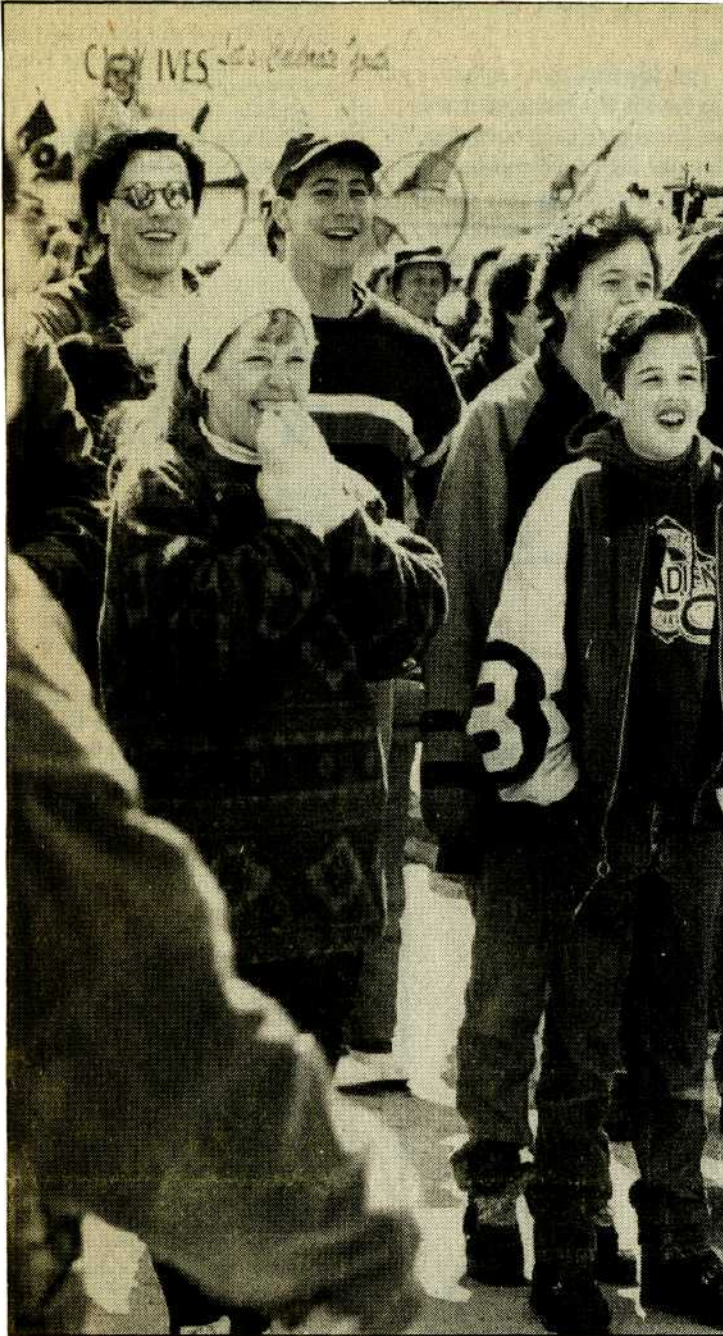


IVES, Clay



Intelligencer photo by Nancy Gummow

Hundreds of people lined Bancroft streets to congratulate Olympian Clay Ives, Saturday.

Large turnout overwhelms Ives

By Nancy Gummow

The Intelligencer

He's zoomed into the elite ranks of the world's best luge competitors and competed in Canadian colors at the Winter Olympics.

But well spoken, 21-year-old Clay Ives was overwhelmed at his hometown city's generosity and kindness after a parade in his honor Saturday afternoon.

He couldn't believe how proud they were of him; these kind folks of this village (pop. 2,400) north of Belleville.

Or how they hadn't forgotten that once, before he moved to Calgary, Alta., with Canada's luge team, practised and trained on the icy runs which snake down his father's property, outside of Bancroft.

Because underneath his aerodynamic flight suit, he still considers himself to be one of them, not above, or any greater than anyone of those hundreds of people who lined the streets.

"I wasn't sure anyone would show up to see this," he said, his voice brimming with modesty.

Ives didn't get it. His success is their success. To them, no matter how many runs he races down or wherever he's testing his athletic ability, Clay Ives will always be a boy from Bancroft.

A kid who won a marble competition in Grade 2 and hasn't been the same since. A hungry child who couldn't get enough of a dairy parlor. A kid, who his father, Paul says, was destined for Olympic competition because he has the determination of a herd of bulls.

And so long after Ives leaves for Calgary, Alta., later this week, they'll still be talking about him. Sharing their memories together, joking about days gone by.

And Ives thinks the village has adopted someone to rally around, even if he never ever believed that one day it might be him.

"This is good for everybody. It's nice to see everyone come together."

Ives may not have planned it, but in the process he's become a role model for kids who one day aspire to Olympic glory. And that's a good thing. A good thing for a sport never one of the more glamorous activities at the Winter Olympics. He has become it's youngest ambassador.

"Any kid who believes in himself can go to the Olympics. You can do anything you set your mind to. Anything is possible."

Ives knows when you dare to dream, there may be a pot of gold at the end of the rainbow.

Not only was this an important day for Bancroft, but a special one for Ives.

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