

G oing for the Gold

Many of the stars to watch at the XV Olympic Winter Games are Canadian. Here are profiles of some of Canada's athletes in the running for medals in Calgary.

LAURIE GRAHAM

Alpine Skiing

In 1987, Canadian Laurie Graham established her mark on the European-dominated world of ski racing by completing the season with a third-place ranking in women's downhill for the second consecutive year.

As leader of the Canadian Women's Alpine Ski Team, Laurie Graham is the host nation's strongest hope for a medal at the 1988 Olympic Winter Games in Calgary. Already a veteran of two Olympics, she has set a high standard for herself on Canadian snow and is determined not to disappoint

Veteran downhill ace and three-time Olympian, Laurie Graham.

the fans who cheered her to four top-three finishes on Canadian slopes during the 1986-87 season.

After 10 years on the World Cup circuit, Graham has become a favourite with the international media. Her gregarious, charismatic nature lends ease to the demands placed on her by the media and in her role as team leader, and has greatly contributed to her celebrity status in the sporting world.

Born in 1960, in Inglewood, Ontario, far from the menacing slopes of the western Rockies, Graham began her competitive career at age 10. Since capturing her first national downhill championship in 1980, she has made Canadian skiing history by winning the Super Giant Slalom World Cup event in 1984 and by dominating the women's downhill at Val d'Isère since 1985.

Graham's outstanding accomplishments have led to her being named Canada's Female Athlete of the Year for 1986, and have made her a recipient of the Canadian government's sport excellence award each year since 1982. With great courage and skill Laurie Graham has overcome injuries and moments of self-doubt to reign now among the top five women skiers in the world.

BRIAN ORSER

Figure Skating

In March 1987, Canadian Brian Orser added another exclusive chapter to the book of figure skating history, the one written only about world champions. By capturing the gold medal in



Cincinnati, he finally won the title that had eluded him since 1984.

At age 25, Orser has won seven national championships, one world championship (he had placed in the top three in four others), and a silver medal at the 1984 Olympic Games in Sarajevo. His seven-year reign as Canadian champion has provided him with the confidence he needed to make a consistent rise through the international ranks, which have been strongly dominated by Soviet and American skaters.

Previously regarded as a strong technical skater, but lacking in finesse, Orser has discovered the right combination of coaching and environment needed to develop a level of elegance and masculine grace that has finally set him apart from his competitors.

World champion Brian Orser: Canada's hope for Olympic gold.

After winning the Canadian Junior Championship in 1979, Orser ignored the lure of big-city clubs, stayed in small-town Orillia, Ontario, and placed increased faith in his coach Doug Leigh, who had first taught him figures at age nine. With the addition of West German choreographer Uschi Keszler in 1981, Orser gained the support of a coaching team dedicated to his success, without the distractions of a metropolitan area.

After a 12-year competitive career, an Olympic gold medal is all that remains unclaimed. In 1988, Orser hopes to cap off his amateur credentials with just such a finish.

