



# Hockey Thunder Bay.com

## Pronger in search of 4th Olympics



Dryden's Chris Pronger prepares to unleash a shot during practice at the Canadian men's Olympic hockey orientation camp in Calgary.

Photo: Bruce Rakoczy

**CALGARY** – He may very well be a veteran on the international stage for Canada, but Chris Pronger still relishes the opportunity to represent his country at the 2010 Winter Olympic Games in Vancouver.

More at ease and familiar than most involved with the proceedings taking place at the Canadian men's Olympic hockey orientation camp being held in Calgary the Dryden native remains driven to play.

"I think you always want to compete. You want to win."

It is past success that generates the incentive for the 34-year old defenceman.

"When you've won in the past and see the excitement and enthusiasm you get from winning, you want it back. You always want to feel that rush and excitement."

Barring injury or another unforeseen circumstance Pronger should be a lock to be one of the defencemen on Canada's 2010 Olympic roster and compete in his fourth set of winter games.

It is something he never really thought about as a youngster growing up in Dryden.

"No you don't really think about it as a kid. It's been fun being a part of it though. It's pretty exciting."

His first taste of Olympic hockey came in 1998 and was also a key component four years later in Salt Lake City, Utah as Canada put an end to the nation's 50-year Olympic gold medal drought.

It wasn't nearly as successful in 2006 when the side finished a disappointing seventh.

Asked to reflect on what went so right in 2002 and so terribly wrong four years later Pronger offered these thoughts.

"Salt Lake was a lot different. We got off to a shaky start from a media and fans perspective," claimed the 3-time Olympian. "However the great about that team was with the slow build up that team got better and better in every game," he added. "By the end of it we played a near perfect game against the U.S. and we won."

Over in Italy the build up never materialized.

"In Turin the progression was not so much," he said. "We had a heart-breaking defeat to Switzerland and I don't know if we ever really recovered from that," Pronger reflected. "We played pretty well, but didn't do the things necessary to score goals and win. At the end of the day you have to win that game. I think that Swiss game took its toll on us and I don't think we were able to recover."





He would go on to quote a former coach to size up the situation.

“To take a page out of Mike Keenan’s book, it doesn’t matter how you win, you just got to win and we weren’t able to do that.”

While injuries to the likes of Pronger may have affected Canada’s performance the veteran blueliner would have no part of it.

“I really don’t think that’s an excuse. You play all season long and a lot of guys are injured,” stated the former NHL most valuable player. “

You got to get used to playing with a little bit of discomfort or pain whether it’s the regular season, the playoffs or internationally. You can’t look around for excuses. At the end of the day we just didn’t get it done.”

With the upcoming Olympics in B.C. former NHL most valuable player sees that as a big advantage for Canada.

“That makes a huge difference. You don’t have the long travel of going to Europe and that. The travel probably takes the biggest toll on you. Here you’re pretty much acclimated. That should play a big part for us.”

Chris Pronger eyes the play with Ryan Smyth (white) and Eric Staal (red) preparing to join in during drills at the Canadian men’s Olympic hockey orientation camp in Calgary. Pronger is in search of playing in his fourth Winter Olympic games for Canada.

**Photo: Bruce Rakoczy**

Even with all the attention Pronger is receiving he isn’t the only one in the family in the spotlight these days as his brother Sean was recently named as one of the upcoming inductees to be enshrined into the Northwestern Ontario Sports Hall of Fame.

Yeah, it’s pretty impressive. It’s a pretty big honour and I’m really excited for him,” beamed the proud brother.

“He beat me to it,” smiled Pronger with a hearty laugh.

There is no doubt he is sure to join him.

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