



Olympic Glory

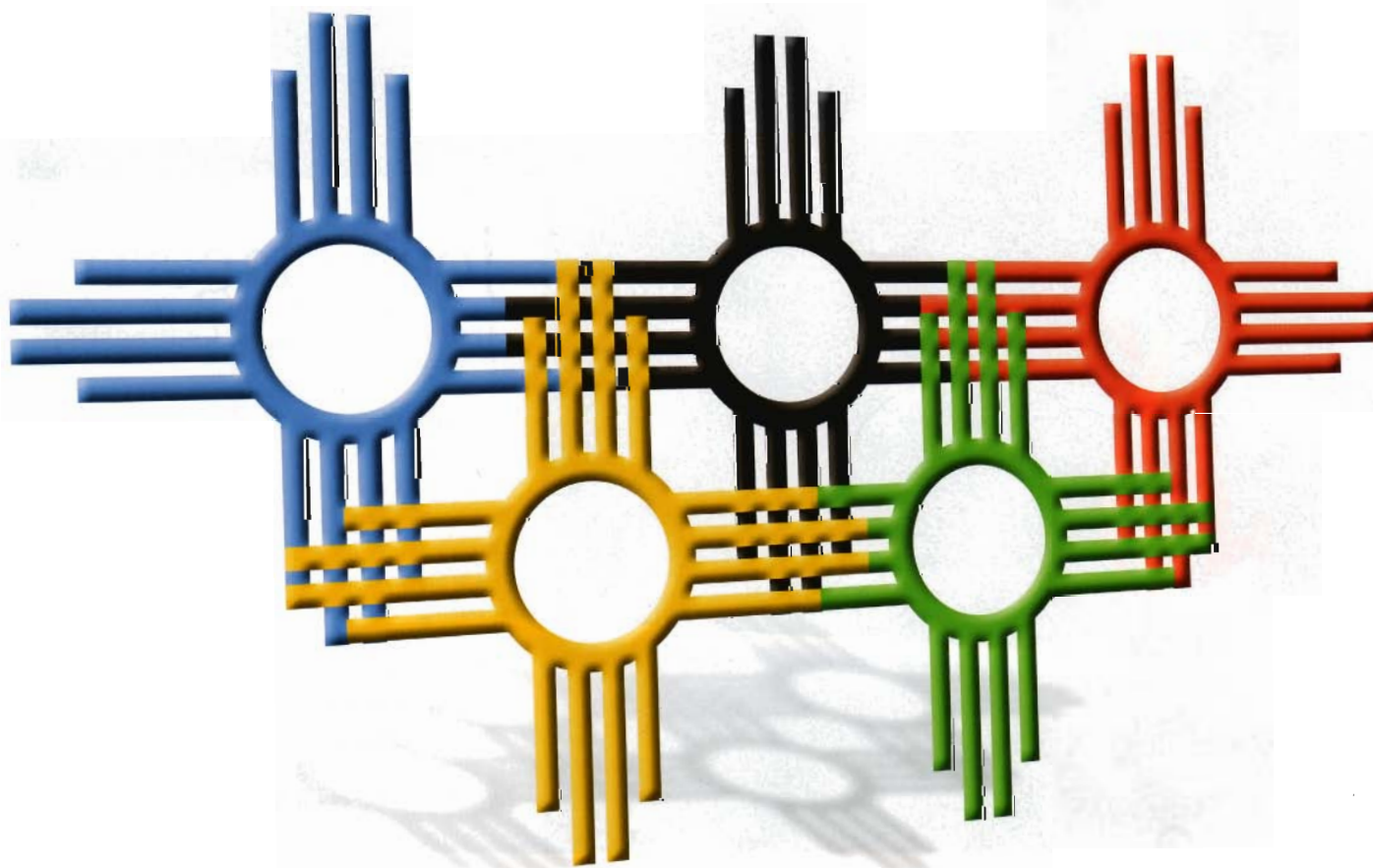
Three Albuquerque area athletes competed in the 2008 Olympics in Beijing—and are only now able to catch their breath.

