned eighth place with partner, Rob Gasper, of Calgary, Alta., in the doubles event.

Along the parade route, people held signs reading 'congratulations Clay' and 'gold next time', while others were content to hold Canadian flags honoring their hero.

"We're proud of him; proud someone from a small town made it to the Olympics," said Michelle Raposo, of Toronto, who was visiting her mother, Madeline.

"He's a symbol of success."

As Ives, dressed in Canada's ceremonial Olympic garb, smiled and waved to village residents, dignitaries heaped praise on the young man's premier Olympic appearance.

"Clay had a dream and that was fulfilled...(and it's become) a major milestone for Canada," said Ontario's



Intelligencer photo by Nancy Gummow

The Olympic rings surround Bancroft's Clay Ives as the village saluted their hero, Saturday.

Agriculture Minister Elmer Buchanan, MPP Hastings-Peterborough.

Buchanan, who presented plaques from his office and Premier Bob Rae recognizing Ives' accomplishments, was also vice-principal of the luger's high school.

Ives' repeatedly asked for clemency from school officials to train in Calgary, Canada's luge team's home. But his continual pleas made some, including Buchanan, skeptical.

"We wondered what he was up to," he said.

Buchanan doesn't second guess Ives' reasoning nowadays. Gasper's influence on his young protege wasn't forgotten as Ives' father, Paul, presented him with a carved wooden hand an appreciatory gift for helping his son.

"You gave Clay a hand, so now I'm giving you one," he joked.

Ives, now living in Calgary will return next week, and concentrate on his physical conditioning. Ives says he wants to concentrate on the singles competition, now that Gasper has retired.