

Acton cheers Olympic Torch bearers

By Frances Niblock

The Olympic Torch run through Acton early Saturday morning was over very quickly for both the lucky torchbearers and for the thousands of people who lined the streets to watch the flame go by on its way to the 2010 Winter Games in Vancouver.

"It was so fast that I want to do it again," said Aaron Wolkoff from Thornhill, the first person to run with the torch in Acton. Some people may have missed the

first section as organizers had said the torch's journey through Acton would begin at the Fourth Line. Sometime before 8 a.m., the plans changed and the first torch spot was moved to in front of the Acton arena, leaving many people east of that location with nothing to see but the convoy of support vehicles, police and other security.

Wolkoff got off the support bus and talked with the people who were lined up in front of the arena – posing for photos with his

torch until the flame arrived to ignite his torch, about 10 minutes late.

"It was wonderful to get out of the support bus and talk with the kids. It was a once in a lifetime experience. I had major surgery three years ago and this was a major accomplishment," Wolkoff said after the run as he joined his family and friends who came to cheer him on.

"It went by too quickly – I stopped running before the end so I could savour the moment."

"Amazing. Absolutely amazing." That was the reaction from Jane Currie of Mississauga, after her 300-metre jog with the torch on Mill Street near Wilbur Street.

"It went so fast – I'll never be able to capture that again, so I hope that someone I know got lots of pictures. I felt such pride – I'm going to be part of the 2010 Games history and that's a once in a lifetime event," Currie said, adding she'll probably be smiling for weeks.

Toronto resident Crystal Quast said the excitement started when she got off the



TORCH ARRIVES IN ACTON: Aaron Wolkoff of Thornhill was ready, willing and able to carry the Olympic torch as it began its Acton journey on Saturday. Wolkoff was the first torchbearer in Acton, an experience he said he will never forget. – Frances Niblock photo

support bus and everyone was calling her name.

"When I actually began running, it was over right away. It was just thrilling to be part of this event and I can't wait to see the flame arrive in Vancouver."

For Paul Nieuwland of Mississauga, his part of the run from the police station to Shopper's Drug Mart went by in a blur.

"The whole experience started early this morning and built until I actually began to run with the torch. It's kind of hard to explain the feeling, but it was amazing with so many

people cheering and then it was over in a heartbeat. When I see the torch light the cauldron in Vancouver, I'll know that I played a part in that journey – what a lifetime memory."

Guelph resident Andrea Razzi was the seventh and last person to carry the torch in Acton and said it was an amazing experience.

"It was such an honour to be an Olympic torchbearer – it went by very quickly, but made memories for me that will last a lifetime," Currie said.

Acton's Barbara Thompson, a RBC employee,

carried the torch last Thursday morning in Newmarket, the first torchbearer of the day for that section.

"It was absolutely unbelievable. I will never forget the experience of actually being part of the Olympic torch relay. I was terrified before I got there, but once I saw all the little kids with their tambourines, I was okay. Because I fractured my hip in May, I got to walk my 300-metres so I was able to look around and savour every moment of it," Thompson said as she showed off her torch on Saturday at the Acton RBC branch.

Acton's George Henderson carried the torch last Wednesday night in Oshawa.

"There were lots of people out on the streets and thousands at the community centre, so it was quite the celebration," Henderson said on Saturday as he posed for photos with his torch at the RBC parking lot.

"It was great to get on the support bus with the other 15 people on my team. It was over so fast that today I can actually stop and see what is going on."

While the crowds dissipated very quickly after the torch left town, some people enjoyed the Acton Citizens' Band and the Sun Rise Choral group that performed on the steps of the old YMCA building.

A small crowd enjoyed a road hockey game, and kids had fun decorating gingerbread cookies and houses at the Town Hall Centre.

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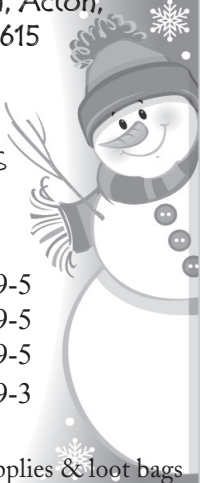
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