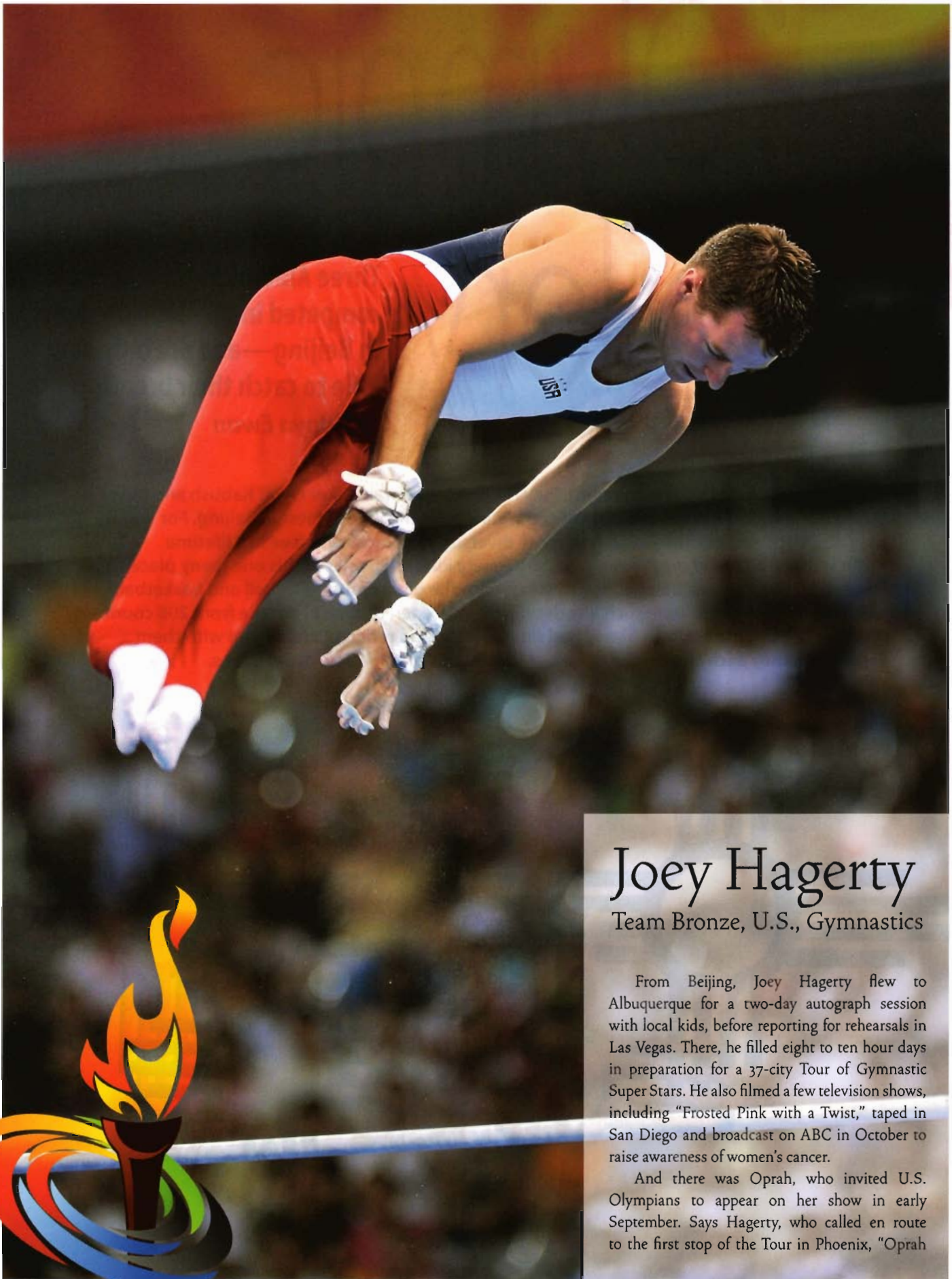
By Sonya Ewan

Albuquerque Olympians, gymnast Joey Hagerty, mountain biker Geoff Kabush and baseball outfielder John Gall, proved worthy of competing with the world's best in Beijing. For two weeks they ate, slept and performed among more diversity than most of us see in a lifetime.

"It was like a *Lord of the Rings* movie, with every kind of species in this one teeny place," says Hagerty of the Olympic Village. "It was crazy, with the ginormous volleyball and basketball players and tiny gymnasts—such a variety. There were ten thousand people from 206 countries."

After Beijing, the athletes barely had time to relax and reflect. Catching up with them separately, they each shared the details of their event-of-a-lifetime experiences.





