

Canadians earn 9 Olympic Medals in Sochi so far

By Jeff Doner

Now well into the first week of competition, the successes of Canada's athletes are finally starting to dominate the headlines coming out of the 2014 Winter Olympic Games in Sochi.

Initially bogged down by reports of bad tap water, poor hotel conditions and botched performances at the opening ceremonies, people are starting to finally realize why they're all there and why we're all watching.

For one, Canada's athletes went in with a bang and have made an early statement, capturing four gold, three silver and two bronze medals at press time, which has them perched near the top the medal standings.

There's still a long way to go, but maybe the Canadian Olympic Committee's goal of finishing first overall in the medal count wasn't so off base after all.

Starting things off was snowboarder Mark Morris, who captured Canada's first medal, fighting through a broken rib to win bronze in the newly featured slope style event on day one.

Then, perhaps one of the bigger Olympic stories thus far, was the three Dufour-Lapointe sisters who competed in the freestyle skiing ladies' moguls. Amazingly, Justine and Chloe combined for a one-two punch in capturing the gold and silver in that event.

That moves us to another debut event, the team free-dance competition. At first, rumours of an alleged scandal between US and Russian judges dominated the news wire, but the Canadian contingent, buoyed by some very strong performances, was still able to come up with the silver medal on Sunday night.

Russia ended up taking gold, while the United States sank to the bronze medal position.

By the time day three took off, I knew exactly what I was going to be watching on Monday morning, one of my absolute favourite events ? speed skating.

There really isn't anything more exciting, in my opinion, and in this event Canada is expected to make some noise with a good mix of veterans and youth.

Leading the pack is Charles Hamelin, 29, who now has three gold medals and one silver thus far from three Olympics.

Hamelin is a medal favourite in all four short track speed skating events and he started things off on the right foot by winning a gold medal in the 1500m final on Monday, narrowly beating out opponents from China and Russia.

Heading back outside to the slopes, Alex Bilodeau, who became a national hero after winning Canada's first Olympic gold on home soil in Vancouver, was back to defend his title in freestyle men's moguls.

Surrounded by a talented pool of Canadian teammates, Bilodeau was joined by Mikael Kingsbury and Marc-Antoine Gagnon in the finals.

Let's just say all three sent a message that Canada owns the moguls.

With an impressive combined score, Bilodeau won gold to become the first athlete ever to win back to back gold medals in the event.

Kingsbury won silver, while Gagnon painfully was knocked down to fourth place behind the Russian competitor, preventing a Canadian podium sweep.

Also worth mentioning from the first few days of competition is the women's ice hockey, who won their first two games of the

tournament.

First they beat Switzerland 5 ? 0, but they quickly found out it wouldn't be so easy against Finland on Monday.

With the score locked at 0 ? 0 going into the third period, team Canada stepped the intensity up a notch and ended up pulling out a gutsy 3 ? 0 victory.

Also starting off on the right foot were the Canadian curling teams, with the men's and women's teams starting out with early wins.

Over the next few days keep an eye out for plenty of speed skating events in the long and short track; women's and men's curling; women's hockey game against the US Wednesday; the men's hockey team will lace up for their first game Thursday against Norway, Friday against Austria and then Sunday against Finland; Aurora's Derek Livingston will be competing in the snowboard half pipe event this week; and Alexandra Paul and Mitchell Islam of Barrie will be competing in the ice dance.