

INSIDE

SEX AN ISSUE FOR SKI RACERS

"If I was a woman, I would probably have 18 gold medals right now." That from Canadian men's alpine racer Erik Guay (at right). "If we raced on the women's tour, we'd have all those medals, too." That one's from teammate John Kucera (left). Ski battle of the sexes, coming right up. **Page F2**



TOMORROW IN SPORTS

SERIOUS SHINNY: Elliott Pap returns Friday with a witty look at the league's hottest and coldest players, teams and coaches with his NHL This Week.



THE VANCOUVER SUN

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THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 7, 2008

SWEDISH SECRET IS OUT



IAIN MACINTYRE
VANCOUVER SUN
COLUMNIST

The Vancouver Canucks are not only finalists in the Peter Forsberg sweepstakes, they were first in line when free agency opened last summer. Canucks general manager Dave Nonis made a clandestine visit to Sweden in July and met with Forsberg to personally pitch the merits of playing in Vancouver. The meeting, brokered by Canucks captain

Markus Naslund, is believed to have lasted several hours in the middle of the night.

Its value remains to be seen, but the Canucks are among the few teams still in the running to land Forsberg, the often-injured former Hart Trophy winner who is expected to sign with a National Hockey League club before the Feb. 26 trading deadline.

After months of rumour and speculation, Nonis finally confirmed his extraordinary trip to Sweden when asked about it again on Wednesday. "I'm not going to deny it," Nonis said. "But I'm not going to talk about it either. We've got a job to do right now with the team we have. We're at a critical stage of the season and we can't afford to lose our focus. The most important thing right now is our game [tonight] against Atlanta. That's what we're focusing on."

CANUCKS | GM Nonis made an undercover trip to Forsberg's front door

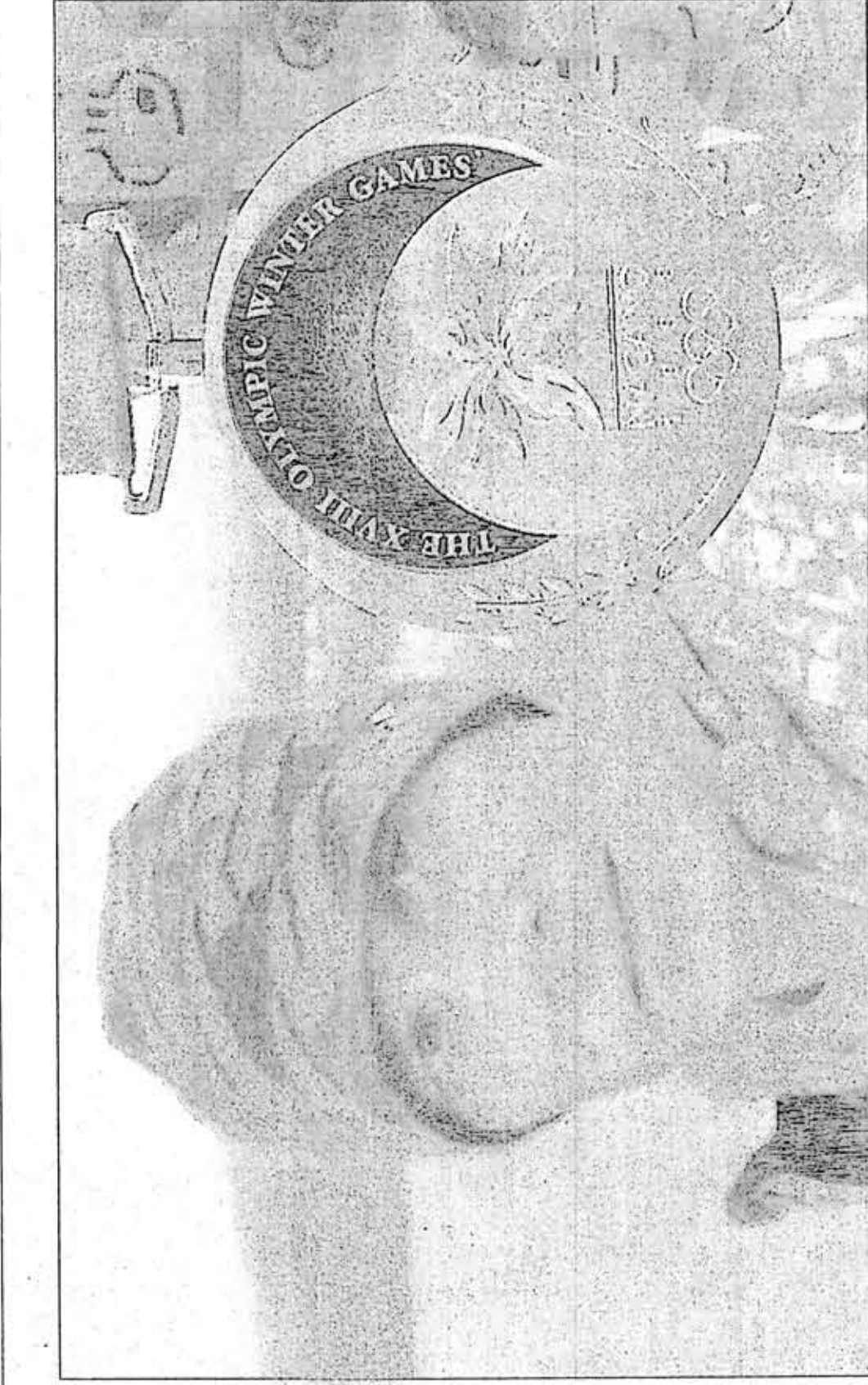
Vancouver Sun reporter Brad Ziemer received a tip in August that Nonis had visited Forsberg as soon as the 34-year-old became an unrestricted free agent.