Joey Hagerty

Team Bronze, U.S., Gymnastics

From Beijing, Joey Hagerty flew to Albuquerque for a two-day autograph session with local kids, before reporting for rehearsals in Las Vegas. There, he filled eight to ten hour days in preparation for a 37-city Tour of Gymnastic Super Stars. He also filmed a few television shows, including "Frosted Pink with a Twist," taped in San Diego and broadcast on ABC in October to raise awareness of women's cancer.

And there was Oprah, who invited U.S. Olympians to appear on her show in early September. Says Hagerty, who called en route to the first stop of the Tour in Phoenix, "Oprah

Courtesy Photo

was amazing, with all the NBA players and everyone else. All the people I met in Beijing were there."

Since his early teens, Hagerty has known the dedication it takes to propel an athlete to Olympic heights. "I've been doing gymnastics for 19 years," Hagerty says. "I realized when I was about 14 that I wanted to be an Olympian. It was off and on in terms of confidence, whether I would make it. It's a long process for sure, which makes it that much more special."

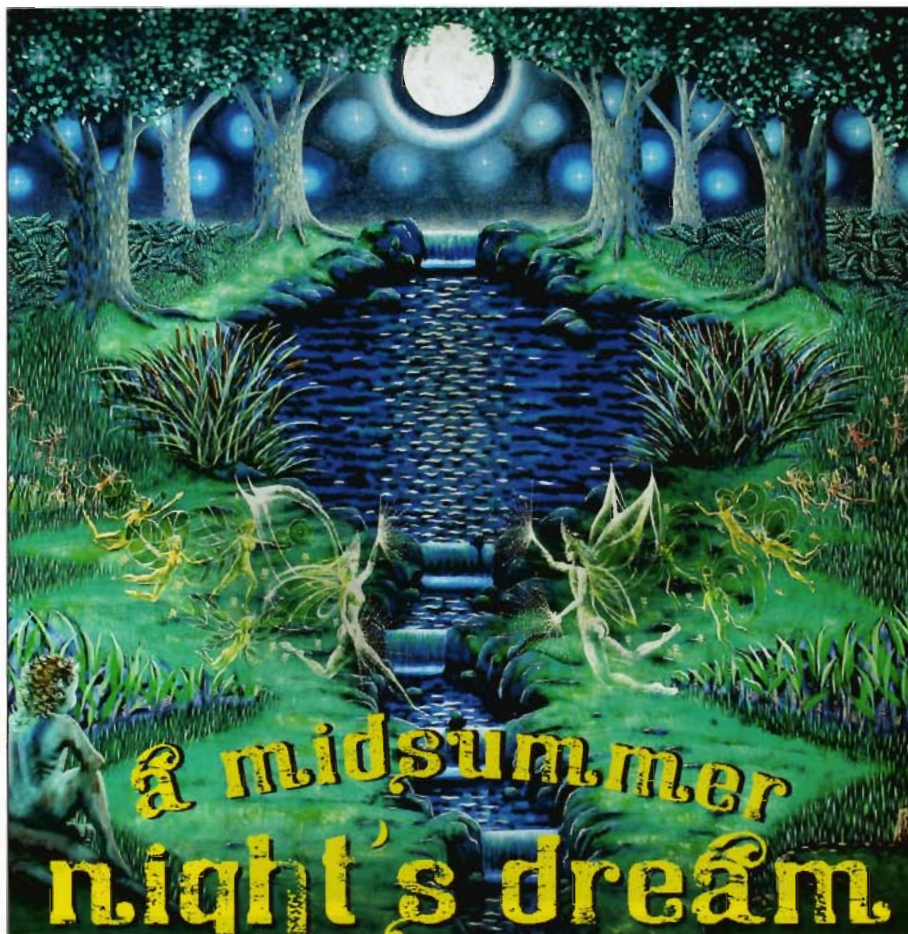
Hagerty says he tells everyone, from aspiring kids to recreational athletes, to remember to enjoy their sport. "If you don't enjoy it, why try?" Enjoying the challenge of making the Olympic team and the pressure of competing in Beijing without the injured Hamm twins was critical during the emotional roller coaster Hagerty and his team members endured. In a short span of time, they went from being gold contenders to wondering if they might medal at all.

"When I was on the flight to San Jose, once we landed, I was informed that Paul [Hamm] wasn't coming," Hagerty says. "We knew Raj [Bhavsar] would be the replacement and he could do a fantastic job, but the day before competing, Morgan [Hamm] got hurt. So we were really down."

