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A Great Site for the New Winter Olympics



[The Washington Post](#)

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To get juiced up for the Winter Olympics this year, I decided to keep an eye on some of the more unusual sports. You know, curling, snowboarding and those nutty freestyle skiers. Naturally, I looked through the sports pages of several newspapers.

The coverage I found on these obscure or upstart sports was sporadic at best. Sometimes the only news available was scores in small type (which tell this uninformed soul absolutely nothing about why curlers hurl that round device down a lane of ice).

Then it occurred to me, as it does more and more these days, that I should make my way onto the World Wide Web. In addition to getting news and feature stories, I figured my electronic amble also would give me a sense of how the Web

is maturing. My very unscientific conclusion: More than ever before, the Web offers some great access to news stories, color photographs and even some video and audio clips. Some Web sites still tend to pile on information in a way that pales next to the images offered by television. But as supplements to the Nagano Games, some of the Web sites I visited should be terrific. For starters you might want to try the Winter Games' official Web site at www.nagano.olympic.org. It is well organized, bright and cheery, with tidbits of trivia salted throughout. The home page offers a set of tabs that seem to put diplomacy and children ahead of sports. Among other things, it suggests how to send digital post cards and make origami. Last week, it also had a "daily snapshot from Nagano," such as a commuter on a bicycle. I spent some time following a hypertext link that allows children to "journey" from Tokyo to Nagano by answering questions about Japan. One of the first questions was about a "famous park in Tokyo." A mouse click brought up a screen with the answer -- Disneyland -- and another link to Disney's home page. Oh well, I guess there's no way to avoid the Games' commercial tie-ins, wherever you go. More browsing turned up details about Japan's geography, bullet trains, ninjas and such. The sports section had articles describing each sport and its rules, as well as schedules of events. For a heavy dose of sports news, stop at the Web page operated jointly by CNN and Sports Illustrated at www.cnn.com and click on the Olympics button. It has the feel of a very focused magazine and is loaded with stories about Olympic minutiae. On one recent day, there were news service stories about a Canadian biathlete struggling to make a comeback, a Norwegian snowboarder who fancies himself the "Brando of the Boards" and seven hockey players who returned to Japan from Canada and the United States to play on their home country's national team. A score of other stories focused on alpine skiing, outlined the Games' events in that sport, described the venues and gave tips on whom to watch. For someone who intends to watch the games closely, this is a must-see site, if only because it includes the schedules for

CBS and TNT and a time conversion chart. Speaking of CBS, the site it runs with SportsLine at www.winterolympics.com also is very strong. I knew I was at the right place when I easily found an article about curling that began, "It started in 16th-century Scotland . . ." and went on to refer to curlers as "chessmasters on ice." Among other features, the CBS SportsLine site offers dozens of audio and video clips to those who have swift computers and the patience to download and configure the necessary software. Organizers hope the site will supplement television coverage to an extent that hasn't been done before. The biggest advantage is that people who want to follow the progress of the games can do so at their leisure. In most cases, that means checking in on the Web site during breaks at work. "On the Web, when it happens, it's immediately posted," said **Kenneth Dotson**, a marketing executive at SportsLine USA. But Dotson acknowledged that even the best Web sites cannot compete directly with television. "At least in today's world, it's not a replacement," he said. "It's supposed to work in concert." Even that remains easier to propose than do. Officials at the United States Olympic Committee hope people will turn to its Web site at www.olympic-usa.org for "some depth and breadth" of coverage, according to Matt Farrell, the committee's manager of online projects. But among the places I stopped, it was among the stiffest. That is to say it had lots of lists, lists about events, lists of athletes' names. It reminded me of some of the inside sports pages I consulted. But Farrell was trying gamely to make life easier for computer users and Olympics enthusiasts last week. He expanded the "clip service" of newspapers from around the world and his coverage of unheralded winter sports. That included something new on, yes, curling. It was called "Curling Week: Our Quiz, Your Answers, Endless Fun." "It's definitely going to be a test," Farrell said about the Web's ability to deliver something more than it has in the past. Let's hope they all pass.

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