Nonis spent most of Canada Day — free agency's opening day — in Vancouver, where it appeared to be business as usual for the Canucks.

Peter Forsberg
Expected to sign with an NHL club by Feb. 26 deadline.



Peter Forsberg
Expected to sign with an NHL club by Feb. 26 deadline.



ROSS REBAGLIATI ADMITS HE BENT SOME RULES TO GET ONTO CANADA'S SNOWBOARD TEAM, AND CAN'T FORGET HIS INFAMY OR THE FRIEND HIS MEDAL WAS DEDICATED TO.

No more smoke and mirrors

MAGANO '98 | Gold medalist Rebagliati comes clean on finding fame without the fortune

BY IAN WALKER
VANCOUVER SUN

Ross Rebagliati has a confession to make. He wasn't telling the whole truth about that still common hours after becoming the first man to win a gold medal in snowboarding at the 1998 Nagano Olympics was due to second-hand inhalation

(other people had been smoking it at party).

Rebar, it's about how Rebagliati found his way to Canada's snowboard team in the first place.

The 36-year-old Kelowna resident strolls along the Kits Beach shoreline with his two dogs on an overcast afternoon this week. From a distance, he looks no different than anyone else out enjoying the mountain views and the hypnotizing sounds of the ocean. He's

got a skullcap pulled down over his forehead and sports a brilliant blue bright blue hoodie that sticks out the back. Still, it doesn't take long for someone to notice him. Faint whispers of "that's Ross Rebagliati" can be heard as two young men walk past.

"The fact it's been 10 years and I'm still recognized... it's pretty incredible," says Rebagliati, who had competed on the World Cup circuit for eight

years, largely anonymous, before winning gold. "It really is amazing."

Rebar marks the 10-year anniversary of Rebagliati's historic — and well-documented — feat. So what better way to celebrate than to come completely clean? If not for a little white lie, the then-Whistler resident may never have had the chance to represent his country.

See: MEDAL, DRUG F2

Shaq to shine with Suns' Nash

Blockbuster trade sends Marion to Miami

PHOENIX — Shaquille O'Neal has a new home, and Steve Nash has a new go-to man. The National Basketball Association's Phoenix Suns acquired O'Neal, a 14-time all-star centre, on Wednesday from the Miami Heat for forward Shawn Marion and guard Marcuse Banks.



Shaquille O'Neal
Injured star expected to counter Aristotle's big opponents.

"I think Shaquille is going to be a big asset for us," Nash said. "He has a great personality and he is one of the most exciting, charismatic players we have had in this league in a long time."

O'Neal will play his first game Wednesday night's Suns game against the visiting New Orleans Hornets.

"We're thrilled to add a player and person of Shaquille's quality to our roster," Suns general manager Steve Kerr said.

"We decided to make this move based on our feeling that it gives us a better chance to succeed in the playoffs, which is what it comes down to.... We felt that it was a great opportunity."

By acquiring O'Neal, the Suns have made a dramatic change to their roster.

See: BIG MAN F4

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