Unwilling to consider anything but a positive outcome, the team got busy boosting moral. "Once we got Raj and Sasha [Artemev], we had a team meeting and said, 'Nothing has changed. The goal is still the podium. We have to commit and never look back.' We held our heads high and kept our eye on the prize," says Hagerty, who competed in the floor and horizontal bar team events. "Every routine got better. We had more and more energy as we finished as a team, and we pulled it off."

Hagerty hopes to compete in one more Olympics, in London. "After 2012, I'm retiring at 30. It's hard to continue. They say you're as young as you feel and I don't feel 26." For now, the elation of success still potent, Hagerty shared, "People says we're bronze in medal but gold in heart. This [medal] feels gold to me."

Though he's lived in Colorado Springs at the Olympic Training Center since 2005, Hagerty was born in Rio Rancho, graduated from La Cueva High School and attended the University of New Mexico. He still misses certain things about Albuquerque—particularly his close friends and sizable family. "I have nine nieces and nephews. My sister is pregnant with twins, so it'll be eleven soon," he says. "Otherwise, I miss green chile for sure. When I'm back home, that's all I eat."



THE HEART BALL IS BACK!

One of New Mexico's premier galas is back. Come dance and dine while raising funds for the American Heart Association.

June 13, 2009 - 6:00pm
Hyatt Regency Downtown
Register at nmheartball.com
or call 505.353.5800



American Heart Association | American Stroke Association

Learn and Live

Presented By:

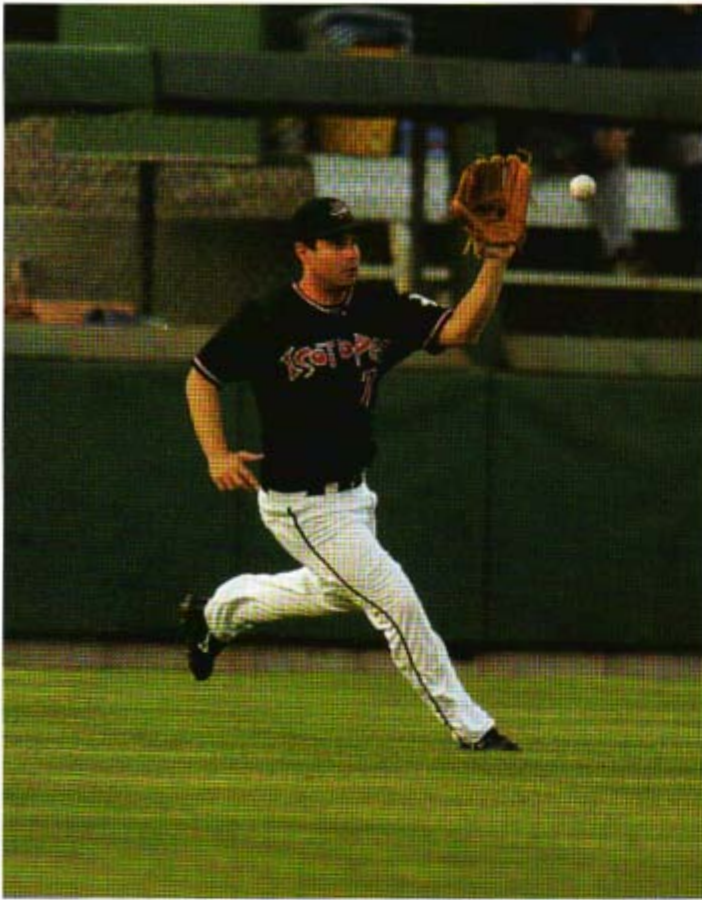


Sponsored By:



PRESBYTERIAN





John Gall

Bronze, U.S., Baseball

After competing in Beijing, outfielder John Gall immediately flew to join his Albuquerque Isotopes teammates as they played out the 2007-08 season in Nashville—just days before his appearance with Hagerty and other U.S. Olympians on “Oprah.”

