

Lake Placid, “Olympic City”

by Ronald M. MacKenzie,

President of the Organising Committee for the XIIIth Winter Games

The XIII Winter Games, thus far confined to the planning stage, will virtually leap off the drawing board within the next few months when more than a year of preparations give way to start up construction of the sports facilities that will make Lake Placid, New York, the “Olympic capital” of the universe for 12 glorious days in February 1980.

To the uninitiated that’s a long way off perhaps, but the countdown is already well under way within the Lake Placid Olympic Organizing Committee, the host for the 1980 competitions which will be staged in northern New York’s Adirondack Mountain region for the first time since 1932.

A natural training center for winter Olympic sports—the 1932 Games were awarded on the basis of the community’s 25 years’ experience in the winter disciplines of the Olympics—Lake Placid and its 3,000 year-round inhabitants are justifiably proud of their Olympic heritage.



We should like to thank Mr. MacKenzie for sending us this article on the state of preparations being made for staging the XIIIth Winter Games in Lake Placid, just three years hence.

Mr. MacKenzie possesses ample qualifications to preside the LPOOC, since he has been involved in winter sports for more than 50 years—as an Olympic bobsleigh competitor, and having practised biathlon, cross-country and Alpine skiing, in addition to being a national ski jumping judge and member of the United States Ski Hall of Fame.

As the site of the III Winter Games over a half century ago and numerous world championships since, Lake Placid is steeped in the rich tradition of the Olympics and has the demonstrated ability to stage the XIII Winter Games.

Olympic traditions

“For over 50 years we have devoted ourselves to the development of winter sports by providing the leadership and facilities for use by persons of all ages”, points out the Rev. J. Bernard Fell, Executive Director of the LPOOC.

This devotion has made it possible for Lake Placid to place one or more of its residents on every US Olympic team since the inaugural Games at Chamonix in 1924. Indeed, the first gold medal ever awarded in winter Olympic competition went to a native son, Charles Jewtraw, for his 500 meter speed skating victory.

The XIII Winter Games will take place in Lake Placid from February 13 - 24 three years hence. The LPOOC is dedicated to providing athletes and visitors with a truly outstanding winter Olympic program. The committee has developed a detailed schedule of required sports and supporting facilities to assure the success of the Games.

The constructions

New construction is expected to start on schedule this spring and be completed by 1979. Facilities that will be upgraded or rebuilt include a 90 meter ski jump and luge run, refrigeration of the bob run and speed skating oval, construction of a new field house, renovation of the existing Olympic Arena, and new access lifts, enlarged lodge accommodations and additional snowmaking facilities at Whiteface Mountain.

Lake Placid's new sports complex, to be constructed beside the existing arena, will have two modern ice rinks, including the only Olympic-size rink in the United States, and seating for approximately 8,000 spectators. Locker rooms and drying rooms which can accommodate 10 teams at once will be available. The complex is designed to provide competitors, officials, spectators and press with the most modern facility in the US for international figure skating and ice hockey competition.

The 400 meter outdoor refrigerated speed skating track will be constructed within a short distance of the new field house on a site which was prepared and utilized during the 1932 Games and which today still offers adequate land area for spectator seating and for the required building and rooms necessary to conduct ice skating competition of the magnitude called for by such an international event.

For the 1980 Games, a new 90 meter ski jump hill is required. Plans have been prepared to construct this facility at the present Intervale ski jump site where 70, 40, 25 and 15 meter hills already exist. When the Intervale complex is finished, it will offer athletes the most complete ski jumping facilities in the United States, and these are within walking distance of Lake Placid village.

Luge was first introduced in Lake Placid at the world bobsled championships in 1961. Thirteen years later, in February 1974, 14 nations participated in a world luge test championship at Lake Placid. The luge course will be built parallel to the existing bob run, thus the same refrigeration system and spectator stands can be utilized. The resulting bobsled-luge course will be the only operating facility of its kind in the United States and Canada.

There has also been scheduled a program calling for overall improvements to the Whiteface Mountain ski center and Mt. Van Hoevenberg year-round recreation area, two New York State owned and operated facilities. Most of the Alpine and Nordic events can be presented with limited modifications since maximum care ensuring minimal environmental impacts have gone into the design of these facilities.

The Whiteface Mountain center, 9 miles from Lake Placid village, has the greatest vertical



descent of any ski area in the eastern United States and with the addition of some grooming and widening at certain key curves it boasts a number of trails approved for Olympic competition in the downhill, slalom and giant slalom races.

The only bobsled run in North America is featured at the Mt. Van Hoevenberg area. The site of the 1932 winter competition, this bobsled run is rated as the world's finest facility and to guarantee the event will be staged in 1980 regardless of weather conditions, the full mile course will be completely refrigerated.

Another portion of this winter sports area consists of a 20 kilometer network of cross-country trails that have been used for international competitive ski racing. Additional trails will be built to meet the full 50 kilometer network required in the Olympics. A women's cross-country trail system is also being developed in accordance with the overall improvements' package being designed for Mt. Van Hoevenberg.

The 1980 Winter Games will require such support facilities as housing for athletes and officials, a communications center for the world news media, an administration building and a number of parking areas.

The LPOOC's sub-committee on athlete housing is presently considering an Olympic village site 8.5 kilometers from the center of Lake Placid. This site would offer a permanent after-use as a state or federal facility, while at the same time providing an optimally secure and comfortable setting for the athlete. The village will be capable of feeding and housing approximately 1,800 athletes and officials during the 1980 Winter Olympics. Construction is scheduled to begin this spring and be completed and ready for occupancy by early 1979.

A press center will be required for use by the news media, including working represen-

tatives of newspapers, radio and television. This facility will be complete with all supporting equipment necessary to conduct news conferences as well as preparation of press releases and distribution of materials.

Parking areas will be expanded in conjunction with existing facilities at the Alpine, cross-country, biathlon and bob-luge run areas. Parking for the ski jump competition and opening ceremonies will require minimal preparation. Sports facilities and administrative offices will be grouped near the village center, thus encouraging pedestrian movement of spectators while minimizing extensive construction of additional parking areas.

The challenge

As the New Year comes in, all systems are go for Lake Placid 1980. "The opportunity to 'observe' the organization and activities of other Olympic cities has passed", readily admits the Rev. Fell, "and now the Lake Placid Olympic Organizing Committee must couple the lessons learned at Innsbruck and Montreal with its own experiences.

"The great challenge before us now is to provide the world with Winter Games that prove the 'Lake Placid claim' - that small, dedicated communities with the appropriate winter sites can still play host to the world's athletes without destroying or abrogating a single important aspect of the Games."

Lake Placid is proud of its Olympic spirit and the community looks forward to making its expertise and facilities available and to demonstrating once again its hospitality to the winter athletes of the world in 1980.

R. McK.