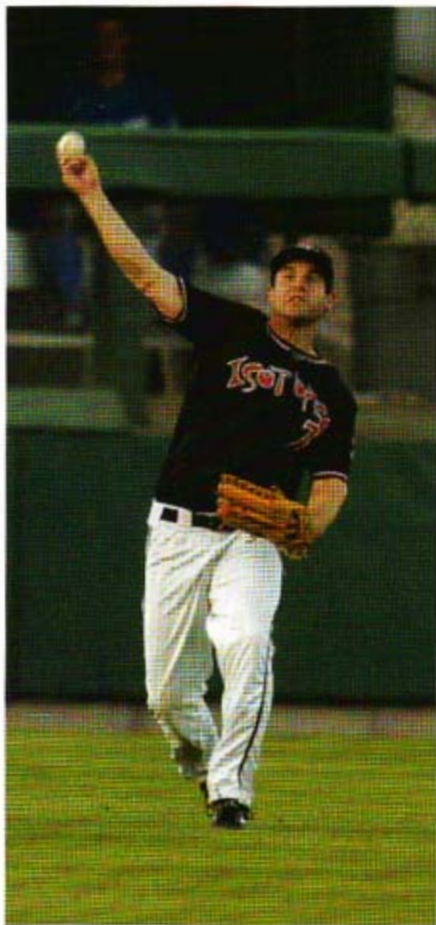
Still, he was maintaining a good-natured playfulness boosted by the bronze medal swinging from his neck. Asked if he was sleeping with his medal on, Gall laughed, “The guys make fun of it, but I do carry it on the road. I’ve been on the road a while.”

One of Gall’s clutch moments in Beijing came during overtime in the final, preliminary-round game against Japan, when he batted a RBI groundout in the eleventh inning. He drove the ball down the first base line, bringing teammate Nate Schierholtz in from third base to score and his team another “security” run to hold Japan at an insurmountable deficit.

Competing under the pressure of that overtime inning, and then in the medal round when the U.S. was down 4-1, but rallied to win 8-4 for the bronze, you might wonder if Gall felt the largeness of those moments. “You do!” he says. “For all the years I’ve played, the intensity was unmatched. There’s so much pride on the line. Everybody is hanging on every pitch. You wonder if your heart could take it if it was always like this.”



Courtesy Photos



Celebrity abounded in Beijing. Gall brushed shoulders with greats in the world of athletics—and otherwise. Says Gall, "There were lots of cool people: Bob Costas, the head of NBC, all the celebrities and actors at the bar next to us. I was with Vera Wang in an elevator, so I introduced myself. My wife thought that was funny."

As for the ruling that baseball won't be included in the Olympics for at least the next few competitions, Gall says, "I think it's a poor decision by the International Olympic Committee. One thing I learned in China, where they've only played baseball four years, is that lots of countries are not exposed and are still in the process of learning. It serves as a better ambassador, to broadcast on international television. I'm very disappointed and hope they bring it back in 2016."

Gall says the best thing about playing for the Isotopes in Albuquerque is the fans. "They're the best fans in the minor leagues I've seen in over nine years of play. That the fans come to the games and pay attention and appreciate good baseball, is not taken for granted by players. Other teams always mention it, how they all like to come to Albuquerque," he says. "I enjoy that—and getting to know the city. It's a livable city."

Summer NIGHTS

The City of Albuquerque Presents

2009

June
Thursday

- 4th Sweet Sunny South
Old-time Country
- 11th Slaid Cleaves
Original Country/Rock
- 18th Incendio
Latin Guitar World Fusion
- 25th Wagogo
World Music

July
Thursday

- 9th Infamous Stringdusters
New Bluegrass
- 16th Cajl & Salome
Brazilian Music
- 23rd Sam & Ruby
Folk/Blues

\$8 adults, \$4 seniors, \$2 children (3-12)

NMBPS Members Half-Price

Gates open at 6:00pm. Concerts start at 7:00pm.

Call 311 (Relay NM or 711)

www.cabq.gov/biopark

Rio Grande Botanic Garden, 2601 Central NW
A Division of Albuquerque's Cultural Services Department



Martin J. Chávez
Mayor

The City of Albuquerque Presents

Zoo Music

2009

June
Friday

- 5th Belleville Outfit
Gypsy Jazz Music
- 12th Enter the Haggis
Celtic Rock
- 19th Feufollet
Cajun Music
- 26th Stephen Kellogg & the Sixers
Rock/Country

July
Friday

- 10th Trout Fishing in America
Kids/Family
- 17th Steep Canyon Rangers
Bluegrass

\$8 adults, \$4 seniors, \$2 children (3-12)

NMBPS Members Half-Price

Gates open at 6:00pm. Concerts start at 7:00pm.

Call 311 (Relay NM or 711)

www.cabq.gov/biopark

Rio Grande Zoo, 903 10th St. SW
A Division of Albuquerque's Cultural Services Department



Martin J. Chávez
Mayor



Geoff Kabush

Canada, Mountain Biking



Though he competes for Canada in the Games, British Columbia native Geoff Kabush has made Albuquerque his home since marrying local Keri Pink in 2007. A week and a half after the Olympics, Kabush was still suffering from a severe case of jet lag, which explained his weary demeanor as he slowly ate a Spanish omelet on a "rest day" in Albuquerque. Kabush was waiting for his mind to catch up to his body. After Beijing, he immediately embarked on a whirlwind of competition in Australia,

Utah, and Nevada, before arriving in town.

In just a week, he was off to Austria to cap his season at the World Cup Finals (he finished twelfth), and then Belgium to celebrate with friends and beloved Belgian beer. This past March, Kabush kicked off his racing season by winning the opening round of USA Cycling's Pro Cross-country tour in Fontana, California for the fourth straight year.

Going into Beijing, Kabush was ranked ninth by the International Cycling Union, but he didn't finish as fast as he hoped. Says

Kabush, "I was able to get out front for the first three or four minutes. One of my strengths is pacing, so after the initial confusion—it's always a bit of a battle—I settled in."

You couldn't miss him up front, with the chops and all. "I think I grew them in 2004 and started winning a lot of races. I'll wait until I'm finished and then shave them off, and no one will recognize me," he says.

After the first lap, Kabush was in the main pack with a twenty-second lead when

Photo by Liz Lopez/ATM

he experienced a technical problem. "I had to pull into the pit for assistance, so I lost a chunk of time and went back into the 30s. I kept fighting, but had another small issue, and ended up twentieth at the finish. It's tough," he says. "My team and sponsors put in a lot of work building towards that event and it didn't work out, so it's a bit of a downer."

Depression is a common side effect of the Olympic experience, whether an athlete strikes gold or otherwise. Kabush experienced it from the other end of the spectrum when, in 2000, he qualified for the Olympic Games in Sydney, somewhat by surprise. "Back then, I went in as a lower-ranked rider and ended up ninth, which was the ride of my life. Definitely after I had the unexpected success of that, it was a bit of a tough time. After achieving all my goals and trying to refocus and find the motivation, it took me a little while to get my head going again in racing."

Kabush tells the story of his Beijing "Olympic moment," during the closing ceremonies. "You all line up and get herded into the arena. The other mountain biker from Canada, Seamus [McGrath], and I were getting bored, and the speeches were starting. Being Canadian, we were thinking, 'We got to get some beer.'"

The two ducked out on a mission, found concessions, and carried beer to those they deemed "deserving" athletes. Says Kabush, "Yao Ming was there and I offered him one and he was like, 'No, I don't drink but that's best beer—Tsingtao.' Later, he was sitting down with his teammates and I offered him a beer and he says, 'Ah, Okay' and I drank mine down and he says, 'Your glass was only half full!' so I was like, 'Wanna go again?' He says, 'Okay.' We said 'cheers,' downed the beer and shook hands. It was funny."

To simulate the Olympic course in the foothills of Albuquerque, Kabush suggests hopping on your mountain bike and riding up and down the steepest trail you find for about two hours (or 20 miles), peddling an average of ten miles an hour. "The significant thing about the Laoshan course was these super steep climbs that you had to go full power just to make it up, over and over again. Especially at the end of the race, you're struggling to go full power."

While Kabush enjoys most of his downtime in Albuquerque, he says, "I have to go back to Canada once in a while to take care of business: anti-doping testing to stay legal, do my taxes, stuff like that. But my wife, two dogs and two cats are here. This is my home now." 🍀

Q: WORKING LATE? A: HANGERS FREE ROUTE SERVICE.

THE LAST THING YOU NEED
TO WORRY ABOUT IS YOUR
DRY CLEANING



CINDY MILLER
FINANCIAL CONSULTANT,
WORLD TRAVELER AND
HANGERS ROUTE CUSTOMER



FRIENDLY TO YOU, YOUR CLOTHES AND THE ENVIRONMENT
Albuquerque's only truly green dry cleaners.

12231 ACADEMY RD NE STE #101 • 505-294-6200
WWW.ABQHANGERS.COM



- Wood
- Carpet
- Ceramic
- Vinyl
- Laminate

All flooring styles
available with reliable,
guaranteed installation.



The Floor Store

Ne Corner of Irving and Golfcourse
898-0507